

The Vanishing Cowboy and the Unfading Indian:

Manhood, Iconized Masculinity and National Identity in Larry McMurtry's

Lonesome Dove and James Welch's *Fools Crow* and *The Heartsong of*

Charging Elk

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Ph.D. Dissertation

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This thesis is dedicated to my husband, Miguel Brand, whose support, patience, invaluable help and invigorating humour have allowed me to get through this work without losing my mental health

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INTRODUCTION

He thought of his earlier attempts to create a past, a background, and ancestry –something that would tell him who he was. (Welch, *The Death of Jim Loney* 88)

Call mounted up, feeling that he had begun to miss Ben Lily, a man he had never liked. Yet, a time or two in his life, he had even missed enemies: Kicking Bird, the Comanche chief, was one. Missing Gus McCrae, a lifelong friend, was one thing; missing Ben Lily was something else again. It made Call feel that he had outlived his time, something he had never expected to do. (McMurtry, *Streets of Laredo* 313)

This study examines the representation of masculinity and national identity in Larry McMurtry's *Lonesome Dove* and James Welch's *Fools Crow* and *The Heartsong of Charging Elk*. It particularly considers the meeting with the external Other and how this confrontation has shaped the construction of certain masculinity ideals for the Western hero and erased traditional notions of masculinity for the Native American male. My claims include firstly, that as long as the narrative of the Western cowboy sustains the collective dream of national identity, the white male will be trapped in the discourse of hegemonic masculinity. Second, that until this discourse is completely overcome, the myth of the Vanishing Indian will loom over the Native American male thus obstructing the configuration of his own identity. Third, that it is imperative to avoid an exclusive, essentialist definition of Native American identity which results in a hegemonic masculinity¹ similar to the one the Native American male is trying to escape from.

Written in 1985 and 1986 respectively, Larry McMurtry's *Lonesome Dove* and James Welch's *Fools Crow* mark a turning point in the novel of the American West. Both novels set forth a process of historical and mythological revision that expose simplistic stereotypes about pre-industrial America, national identity and masculinity ideals. In *Fools Crow*, this process starts with the erasure of white fabrications about Native American culture and the retrieval of Blackfoot oral history and culminates with the creation of a valid mythological model for the Native American population. McMurtry's *Lonesome Dove* dives into the intricate network of historical, mythical and narrative constructions of the white West but produces quite a different result. Neither mythical nor antimythical, the novel reaches an inconclusive end of open wounds where the American male is shown in all his frailty and confusion.

Both *Lonesome Dove* and *Fools Crow* are set in the decade of the 1870s, a time marked by the military defeat of the Native American tribes of the West and the rise of industrial white America. Although the *Heartsong of Charging Elk* is set two decades later and takes place out of the American context altogether, it is equally a product of this same historical background. At the core of the three stories lies the primeval encounter between the white American and the Native American male. This study examines this historical and narrative encounter in order to expose the pervasiveness of a particular Great Story about manhood as well as to bring to light the ensuing conflict between hegemonic masculinity and multi-layered male identity. According to historian and critic Robert F. Berkhofer, a "Great Story", is the "whole past conceived as history", and rests on the assumptions laid by a "Great Past", or a "total past that can be understood and constituted as a history" (*Beyond* 38). The narrative of the American cowboy and the Vanishing Indian is a Great Story and, as such, relies in a Great Past. The mythical cowboy appearing in this Story is a creation of the white Euramerican who partially shaped him from appropriated Native American manhood. Whilst

this hegemonic model contributed to create the American national identity, it also aggravated the inner conflicts of a saturated and conflicting male identity. Outside the scope of this Great Story, the Native American met the white man under completely different circumstances. The consequences of this encounter for the Native American male were the sudden collapse of the manhood model based on the warrior and the shaman, which forced the individual either towards acculturation or nihilism. McMurtry and Welch's novels provide an excellent ground to analyse the complex interplay of the historical and cultural factors leading to the representation of American male cultural identities, since their gaze into the 19th century male role models springs directly from late 20th century male anxiety.

Published in consecutive years, *Lonesome Dove* and *Fools Crow* appeared during the second term of Ronald Reagan's presidency. On the international scene, that term was marked by the Iran-Contra scandal, the summits with newly elected Soviet Union president Gorbachev, and the rise of tensions in the Middle East. Domestic policy rested on Reagan's reliance on the free market, the free individual and on his reticence against any intervention that would limit that freedom. Direct consequences of his policy were tax cutting regulation – since less taxes would encourage entrepreneurial activity- and a reduction of the welfare state system –since under welfare programmes the individual became a dependent subject, an “object of pity” (Diggins, *Ronald Reagan* 341). President Reagan's profile and policy rebooted values like determination, hard-work, ambition and perseverance which are also to be found in the old masculinity model of the Self-Made Man. As Susan Jeffords sustains in *Hard Bodies. Hollywood Masculinity in the Reagan Era*, amongst the most popular Hollywood films at the times figured those displaying the masculine hard body, the tough and defiant male figure that stood for fierce individualism. This hard body stood in direct confrontation with the soft body belonging to a debased and weaker male and often labelled as feminized or gay. The 80s also provided another masculinity model that had little to do

with this version of the masculine primitive. The Men's Movement led by Robert Bly, Shepherd Bliss or Michael J. Meade advocated for a male prototype that rescued the virile qualities of the male without rejecting qualities like emotion, sensitivity or warmth. As Michael S. Kimmel noted in *Manhood in America. A Cultural History*, the 1980s search for a male role model and the expansion of a rigid masculinism set against a threatening feminized other –Latino, Asian, Native American, women themselves and any other “threatening” group- bore clear resemblance to late 19th century attempts to define masculinity against the rise of a feminine force. If the advance of industrial America at the turn of the 20th century rendered traditional male models obsolete, the transformation of the workplace at the turn of the twenty-first century brought about a similar result.

By the time *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* was published, the political context had changed considerably. Welch's last novel appeared at the very beginning of the 21st century, during Bill Clinton's second presidency. Clinton's image of masculinity distanced itself from the model of the hard body masculinity of the 80s. Yet, as Brenton J. Malin has observed, “Clinton was the model of a conflicted masculinity characteristic of the ‘90’s [...] embracing a kind of new, sensitive, non-traditional masculinity at the same time that it sought to demonstrate a powerful, thoroughly established sense of ‘real American manhood’, the sort conventionally depicted in advertisements for pickups by Ford, Dodge, and Chevy” (7). Hypo-masculinity coexisted with hyper-masculinity, Malin suggests, and the male anxiety brought about by the permanence of a rigid historical masculinity continued unresolved.

In all three novels the construction of masculinity is directly influenced by the encounter with the external Other. In *Lonesome Dove*, the threat of the Other serves to reinforce the masculinism of the hero; in *Fools Crow*, the desire for Whiteness threatens to destroy Native American male identity and in *The Heartsong of Charging Elk*, the fight for survival forces the protagonist to emulate the colonial master. The dual image of the Native

American as both the Rousseauian natural man with whom to identify and as the savage alien against whom to oppose oneself had been present from the time the first white settlers set foot on North American shores. By identifying with the Rousseauian Native American, the white man set himself apart from old, corrupt Europe. Furthermore, the Native American offered that which the white man was thirsty for: the return to the primitive and innocent man, the return to the primitive garden.² The white settler's dream of the Garden of Eden soon produced literary works where the white male distanced himself from his community, entered the "wilderness" and emulated the Native American in his ways. But once the United States obtained their independence from Great Britain, there was no further need for the sibling identification with the Native American, as scholar Helen Carr has aptly stated. At this point, the notion of the Rousseauian natural man gradually became that of the Vanishing Indian. Narratives as Longfellow's famous *The Song of Hiawatha* and Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans* helped to create the stoic, virile, primitive but loyal and honourable Native American whose death was necessary in order for the new American male to exist.

In his 1996 article "Revolution, Region, and Culture in Multicultural History", Native American author Philip J. Deloria addressed the subject of national identity in response to a controversial study of the American Revolution.³ Alongside Carroll Smith Rosenberg, Deloria believed that American national subjectivity is multi-layered. He maintained that the process of formation of American revolutionary identities was characterized by "a complex interplay of repulsion and desire, identification and Otherness [that] figured around multiple racial, gender and class lines" ("Revolution" 366). Deloria advocated the need for a valid analytic framework with which to assess this process of identity formation. He also warned against "the traditional narrative problem of losing sight of Indians and others when they are not caught up in armed struggle or treaty negotiation" and stressed the ambivalent position Native Americans occupied "sometimes outsiders, sometimes insiders, sometimes noble,

sometimes savages – all in various and coterminous combination” (“*Revolution*” 366). Setting James Welch’s *Blackfoot* *Pikunis* and *Oglala Sioux* side by side with Larry McMurtry’s cowboys makes it possible to better assess the consequences of the creation of American national identity which, in its formative process, had “codified, naturalized, performed and materialized” (P. J. Deloria, “*Revolution*” 366) multiple and contesting identities. Since scholarly approach to the narrative Western hero often lacks this comprehensive analytical frame, most of its readings tend to be partial and incomplete.

Criticism of Larry McMurtry’s *Lonesome Dove* has taken a divergent path. On one side figure those scholars and readers approaching his novel as a proto-Western that preserves the myth of the cowboy and the open range. On the other side are those who regard it as anti-Western which debunks those myths. The first of these deals mainly with the dichotomies agrarian/industrial America, open range/domesticity, West/East, and individual freedom/collective constraint whilst the second consider subjects as gender expectations, male violence and counter-myth. Analysing *Lonesome Dove* in the light of *Fools Crow* and *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* allows me to dig out the source of such contradictory readings, which I take to be the unresolved question of white male American identity. Conversely, reading Welch’s novels in the light of *Lonesome Dove* helps understand the big question facing the Native American: how to disentangle himself from a national identity created at his expense and yet not become a social outcast. Following Deloria’s and Carroll Smith-Rosenberg’s cue on the formation of national identity, my study considers the narrative of the cowboy and the Indian⁴ within the framework of cultural identity. Seen as such, the linear story of the cultural clash between the Native American and the white man becomes a complex story of contact taking place on a contested ground.⁵

A serious study of the representation of American male cultural identity through the cowboy and Indian story requires an interdisciplinary approach. The theoretical basis for my

study is provided by trends of thought found in masculinity studies, film studies, post-colonial criticism, anthropology, western cultural studies and historiography. The starting premise for my study, the fact that an accurate assessment of the American West necessarily involves a careful study of the Native American West, its impact on the white colonizer and the interrelationships created henceforth, is heir to the New Western Historian's concern for an inclusive picture that accounts for racial diversity in the West and challenges the white Turnerian approach to the subject⁶. The second premise is the belief that it is neither possible nor desirable to strictly separate between the imagined West and the historical West. This differs from the New Western Historian's focus on the real West and comes as logical consequence of the linguistic turn applied to Western studies.⁷ To bridge the gap between New Western and Post Western⁸ concepts of the West, I adhere to Satya P. Mohanty's postpositivist realist theory which claims that experience and social location can provide access to knowledge while conceding that this knowledge is culturally mediated.

For the analysis of the stereotyped Indian and the stereotyped cowboy in the narratives of Larry McMurtry and James Welch, I focus on Barthes' theory of the bourgeois myth, Frantz Fanon's concept of Negrophobia, Homi Bhabha's theory of the ambivalence of the stereotype, and Philip J. Deloria's reflections on the white Indian. For the study of the clash between conflicting masculinities and stereotyped masculinity within the cowboy and Indian discourse, I will draw from film studies on the cinematic cowboy, studies on the creation of the 19th century male identity, criticism on Native American masculinity and white image appropriation, and masculinity studies dealing with the tensions between hegemonic masculinism and conflicting masculinities.

While my study of male identities in the cowboy and Indian discourse mainly examines McMurtry's *Lonesome Dove* and James Welch's *Fools Crow* and *The Heartsong of Charging Elk*, I also include a brief examination of other novels and non-fiction work by the

same authors so as to strengthen some of my points. My first chapter begins considering *Lonesome Dove*, *Fools Crow* and *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* as compelling novels for the discussion of historical and narrative American male identity. In the first section, I state the reasons why I have chosen these novels as subjects of my research and explain why a comparative analysis of the novels offers a new perspective on the subject of conflicting masculinity. In the second section, I turn to the construction of hegemonic masculinity in the cowboy figure as well as the connection between American national identity and hegemonic manhood. My objectives here are first to look at the various masculinity models already competing in the nineteenth century, second to consider how the selection of valid roles and the dismissal of “inappropriate” ones left an imprint on the narrative cowboy and, third, to examine the appropriation of Native American manhood by the white male and the consequent disavowal of the Native American male. In the last section I offer an overview of traditional manhood models among the Blackfeet and the Sioux and state the problems caused by a sudden imposition of white masculinity models on Native Americans.

Since the previous framework needs to be set against the historical setting of the novels, the nineteenth century West, the first section of my second chapter begins with a brief account of the contacts between the white man and Native American Blackfeet before the Lewis and Clark expedition and continues with an examination of the colonial intentions of the expedition. My aim in this section is twofold. On the one hand, I want to trace the interplay between history and story of the nineteenth century West. On the other, I want to assess the lesser or greater degree of accuracy of the white narratives of the West from solid ground. For that reason, I have considered Thomas Jefferson’s westward expansion in the light of the Christian Doctrine of Discovery, a Great Story of the past which, in its turn, has caused other histories and stories to be born. My focus on McMurtry’s book of essays, *Sacagawea’s Nickname*, is aimed at showing the extent to which the Lewis and Clark

narrative still shapes the vision of the West in twenty-first century writers and at establishing some premises from which to analyse *Lonesome Dove* later on in the dissertation.

History plays a crucial role in *Lonesome Dove* and *Fools Crow*. The image of the encounter between the Native American man and the white man in the two novels is determined by the way the authors receive, perceive and fictionalize history. The second section in chapter two aims at examining Welch's and McMurtry's strategies when turning the historical framework into narrative. To this purpose, I discuss Berkhofer's reflections on the role of historians, the difficulty of distinguishing facts from fiction and the burden of "normal historical practice". I also consider William Cronon's definition of history as opposed to non-evidence and contrast this viewpoint with Arnold Krupat's reflection on Native American historiography, since this does not differentiate between factual history and non-factual history in the way western historical practice does. I propose using Satya P. Mohanty's postpositivist realism as social theory with which to assess Larry McMurtry and James Welch's fictionalization of history.

Next, I turn to explore Larry McMurtry and James Welch's role as historians in their non-fiction works *Crazy Horse* and *Killing Custer* respectively since these two works exemplify the authors' vision of the West present in *Lonesome Dove* and *Fools Crow*. The comparison allows me to contrast McMurtry's initial reliance on the Great Past as Great Story with Welch's fight to contest normal historical practice. The contrast between Welch and McMurtry's vision of *Crazy Horse* also helps to show the two different ways of shifting from the position of contextual historian to that of textual writer. Finally, I sustain that postpositivist realism provides an exceptionally valid theoretical framework with which to understand James Welch's narrativization of the Native American experience, to vindicate the validity of the concept of identity and to assess the degree of accuracy of McMurtry's portrayal of *Crazy Horse* and Native American culture. Having established the theoretical

parameters for analysing masculinities through the encounter between the white man and the Native American, the next two chapters set on a detailed inquiry of masculinity models in *Lonesome Dove*, *Fools Crow* and *The Heartsong of Charging Elk*.

Chapter three discusses the conflicting nature of McMurtry's cowboy protagonists in *Lonesome Dove* as well as the problems the author runs into when exposing the masculinist code of the Western genre. The first section of the chapter considers the presence of the Indian stereotype and its use as external threat in order to reinforce Woodrow Call and Augustus McCrae's masculinism. Homi Bhabha's interpretation of the colonial stereotype, Frantz Fanon's theory of Otherness and Sara Ahmed's study on fear all provide me with the ground to analyse the perception of the Other and to assess the extent to which the relationship with the Other alters existing models of masculinity. I examine the dual discourse of the vanishing / menacing Indian and contrast it with the historical reality where the Comanche were actively persecuted and forced out. Next I examine the moments in the novel when the menace of the Native American appears with pre-emptive force and those when the Native American exerts a real menace.

In the second section of the chapter, I deal with the subject of appropriated Native American manhood as a means to shape the cowboy's national identity. Together with this appropriation comes the dismissal of the Native American's profound spirituality and the decontextualization of his manhood. My contention is that McMurtry overlooks the American male's desire to become and replace the Native American, although he exposes the emotional loss caused by the cowboy's separation from the community and his adherence to a strict code of masculinity. In the last section of the chapter I investigate fraternal bonding in *Lonesome Dove* and explain why it is bound to collapse. I first examine the dyad Gus-Call as representation of the ancient Enkidu and Gilgamesh Sumerian myth of manhood. Secondly, I consider the fraternity created within the group of cowboys in the Hat Creek outfit as heir to

the Lewis and Clark myth of fraternal *communitas*. I apply Dana Nelson's study of fraternity in the Lewis and Clark myth to explain why fraternal bonding can never alleviate the loss caused by the separation from the community. I claim that fraternal bonding works only temporarily as long as there exists an external Other against whom to define oneself, for when this external threat disappears, the phantoms hidden within the self emerge.

In the last chapter I examine James Welch's *Fools Crow* and *The Heartsong of Charging Elk*. I consider Welch's reconceptualization of traditional Native American masculinity as well as his reflections about indigenosity and the urban Native American. I initiate the chapter by distinguishing between the two kinds of masculinities portrayed in *Fools Crow*, community-oriented manhood and individualistic manhood. I explicitly focus on Welch's depiction of warrior masculinity and draw a further distinction between the Native American concept of warrior manhood and its Euramerican (mis)interpretation. I proceed to analyze several Blackfoot myths present in the novel in which Blackfoot masculinity departs from the model provided by the hero in the western monomyth. This examination shows that Welch forfeits the more controversial aspects inherent to tribal warrior masculinity –assertion of manhood through aggression- in order to provide a positive male model for the 21st century Native American. I contend that his proposed models of masculinity are set in clear opposition to the dominant hegemonic masculinity of Western narrative. I further suggest that Welch defends an integral Native American masculinity that disavows any masculinist interpretation of manhood. This masculinity needs to be rooted on self-growth and commitment to the community, which he sees as inherent components of Blackfoot culture.

The second section in this chapter deals with the representation of and confrontation with (white) Otherness in *Fools Crow*. I start by establishing some initial parallelisms between the portrayal of Otherness in *Lonesome Dove* and in *Fools Crow*. Next, I exemplify the passages where whiteness is associated to darkness and corruption in reversal of the

Western construct where it appears as signifier of wholeness. The last section of chapter four investigates Charging Elk's survival strategies in an alien environment in order to assess whether mimicry serves as tool of contestation, as Homi Bhabha maintains, or whether it leads to further male confusion, as in the case of the cowboy. I suggest that Welch distinguishes between the acculturated Native American who has given up his indigenoussness and the Native American who, through camouflage, is really contesting the signifier Whiteness and hence asserting indigenoussness. I contend that Charging Elk exemplifies the latter and I offer evidence to refute opinions such as that of Elizabeth Cook-Lynn who believes that Charging Elk is silenced by assimilation. In my final reflection I read Charging Elk's journey towards life as the reversal of the journey of the Western hero towards death.

NOTES

¹ Throughout this study, I will maintain the distinction between masculinism and masculinity/ies that Arthur Brittan establishes in *Masculinity and Masculinism*. Masculinism refers to “the ideology that justifies and naturalizes male domination” while masculinity “refers to those aspects of men’s behaviour that fluctuate over time”. R.W. Connell uses the term hegemonic masculinity to refer to masculinism. He describes hegemonic masculinity as the “dominant form of masculinity in society as a whole”. In this context hegemony denotes “a social ascendancy achieved in a play of social forces that extends beyond contests of brute power into the organization of private life and cultural processes”. See Brittan 3, 4; Whitehead, *The Masculinities Reader* 5; Connell, *Gender & Power* 183-185.

² For a thorough examination of the theme of the pastoral garden in American narratives, see Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth*; R.W.B. Lewis, *The American Adam. Innocence, Tragedy and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century*; Richard Drinnon, *Facing West. The Metaphysics of Indian-Hating and Empire-Building*; and Annette Kolodny, *The Lay of the Land. Metaphor as Experience and History in American Life and Letters*.

³ Deloria was answering Edward Countryman’s essay “Indians, the Colonial Order and the Social Significance of the American Revolution.”

⁴ In the present study, I use “Native Americans” to refer to indigenous North Americans while I use “Indians” when referring to the stereotyped image created by the white man. Yet, this is by no means a generalised use of the terms. “Indians” is also widely used to refer to the indigenous North Americans, as is the term “American Indians”.

⁵ I borrow this last term from historian Theodore Binnema. See Binnema, “Allegiances and Interests: Niitsitapi (Blackfoot) Trade, Diplomacy, and Warfare, 1806-

1831” and also *Common & Contested Ground. A Human and Environmental History of the Northwestern Plains*.

⁶ Amongst the most influential New Western Historian’s studies are Limerick’s *The Legacy of Conquest. The Unbroken Past of the American West*; Worster’s *Under Western Skies: Nature and History in the American West*; Cronon’s *Under an Open Sky: Rethinking America’s Past*; and White’s; *It’s Your Misfortune and None of My Own*.

⁷ Amongst these, Elaine Jahner’s *Spaces of the Mind. Narrative and Community in the American West* and William Cronon’s *Under an Open Sky and Rethinking America’s Past*. I have included Cronon as both a New Western Historian and a “Postwestern” historian because his analysis of the West as place involves a serious reflection on the role story-telling and narratives have in the reconstruction of history, that is, on the way the past has been interpreted through stories and the extent to which these stories create history.

⁸ The term postwestern has been borrowed from the term in the new series “Postwestern Horizons” launched by the University of Nebraska Press. The series focuses on the ways narratives have represented the West rather than in describing the way it was.

CHAPTER 1

COWBOYS AND INDIANS IN THE AMERICAN WEST

Lounging there at ease against the wall was a slim young giant, more beautiful than pictures. His broad, soft hat was pushed back; a loose-knotted, dull-scarlet handkerchief sagged from his throat; and one casual thumb was hooked in the cartridge-belt that slanted across his hips. He has plainly come many miles from somewhere across the vast horizon, as the dust upon him showed.

(Owen Wister, *The Virginian* 17)

The Cowboy, the Native American and the Lost Garden in the West

The Western genre¹ in its narrative form has enjoyed great popularity from the times of Owen Wister's *The Virginian* in 1902.² Yet, this popularity has not always been matched by a similar interest from academic circles. With a few recent exceptions that include authors like Wallace Stegner and A.B. Guthrie, Western fiction has usually been relegated to the sphere of popular culture and has often been criticized for its perceived use of stereotyped and shallow characters, basic plotlines, predictable outcome and uncreative use of language (Wallman x-xi; Cawelti 3-9). Yet American Western fiction has not only shaped American culture and society but also the way non-Americans perceive America. From the first narrative Westerns which portrayed heroes like Daniel Boone, David Crockett, Natty Bumppo, Nick of the Woods or *The Virginian*, American culture has borrowed from the Western genre images of masculinity, male friendship and national identity which today pervade countless spheres of American life.

In the last decades of the 20th century, scholarly interest for the genre increased thanks to the research and promotional work made by Western readers and critics,³ to novels from

authors like Cormac McCarthy and to the thrust given to Western studies by New Western Historians. Awarded with a Pulitzer Prize in 1986, *Lonesome Dove* turned into one of the few Western novels that managed to bridge the gap between popular and academic appreciation.⁴ The novel combines an engaging plotline, charismatic characters and unrelenting action with a post-Western, anti-mythical atmosphere that at the time appealed both to the traditional Western reader and to the post-modern one. More importantly, it rescued an old tale of male prowess and achievement that had been essential to the construction of hegemonic American masculinity.

Set around the 1870s, *Lonesome Dove* takes place in the brief span of time between the big cattle drives through seemingly infinite stretches of uninhabited land and the Turnerian⁵ closing of the frontier which would, in the American collective imaginary, precipitate a new industrial era in the country. When Captain Woodrow Call decides to gather a herd of cattle and drive it to Montana, lured by Jake Spoon's accounts of fertile, wild and unsettled country up north, he is following the path of many Americans that embarked upon a voyage of discovery seduced by stories of riches and plenty. For Call, Augustus McCrae and the party of cowboys with them, Montana is the land of promise, the last empty garden of America that waits to be cultivated by the settler. The story of their cattle drive tells the tale of the American male led onwards by a myth of progress, prosperity and masculine rebirth. But what Call and Gus and thousands of other American males like them encountered at the end of his journey might or might not have been success. Some did accomplish their dream whilst others perished still searching for it. Common to both though, was the constant readjustment and reformulating of beliefs and expectations upon reaching the promised land and the people inhabiting it.

In her perceptive study *The Lay of the Land*, Annette Kolodny analysed the pastoral myth in male American literature, carefully pointing out how the land had been feminized

and turned into the dual image of the mother/virgin. As her study shows, writers such as Crèvecoeur, Fenimore Cooper or William Gilmore Simms came to a decisive turning point in their writing when they realized that the pastoral dream carried the seeds of its own destruction. The arrival of the white settler meant the taming of the wilderness, hence the beginning of the end of the pastoral dream. The only way to preserve the myth was to separate the male from human community and strand him in a mythical frozen past (Kolodny 134). Because community brought about progress, that is corruption, the male had to move away from it and revert to a pre-human state of purity. Kolodny's thesis opened up new ground after the first multidisciplinary approaches in landscape history by Henry Nash Smith, R.W.B. Lewis or Leo Marx. The journey to Montana undertaken by the Hat Creek outfit in *Lonesome Dove* emulates the pastoral impulse which led American pioneers to seek out a new life in peace and harmony on virgin land. In his trilogy of the West, author and critic Richard Slotkin argues brilliantly that the white man's movement towards the west was also impregnated with the desire to be reborn. In pre-industrial America this desire implied fighting the Native American, dispossessing him of his land and appropriating his identity so as to be the new and rightful proprietor.

What made the American pastoral narrative different from similar European narratives was the encounter between white man and Native American. In his 1960 and 1968 studies *Love and Death in the American Novel* and *The Return of the Vanishing American*, Leslie Fiedler sustained that the American narrative hero was born from the meeting between the Native American and the white man. Fiedler claimed that the first narrative new born baby was Fenimore Cooper's Natty Bumppo after his encounter with Chingachgook:

Natty is no longer of the seed of woman, being the first (after Henry) of those Americans reborn in their encounter with the Indian on his own home ground, which is to say, born again out of a union between men. Though he has, as he

likes to boast over and over, “no cross in my blood”, no taint of miscegenation in his begetting, he is neither a White Man nor a Red, but something new under the sun. (*Love and Death* 117, 118)

Fiedler’s approach towards the relationship between the Native American and the white man raised the highly controversial subject of homoeroticism (or innocent homosexuality) in American narrative and the American psyche but the subject has not seen serious debate until the recent introduction of masculinity studies. Despite its novelty and insight, Fiedler’s interpretation of the male bond between Natty Bumppo and Chingachgook left little room for major topics like racism, male violence and identity appropriation.

Along with N. Scott Momaday’s Pulitzer Prize and the Native American Renaissance movement in the late 1960s⁶ came an increasing number of studies on Native American identity, misrepresentations of Native Americans and rewritings of the history of the West. These studies started to take into account the Native American perspective.⁷ Richard Drinnon’s *Facing West. The Metaphysics of Indian-hating and Empire-Building*, Rayna Green’s *The Tribe called Wannabee: Playing Indian in America and Europe* and Philip J. Deloria’s *Playing Indian* paid special attention to the figure of the white Indian, that is, the white man who appropriates Native American identity. Drinnon’s book traced the history of Indian-hating back to the times of the first settlements. He claimed that the strict Puritan system of repression caused the male to seek a way out through violence, and that he often exerted that violence on the Native American. He also documented a parallel movement of rebellion followed by writers like Thomas Morton or Robert Louis Stevenson and by literary characters such as Natty Bumppo whose way of life contrasted radically with that of the Puritan white male. Bumppo was for Drinnon the antithesis of the repressed Puritan. He interpreted Natty’s sympathy for the Native as an attempt to perceive life in a more natural and uncorrupted way. But what Fiedler and Drinnon took as a response to an inner need for

unrepressed life, Rayna Green and Philip J. Deloria take as the white American's need to play Indian: the process through which the American white man tries to build his identity by imitating the perceived image of the Indian.

In her 1988 essay, "The Tribe Called Wannabee: Playing Indian in America and Europe", Rayna Green stated that "the earliest, most primary and essential form of playing Indian belongs to Anglo male, military behaviour" (31). Rayna Green was concerned with the American male who chooses to become Indian in a "non-Indian" context, either temporarily or permanently. Her essay followed the process of white males adopting Indian costume, mock-Indian language and gestures, semi-spiritualism and semi-ecologism, during which a parallel process of real Indian removal was taking place. Her conclusion is clear: so as to play the Indian successfully, the real Native American must be dead. Following this same thesis, Deloria's *Playing Indian* turns to key moments in American history when Indian-playing reached systematic proportions: the Revolution and post-industrial America. For Deloria, *playing Indian* is the "still unfinished, always-contested effort to find an ideal sense of national Self and to figure out what its new mode of consciousness might be all about" (7).

Ranking very high in the *playing Indian* top hits is of course the "Cowboys and Indians" game which has been immensely glamorised by the Western film genre. The white Indian in the Western genre was constructed by the American psyche with the help of writers, adventurers, entrepreneurs, novelists, politicians and even presidents. It has come a long way from the characters such as Crèvecoeur's James Farmer, Filson's Daniel Boone, the real and the literary David Crockett or Cooper's Natty Bumppo, to recent figures such as Kevin Costner's Lieutenant Dunbar in the 1999 movie *Dances with Wolves*.⁸ Still, all these characters share common traits such as courage, toughness or skilfulness, and follow the model of the outcast hero who renounces the comforts of life in the community, befriends the Indian and embraces a more "primitive", uncorrupted and fulfilling existence.

In *Lonesome Dove*, the white cowboys appear both as white Indians befriending or emulating the Native Americans and as Indian haters trying to erase them from white America. This pattern reflects the dual representation of the Native American as hated and as desired Other. On the one hand, he is the savage primitive against whom the cowboys test their manhood. On the other, he is the primitive American holding the spirit of American national identity. This dichotomy inserts itself within the colonizing project that needs to disavow the Other in order to appropriate his desired qualities. The alien Other in *Lonesome Dove* are the Comanche who ferociously raid peaceful sleepy towns, the evil Blue Duck whose sagacity and dexterity is only matched by Call and Gus or the pitiful bunch of Blood Blackfeet who shoot at Gus' leg later causing his death. Within the mythical discourse of the colonizing Self, the Vanishing Indian is linked to that of the Vanishing cowboy. The disappearance of the wild and free Indian, McMurtry says, inevitably brings about the disappearance of the wild and free cowboy. It is mostly through Gus that we hear the discourse of the proud, honourable and unjustly treated Indian who has to disappear for the white man to advance. And it is Gus who also disappears in the advent of industrial America, thus sealing off the narrative bond between white man and Native American. Historical records tell however how by the 1870s, the arrival in Montana of the likes of Gus and Call put a definitive end to the traditional way of life of the indigenous Native American tribes. The three divisions of the Blackfoot tribes -Blood, Pikuni and Blackfeet- were either forced into reservations or had to flee to their Canadian territories. In actual history, it is not the Blackfeet who killed the white man but the white man who put a definite end to the traditional world of the Blackfeet.

Yet, simply defining McMurtry's cowboys as white Indians disregards the complex and often contradictory representation of American manhood. The two protagonists, Woodrow Call and Augustus McCrae can be read as historical "real" cowboys, symbolic

frontier men, white Indians, emotional males or even confused human beings. Some recent post-Western filmic cowboys provide good examples of this multi-layered masculinity. Clint Eastwood's Bill Munay in *Unforgiven*, Heath Ledger's Ennis del Mar and Jake Guillenahall's Jack Twist in *Brokeback Mountain* and Tommy Lee Jones' Pete Perkins in *The Three Burials of Melquiades Estrada* escape both the iconic figure of the powerful, self-righteous and confident cowboy and any easy identification with the white Indian cowboy. Bill Munay is an old, beaten and physically rundown cowboy who looks out of place and time; Ennis del Mar and Jake Twist are confused, insecure and take the wrong turns in life; Pete Perkins is also old and maybe too late to repair his past mistakes. They all seem to be exploring ways to let their emotional selves run freer, to move away from the stereotyped lonely and tough man who can never indulge into sentimental friendship and love. It is a tiny crack running through the solid rock of their iconic male identity, yet one wide enough for them to question the validity of that identity. Similar to Bill Munay and Pete Perkins, there is an essential flaw in Woodrow Call and Augustus McCrae's assumed masculinism that makes it impossible for them to be at ease unless one is ready to accept permanent self-deception. McMurtry's cowboys emerge not only from a narrative tradition that has tried to fix the image of the American male but also from a time in history when that firmness is being amply questioned. Therefore, examining their narrative significance and their meaning for contemporary audiences requires to integrate more than one perspective.

Written in 1986, *Fools Crow* was published contemporarily with highly influential Native American works like Arnold Krupat's 1989 *The Voice in the Margin*, Paula Gunn Allen's 1986 *The Sacred Hoop* or Gerald Vizenor's 1989 *Narrative Chance*. During the 1980s, the Native American struggle to gain recognition and define identity had adopted postmodernist theories deconstructing master and colonizing narratives. There was a danger to be avoided, though: that of falling into postmodernist nihilism and losing the new found

voice among other equally heard voices. Krupat's answer was to defend a dialogism that "envisions a form of strong pluralism in which all possible significations have at least some legitimate claim in any determination of meaningfulness", rather than one implying "a kind of infinite, unbound free play of signifiers in regard to which decidable meanings simply do not exist" (136). Vizenor's "Trickster Narratives" opposed monologue discourse to dialogism through the Native American comic holotrope of the trickster (*Narrative* 187-208). Paula Gun Allen decentering strategy focused on Native American gynocentrism against the patriarchal Western model. She kept however a distrust for postmodernist writers since she thought that they "often appear to disregard classic Western literary conventions while implicitly recognize[ing] them all the same" (81). James Welch's option was to provide a narrative firmly rooted in Native American tradition but also highly recognizable for the non-Native American reader.

James Welch's *Fools Crow* engages in a clear political and cultural commitment with the Native American people and, particularly, the Native American male. At the time of the novel's appearance, the Native American struggle to claim first nation rights faced white hegemonic manhood, renewed images of the Vanishing Indian and a federal policy of fund cutting which seriously threatened Native American health and education schemes. In this scenario, *Fools Crow* offered renewed confidence to the struggle of the Native American by providing a much needed link between past and present Native American history and a solid male role model where personal advancement was tied to the community. Whereas *Lonesome Dove* exposes the flaws in white national male identity, *Fools Crow* rescues the historical identity with which to shape the new Native American. Out of the wreck of a collapsing culture, James Welch rescues his new male. The young protagonist of the story, White Man's Dog, is a member of the Blackfoot Pikuni tribe who, unlike the protagonists of Welch's two first novels *Winter in the Blood* and *The Death of Jim Loney*, finds himself firmly rooted in

place and history. At the beginning of the 19th century and up to the 1850s, the Blackfeet extended their dominance all over the Great Plains.⁹ Yet, that period of dominance declined soon after the arrival of the white man and by the 1880s their traditional way of life had ended.

Louis Owens has stressed the importance of a novel like *Fools Crow* because of its commitment to rescue the history and culture of Blackfoot people for both Native American and white audiences. According to Owens, *Fools Crow* is a novel “about returning, about going home to an identity” that offers a picture of Pikuni life in full “human detail seldom allowed Native Americans in literature by Euroamericans” (*Other* 164, 165). *Fools Crow* avoids the romanticizing fantasy of depicting a blissful pre-contact world soon to be destroyed by the ruthless invader. Escaping the Great Story of the idyllic Native American garden, *Fools Crow* points at the communal fissure caused by overwhelming male desire as well as at the need to build male role models that balance personal and communal interests. The threat is not only posed by the white man but also lies within the Pikuni community. In this framework, it is possible to examine the confrontation with the white man as test ground for Native American manhood. The opposition to the white man provides individuals like White Man’s Dog/*Fools Crow*¹⁰ with the opportunity to validate responsibility toward his community and redirect personal gains towards communal advancement. Yet, it also accentuates the problems of wrongly addressed and incorrectly channelled zealotry, aggressiveness and emotional frailty. Owl Child or Fast Horse are examples of this kind of overmasculinized individuals who progressively lose contact with their community and, eventually, with themselves.

The protagonist of James Welch’s novel initiates a quest for personal maturation that seems to fit the mould of the western Bildungsroman. His spiritual and moral growth gradually builds up during the novel, turning the insecure and clumsy White Man’s Dog into

the brave and honourable Fools Crow. White Man's Dog's desire for social recognition and his admiration for the heroic warriors among his Pikuni tribe do not differ much from Newt's dream of being a real cowboy and his fascination about Jake Spoon and Captain Call in *Lonesome Dove*. White Man's Dog's interest in obtaining wealth and, thus, women, can similarly be matched with Dish Bogget's interest in Lorena. Furthermore, the Pikuni's test of manhood through honourable and brave performance in battle lies very close to the cowboy's way to assert manhood. The conclusion of the quest story is successful in *Fools Crow* but it is not in *Lonesome Dove*. While White Man's Dog manages both to climb socially and to acquire spiritual growth, Newt's journey does not bring about any positive change in his life.

But examining *Fools Crow* from the perspective of the narrative hero in Euramerican narratives, in this case the Bildungsroman hero, means to isolate the Native American from his community for, in most cases, the individual in those narratives rises above or is set against the community. Paula Gunn Allen makes this point when observing that "pure self-expression" is not a concern for traditional American Indian literature, which rather stresses the community's role in channelling private emotions and integrating the individual within the wider "cosmic framework" (55). Isolation from the community, what the cowboy initially celebrates, is what the Native American abhors and what brings about the absolute downfall of the individual, as we see in *Fools Crow*.

The protagonist of Welch's novel follows a very distinct process of coming of age at the end of which he reaches mental maturity and assumes communal responsibility. The chronological process of internal growth is told in a non-linear narrative pattern which sometimes spins history forwards and sometimes rewinds it back. Fools Crow's restlessness as a young man has little to do with that experienced by Captain Gus and Call for it appears only as fruit of his youth, and rightfully ends by the time his coming of age has been completed. Despite his young age, Fools Crow acquires all the knowledge and wisdom

necessary to act as a strong spiritual healer helping his people bear times of immense suffering. Call's old age, by contrast, has not granted him the same kind of knowledge and the process seems to be rather the opposite: the older he gets, the worse he can deal with himself and those around him. Both *Lonesome Dove* and *Fools Crow* deal with loss of human lives, specifically male lives. Yet, in *Lonesome Dove* deaths occur arbitrarily, they seem nonsensical and are accountable to just a few or even to no one whereas for the Pikuni in *Fools Crow*'s, every single death is specifically accounted for and has a very definite narrative purpose. Every loss strikes a hard blow to all the community and the wound it opens has to be ritualistically healed by the community before they can proceed successfully. The disturbing restlessness the male experiences in *Lonesome Dove* may come from his having lost contact with the community, with the Other and with himself. His relationship with the Native American, a confusing blend of hate, envy, dismissal and admiration, would then be caused by his desire to recover all these losses.

Several scholars have noted that James Welch's last novel, *The Heartsong of Charging Elk*, offers a continuation to *Fools Crow* (McFarland 172; Ferguson 35; Opitz 98). This time, the protagonist is not Pikuni but Lakota Sioux and James Welch sets him in France rather than in North America in order to fully explore the consequences of separation from community and the individual's struggle for survival in an alien environment. Not unlike the narrative cowboy, Charging Elk finds himself in a hostile environment orphaned by family and society. His Lakota community lives a shadowy existence trapped in reservation life, the US government is only happy to witness another Vanishing Indian disappear, and Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show can easily replace one actor with another. In the late 1880s, the traditional Lakota Sioux lifestyle has almost faded, and life in the reservation leaves little opportunity for young boys to develop their manhood through Sioux codes and rituals. It is

no wonder then that Charging Elk assumes the fantasy of the white man by becoming the Indian in the show.

As Native American, Charging Elk is in a process of cultural and individual mummification, that “continued agony” which Frantz Fanon claimed was the ultimate objective of the colonizing system (“Racism” 128-129). Soon the Wild West Show is gone, the fake Indian disappears and mimicry seems to be the only choice left for Charging Elk to survive. Welch takes the Native American right to the place where Euramerican notions of primitivism and savagism achieved its formal peak through illustrated thought. In that respect, *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* not only picks up where Fools Crow left in time but also flashes back to the time when the imagination of the white man first wove the fantasy of the Indian. So, the journey to a possible future is actually a journey back to the beginning that reads as the reverse of the white man’s journey Westwards. To the journey West, Welch opposes the journey East, to the new world he opposes the “old” world, to the Garden of Eden, the descent into Hell and to the white man’s appropriation of Native American identity, the Native American mimicry of the white man. Welch soon blurs the simplistic duality that such a confrontation of terms implies by suggesting that renewal is possible even in the most unlikely location. Charging Elk, the Native American who almost became a Vanishing Indian, brings the hope of a future in that same corrupt world from where the white American once escaped.

The White Male: Manhood, National Identity and the Evolution of the Cowboy

The late 18th and 19th centuries witnessed the formation of an idealized version of American masculinity that stitched together illustrated models of masculinity, fantasized Native American primitivism, American images of rugged individualism and patriarchal conceptions of male fraternity. The illusion of a homogenized male model concealed the

tensions between different masculinity typologies by defining an essential and essentialist unit that excluded any differentiating Otherness. The birth of the fictionalised cowboy at the end of the 19th century and its consolidation during the 20th century reflected the political and social process driving towards an essentialization of American manhood. Narrative heroes like Wister's *The Virginian* (1902) and Zane Grey's Lassiter in *Riders of the Purple Sage* (1912) were branded as the new beacons of American manhood. In this section I aim to draw attention to the specific confluence of narrative traditions, historical circumstances and psycho-political conditions that resulted in the construction of the Western cowboy, turning him into an inescapable referent of American manhood. It is often the case that studies of the Western genre highlight narrative or historical circumstances but fail to integrate them in the broader context of the construction of masculinity.

In *The Western. Parables of the American Dream*, Jeffrey Wallman points at several narrative traditions foreboding the appearance of the cowboy hero such as the soldier of battle accounts, the explorer of travel narrative, the huntsman or the lumberjack of epic poems. All those characters shared male qualities like boldness, strength, self-reliance, toughness and self-sufficiency that would soon define the personality of the Western cowboy. The dime novel and the Buffalo Bill Wild West Show were the millstones grinding all those narrative characters together. As Jeffrey Wallman observes, the dime novel simplified the plot line of epic narratives, introduced melodrama and quick action and adapted previous narrative male heroes to modern tastes, creating a "more appealing, more civilized hero who is youthful, eligible, physically attractive and naturally noble" (78). Introduced as secondary character, the cowboy soon became the star of dime novels thanks to the success of Buffalo Bill Wild West Show.¹¹ In fact, dime novels and the Wild West Show fed on each other: the dime Western had created an audience ready to receive the Wild West Show; the Wild West Show

in turn produced the drama of the Wild West that the dime novel would recreate and further build on.

While the fictionalised cowboy was rapidly rising to fame, the real cowboy was as rapidly disappearing. The existence of the real cowboy was short spanned, ranging from the end of the Civil War to the early 1880s, the time when the big cattle drives up north ended. His history was tied to that of the cattle baron: it was the cattle baron who owned the herd and who needed the cowboy in order to make the huge profits by taking the Texas longhorns up north. When bad weather came and low prices collapsed the market, the cattle baron left the scene and so did the cowboy (Atherton 241-271; Slatta *Cowboys* 22, 23). Contrasting with the appealing figure of the narrative cowboy, the real cowpuncher had a sordid life that involved hard and often tedious work, a meagre salary and poor job security. Frenzied work rounding up, branding cows and leading them north often stopped during the winter months, when the contracts ended, so that inactivity and mobility among the cowboys increased considerably. The alluring image of the drifting and mysterious cowboy was caused by no other than poor work conditions. In fact, the real cowpuncher and the fictionalised character differed substantially. Social status was one of these differences. While real cowboys and vaqueros often experienced marginalization, their narrative counterparts were glamorised to the point of being turned into alluring role models. Argentinean gauchos, Colombian llaneros, Mexican vaqueros, Chilean Huasos and Anglo cowboys occupied quite a low step in the social ladder yet they were soon iconised in novels, popular literature and even nationalistic epic poems (Slatta, *Gauchos* 10-16; *Comparing Cowboys* 82-98; *Cowboys* 9-25).

Contradicting popular and widespread opinion, the Anglo cowboy was not a pure American character. In fact, he was highly indebted to the Mexican vaqueros who had first initiated the tradition of the cattle trail when driving Texan herds to Spanish Louisiana during the 18th century. They also taught him how to handle wild cattle in arid and unyielding land

(Slatta, *Cowboys* 19). As in the case of the Latin American vaqueros, the traits found in the Anglo cowboy -independence, strength, love of the saddle- were not a reflection of a national essence but sprung from sheer necessity: the vaquero and the cowboy came to cherish those qualities without which their work was simply not feasible. These characteristics remained in the narrative cowboy but they were soon disconnected from the work environment and rather ascribed to the cowboy's manhood. This disconnection was the initial part of a process of naturalization that would eventually equate the image of the American cowboy to the quintessential American male. A reading of the myth of the cowboy in the light of Roland Barthes' theory of myth can clarify how this process came to be.

Barthes understands myth not simply as fable or story but as dominant ideology. As such, myth is a language and semiotics is the tool needed to analyse it. In his studies of meaning and the sign, Barthes proposes different levels of signification. The first order is the sign at a denotative level: signifier and signified.¹² The second order adds the connotative level by attaching another signified to the sign in the first order. The first order sign is then the signifier of the second order. While the first order takes place within the linguistic system, the second order is metalinguistic since it is a second language operating on a first. The combination of the first sign at the denotative level and the second sign at the connotative level produces the myth (Barthes 107-159).

Reading the Western cowboy in this light requires considering a first order sign and a second order sign. In the first order of signification, the signifier "cowboy" and its primary, literary meaning "working hand, cow tender" produce a linguistic sign. This sign is the signifier in the second order of signification where another signified is being added. In the case of the Western cowboy, this second signified was built both by written sources such as newspapers, dime novels or Westerns as well as by visual and oral sources such as the Buffalo Bill Wild West Show or the first filmic Westerns. All these sources, particularly the

dime novel and the Wild West Show, disregarded the more sordid aspects of cowboy life and presented the image attractively so that it could be easily marketed. They replaced the unattractive story of the cowboy with that of the already glamorised American hero, the story of Daniel Boone, Kit Carson or Natty Bumppo. Buffalo Bill even added dress paraphernalia that was borrowed from the elite Spanish rider rather than that from his poor counterpart, the plain vaquero. Buffalo Bill's immaculate buckskin dress, elaborate trimmings, big shiny spurs and ostentatious hat had more in common with the elite Mexican charro or the idealised Chilean huaso than with the shabby vaquero. Even the unmistakable sign of the cowboy, the gun, was very rarely used by Anglo cowboys against other males and was altogether avoided by the Latin American vaqueros, who thought using firearms in confrontation was unmanly.¹³

By the time Owen Wister's *The Virginian* came to light, the basic reality about the cowboy, his condition of wage-paid worker at the service of the expansionist cattle baron, had been replaced by a dramatic story where the cowboy's constant wandering was a direct consequence of his untameable and manly character. The second order of signification attached the signified "virile, strong, independent and untameable" to the first order sign "cowboy". It is at this time, Barthes says, that history evaporates and meaning becomes form. At the second order, the history of the cowboy as poor cowhand loses value and the new story of the cowboy as epitome of American manhood takes over. History is emptied out and the concept, in this case hegemonic masculinity, is naturalized, transformed into something natural. Since "the winning of hegemony often involves the creation of models of masculinities which are quite specifically fantasy figures" (Connell, *Gender & Power* 184), iconic narrative creations such as that of John Wayne are seen as the hegemonic brave and untameable American male. Led by narcissistic desire, the American male identifies with the cowboy hero in the narrative and cinematic Western since, as Steve Neale observes in

“Masculinity as Spectacle”, narcissistic identification involves “fantasies of power, omnipotence, mastery and control” (13).

But, what are the traits of hegemonic masculinity as shown in the Western and how did they come to overrule other manifestations of masculinity? Answering these questions requires us to consider 18th and 19th century concepts of manhood as well as the issue of emerging national identity. Charles E. Rosenberg’s 1973 essay “Sexuality, Class and Role in 19th-Century America” provides a good starting point to situate this discussion since his thorough examination of the 19th century Victorian male role model takes into account the existence of and the tension between contesting masculinity models. Rosenberg’s study brings attention to three significant points in 19th century medical and biological literature dealing with sexuality. First, he detects a trend of increasing repressiveness; second, he stresses the inconsistent and contradictory nature of many of the narratives on sexuality and, third, he points at an “older, male-oriented antirepressive behavioural ethos” (134) that identifies physical strength and sexual virility with manhood.

Rosenberg argues that, in the written material belonging to the two generations after the 1830s, the repressive trend not only accentuated in tone but moved from the strictly private sphere to the public one (134). At the peak of virtue were self-control and the need to repress childhood and adolescent sexuality. Rosenberg calls this trend the “Christian Gentleman” model and contrasts it with that of the “Masculine Achiever” incorporating the older masculine ethos. Rosenberg highlights the growing anxiety coming from the internalisation of the Christian code of behaviour that causes males to suppress sexuality and to fear inadequacy, although he concedes that, for some males, “the Christian Gentleman ideal [] provided a viable framework for personality adjustment” (150). Curiously enough, both trends use similar sexual terminology that identifies lack of control with a more primitive, or “natural”, male.

Anthony Rotundo borrows Rosenberg's male typology in his classification of 19th century male models but adds a third type, the Masculine Primitive, by redrawing Rosenberg's Masculine Achiever (Rotundo 36). For Rotundo, as for Rosenberg, self-control defines the Christian Gentleman. Another trait that Rotundo highlights in this model is the desire to retrieve communal values which individualism forfeits: family life, compassion and love. Rotundo splits Rosenberg's Masculine Achiever into two: the so-called Masculine Achiever and the Masculine Primitive. The first presents the "male sex as naturally active and dynamic" (36) and considers advancement and industry as his main goals. So as to successfully achieve these goals, man has to release himself from the chains of family, community and sentimentality. As Rotundo notes, both the Christian Gentleman and the Masculine Achiever, whilst highly antagonistic, share a "heavy emphasis on mastery and conquest" (40). Finally, the Masculine Primitive "stresses the notion that civilised men –more than women- were primitives in many important ways" (40). Whereas the two first models are to be found at the beginning of the century, the Masculine Primitive model does not appear until mid-century. In *Manhood of America*, Kimmel renames Rotundo and Rosenberg's male models, calling them the Genteel Patriarch (the Christian Gentleman), the Heroic Artisan (the Masculine Primitive) and the Self-Made Man (the Masculine Achiever). Both Kimmel and Rotundo maintain that the Self-Made Man has authentic American roots and that the other two have their origins in Europe. Kimmel stresses in the Heroic Artisan honesty, independence, loyalty, self-reliance, craftsmanship and hard-work; from the Self-Made Man he highlights restlessness and insecurity, two most significant traits which Rotundo did not consider in his definition.

The model of the Genteel Patriarch, Kimmel says, lost influence during the 19th century, while that of the Self-Made Man gained force. The world of the craftsman, the small shopkeeper, the merchant –that of the Heroic Artisan- radically changed with the growth of

capitalism and the rise of labour under wages. Because the Heroic Artisan saw his independence threatened, he sought a “retreat to a bygone era”, an evasive escape “to the primitive conditions of existence on the frontier” (*Manhood* 61-62). Literary fantasies of the West supplied the American male, now trapped in the emerging industrial world, with a fantasized masculinity where he saw his manhood restored. In that context, Kimmel says, the Western “represented the apotheosis of masculinist fantasy, a revolt not against women but against feminisation” (*Manhood* 101).

While Kimmel provides quite an accurate analysis of the three masculinity prototypes present at the turn of the 20th century, I think that his assessment of the cowboy is not as precise. First of all, he fully identifies the fictional Western cowboy with Owen Wister’s unnamed hero in *The Virginian*, which sounds a bit daring given the existence of other classical cowboy types that do not exactly match Wister’s character. Second, Kimmel maintains that the fictional cowboy was the attempt to restore a more traditional vision of masculinity, which is only partly true for he fails to account for the presence of the Self-Made Man in the cowboy. Thirdly, he doesn’t consider Wister’s cowboy as the logical evolution of a whole series of pre-cowboy characters present in American narrative and the American imagination. This tradition is wide enough to encompass John Filson, Fenimore Cooper, J. Hector St. John de Crevecoeur, Washington Irving, the Wild West Show and the dime novel amongst many others. In that framework, Wister’s creation is a very cleverly designed composite of the three male models described before. The cleverness of its design lies in creating a combination flexible enough to allow further evolution but solid enough to allow recognition. Wister’s *Virginian* has the education and the sensibility of the Genteel Patriarch, the resolution and the energy of the Self-Made Man, the virility and the strength of the Heroic Artisan. In reality, Wister’s cowboy is a fantasized version of himself, a fantasy that was created thanks to the “Western” experience that had transformed the educated and

more feminised easterner into the virile new American. This is also the story that Theodore Roosevelt, Frederic Remington and other cultivated easterners believed in, and one they helped propagate.

In later cowboy representations, the *Genteel Patriarch* loses force and the traits of the Heroic Artisan are more visible.¹⁴ Thus, the narrative figure of the cowboy as represented by classic characters like Louis L'Amour's Hondo Lane, Zane Grey's Lassiter, Alan Ladd's Shane or even Clint Eastwood's Pale Rider have lost the sensibility of the Genteel Patriarch/Christian Gentleman although not his emotional restraint and self-control. Common qualities are the Self-Made Man's thirst for liberty and the Heroic Artisan's physical prowess, craftsmanship and strength. Restlessness is also one of the traits borrowed from the Self-Made Man. Despite its being portrayed as a quality, it is not difficult to link it to the insecurity and anxiety lying beneath an apparently absolute command of the self, as we will see further on. There exists quite a flexible range of cowboy characters that combine the traits of the three 19th century male prototypes to different extents although they mostly maintain some basic traits as individuality and dexterity with the gun or the fists.¹⁵

In *Lonesome Dove*, McMurtry draws on this variety to depict the cowboys forming the Hat Creek outfit: Captain Woodrow Call, Augustus McCrae, Jake Spoon, Dish Bogget, Pea Eye, Joshua Deets and Newt. Curiously enough, out of the whole bunch, it is precisely the African-American character, Joshua Deets, who best fits the classical definition of the cowboy: honest, loyal, resolute, hard-working, strong, reserved and capable. Deets combines the best of the Self-Made Man with the best of the Heroic Artisan and it is only his race that prevents him from acquiring the status that Call or Augustus have reached. Dish Bogget resembles Deets in many ways but a trend towards sentimentality renders him inferior to him in the male cowboy hierarchy. Pea Eye best fits the Heroic Artisan model since hard-work, loyalty and craftsmanship define him. Jake Spoon, the character who scholar Ernestine

Sewell considers the *Id* part in the Freudian trilogy completed with Call and Gus,¹⁶ is the easy-going drifter who welcomes a life of pleasure and flees from commitment. His character is a clear reaction to the model of the Genteel Patriarch although it fits neither the *Heroic Artisan* -since hard-work does not count as one of his virtues- nor the Self-Made Man given his lack of initiative and dynamism. Integrity is inherent to the classical cowboy type but Captain Call and Augustus McCrae's behaviour challenge that assumption more than once. Insecurity and inner conflict are two of Call's main flaws while Augustus McCrae often shows irresponsibility and laziness. Although young Newt is in the process of coming of age, he is often the character through whom judgment of the other cowboys is made. Newt offers the promise of a new typology of cowboy who does not recoil from affect and emotion. Yet, hegemonic masculinity does not contemplate that possibility and the story denies Newt any positive future.

Central to the discussion of 19th century white masculinity and the configuration of the cowboy is the subject of American national identity. In his study of American manhood and masculinities, Kimmel notes that the need to define white masculinity by exclusion of other models increased in the 19th century as the new work environment made it difficult to prove masculinity by traditional standards. The black man, the female, the homosexual and the Native American were some of the groups against which white masculinity was defined. Kimmel observes that the bond between the Native American male and the white male not only responds to white man's guilt, as Leslie Fiedler sustained,¹⁷ but works as "a way to present screens against which white manhood is projected, played out and defined" (*Manhood* 44). I believe that Kimmel is quite right in his assumption, as he is in observing that Chingachgook in *The Leather Stocking Tales*, Jim in *Huckleberry Finn*, or Tonto in *The Lone Ranger and Tonto* represent the "male mothers, nurturing their younger, wilder white charges into the deeply spiritual world of the primitive" (*Manhood* 45). He is also right when

he maintains that introducing the sexual element in the bonding invalidates the veiled reference to the maternal link. Yet, Kimmel's examination of the Native American is too succinct and short-fetched. The initial chapter of the book -precisely the one that deals with the birth of the Self-Made Man- pays lip service to the role the Native American played in the construction of national American identity long before the 19th century. Several scholars have called attention to the fact that, more than any other group, the Native American worked as an exclusion group against which to shape male national identity since it was he who had been inhabiting the land when the white man arrived. The process was a long, complex and paradoxical one and marked both the Native American and the white male from the offset.

In her essay "*What Feels an American?*", Evan Carton addresses the subject of national and male identity in late 18th and 19th century America by examining Benjamin Franklin's and Jonathan Edward's different reactions to George Whitefield's sermons. Carton notes that Franklin's reaction was to suppress feeling and alienate himself from the communal emotion around him whereas Jonathan Edwards let himself be immersed into the communal feeling as a way to transcend his own self. This analysis allows him to interpret Crèvecoeur's James Farmer as "a hybrid product of a Franklinian economy of rational and material self-reliance and an Edwardian economy of affective communion" (35). Crèvecoeur's *Letters* show us that it is feeling which the American man is seeking so as to anchor himself firmly during a historical moment when all other traditional anchors "seemed shifting and insecure" (24). Carton concludes that James Farmer's decision to live amongst the Native Americans fulfils his desire to recover the communal affection which has been corrupted in the white American world. Yet, he concedes that his envisioned future may also be interpreted as the American white male's fantasy of going Indian, a fantasy which often goes hand in hand with strong racism.

Applying Rotundo and Kimmel's male models, it is possible to identify Carton's Franklin with the Masculine Achiever/Self-Made Man, Edwards with the Christian Gentleman/Genteel Patriarch and James Farmer with the western Masculine Primitive/Heroic Artisan. Carton's James Farmer however offers a new reading of the Heroic Artisan which I believe is essential to understand the colonial American's attitude towards the Native American. Thus, the movement towards the idealized West sheltered not only the desire to regain a lost manhood, as Kimmel pointed out (*Manhood* 91-104), but most significantly, the rescue of the sentimental component through the intervention of an uncorrupted community. The story of the white man's flight from home towards the wilderness is not complete, I think, unless both explanations are taken into consideration. This story would then run so: running away from a restricted, repressing and feminised domestic sphere, the American male goes into the wilderness in search of his lost manhood. Yet, the more he ventures into the wilderness and the freer he feels, the more he is aware of his loneliness and alienation. Consequently, his need for emotional solace grows stronger. At that moment, the Native American appears as the alien Other against whom to identify oneself but also as the brotherly male who can provide the domestic warmth the white man has left behind. The Native American is hypermasculinized as barbaric primitive and at the same time feminized as maternal nurturer. What is left is not the Native American, but the Indian, the fantasized construction of the white male.

Further insight into the subject of national identity is provided by Carroll Smith-Rosenberg in "The Republican Gentleman: the Race to Rhetorical Stability in the New United States". Smith-Rosenberg argues that the American male had to forge an identity encompassing both the European refined 18th century male and the early Republican man who represented a more classical and virile model, that is, Genteel Patriarch and Heroic Artisan. The big challenge was "to fashion a unique sense of personal and national self out of

an unstable mix of conflicting political, economic and social discourses: Classic republicanism, liberalism, the discourses of gentility and respectability, the Protestant Work Ethic, fiscal capitalism, rugged individualism, American Exceptionalism” (Smith-Rosenberg, *The Republican* 69). Paramount to this process was the creation of an antagonist Other that made it possible to unify an atomised American identity. As Smith-Rosenberg contends, “Enslaved African Americans and Native American warriors epitomised the excess, the abjectness that lurked at the margins of the new American identity, as they lurked at the periphery of white homes, in slave cabins or along the frontier” (*The Republican* 70).

“Inindianation” is the name Dana D. Nelson has given to this process of creation of national manhood. In her book *National Manhood, Capitalist Citizenship and the Image Fraternity of White Men*, Nelson asserts that the process of breaking up with the mother-country (Great Britain) and the father-king brought about a reconfiguration of male bonds modelled upon an idealised fraternity of (white) males (37). Using althusserian terminology, Dana explains that “people are ‘hailed’ to nostalgically familiar gender order, ‘hailed’ as male subjects” (45).

The hailing or interpellation creates a “national manhood” which relies on two axes: “husband is to wife as reason is to passion [...] and man is to man as interest is to market” (45). Nelson contends that in the Early Republic, Enlightenment thought propagated “the constitution of a reassuringly bounded, yet symbolically expansive white manhood” (62) that created a common feeling of selfhood through the permanent exclusion of the Other.

Early capitalism created a new model of manhood that replaced the family man -the Genteel Patriarch- with the isolated and competitive man –the Self-Made Man. It was through “multiple, multiplying calculations of otherness” (Nelson 63) that the anxious new American could recover a unitary sense of the self and bond with his white male peers. The illusion of a reconstructed white fraternity offered the white male a much needed emotional and affective outlet. It replaced the absent father with the filial bond although its promise of a

homogenous and democratic society masked highly patriarchal and hierarchical structuring principles. Through “Inindianation”, contending manhood models are homogenized. The education, refinement and self-control of the Genteel Patriarch contrasts with the Indian’s primitiveness and barbarism. The Heroic Artisan sees in the Native American that traditional manhood he wants to rescue. The Self-Made Man admires the autonomous character, the boldness and the intrepid nature of the Indian. Civility and progress are invoked by all of them to justify expansion, and the fable of the Vanishing Indian is built as a discourse that enables the symbolic appropriation of Native American manhood.

I suggest here that the literary and cinematic cowboy of the early 20th century offers one of the best examples of Inindianation. As we have seen, it is possible to describe the cowboy referring to his masculine traits, his surroundings or his personal story but he is best defined by contraposition to the alien Other. In other words, what makes the cowboy different from other western heroic characters is the overt presence of the Indian. Early dime novels already portrayed Indians against which the Western hero measured up his manhood. Stories of virginal maidens kidnapped by merciless Indians, brutal Indian raids, and fights between savage Indians and courageous Westerners were a constant theme in the dime novels of Emerson Bennet, Edward Sylvester Ellis or J.H Robinson (Sullivan 13-22; Johansenn, Ch. III-Ch. XIII). Not all dimes portrayed the Indian as savage but even when they didn’t, the Indian figured as the sidekick for the white character, as dying or as hypermasculinized Indian.¹⁸

These hypermasculinized Indians appeared as co-stars of Buffalo Bill Wild Show from 1882 to the early 20th century. Real Native Americans performed as fantasized Indians dressed in showy regalia before hundreds of spectators who expectantly awaited the moment when the brave white cowboys would enter the scene and outsmart the fierce Indians. Although it is fair to credit Buffalo Bill for his fair treatment of the Native Americans (at a

time when employing Native Americans was unheard of), what emerged from his Wild West Show was not the real Native American but the fantasized, cinematic Indian. Moreover, Buffalo Bill's dual image as Indian-friend and as Indian hater sprang from the old duality constructed around the Indian: the Rousseauian primitive or the demonic Other. The cowboy befriended the Rousseauian primitive who was doomed to extinction and chased the demonic Other who threatened his advancement. The Native American as spectacle Indian exhibited muscles, resolution, skill and stamina, precisely the qualities defining the Heroic Artisan model endangered by the advent of Industrial America. The spectacle cowboy in its turn, displayed formidable skills that invariably surpassed those of the Native American. The visual organization of the spectacle turned the Indian into the object of the male's gaze - the scopophilic look- and the cowboy into the subject of that gaze through narcissistic identification.¹⁹ The cowboy in the stage is the ideal ego "conceived in the original moment of recognition in front of the mirror" (Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure" 12). Once in the diegetic space of the show, the spectator/cowboy can control the Indian.

In Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show the Native American appears as commodity and racial fetish in order to remove the threat of the savage Other and reinforce white identity. Scholar Jeffrey Steele has observed that product advertising increasingly appropriated the image of the Native American during the 19th century (Steele 46). The advertising cards and promotional posters of the Wild West Show used a similar display of a stereotyped image of the Other that served to assert white identity. Posters of the Show often focused on warfare scenes where the Indian presented a defiant and menacing pose. The Indian was scantily dressed, he usually exhibited a bare torso that contrasted with the fully clothed cowboy and invariably wore an impressive Sioux headdress that added to his exoticism.

By referring to a traditionalist image that the audience perceives as real, the white man freezes the Indian in time, naturalizes him. Thus, the Indian as exotic commodity

achieves the status of fetish that can be equated to other commodities.²⁰ The commodification of the Indian takes place when the white man locates him in the marketplace and confers to him an exchange value: his exchange value is established in relation to the cowboy male, for what the Wild West Show is selling is not the idea of a courageous Native American but the construct of the almighty cowboy. Furthermore, the Indian red body and its aestheticised parts, the bare torso, are racial fetishes. The primitive and bare body of the Indian appears so that it can be contrasted with that of the civilized white male. Since “the [white] male figure cannot bear the burden of sexual objectification” (Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure” 11), the gaze is diverted twofold. So as to avoid seeing the white male body as flesh and preventing homoerotic desire, it focuses on “fetish items associated with parts of the body” (Mitchell 165) such as hats, holsters, guns, handkerchiefs, buckles, spurs or high boots. On the other hand, the gaze is also diverted towards the red man’s body. Through a process of feminization of the body, the Other is turned into an object of display. The Indian’s masculinity becomes physical while the white man’s masculinity reaches an uncorporeal status that confers a mystical quality to it. Thus, the Indian can easily be imitated in its masculinity, for after all it is visible to everybody. But because the white man’s masculinity transcends physicality, imitating it becomes a much more arduous task. The equation is completely reversed: one can acquire Nativeness by imitation but Americanness is in the genes.

Out of all the fetish items, none achieves higher status than the gun. It is important to bear in mind that the fictional cowboy inherits the firearm as signifier of male aggression not from the cowhand but from the military man and the Ranger, two representatives of colonialist America. The illustrations in dime and pulp Westerns and later in the cinematic Western iconised the six-shooter or Colt revolver to such an extent that it soon became synecdochal. At that point, the history of the cowboy was completely naturalized and the

myth rooted itself firmly in the American national conscience. In his classical study of Westerns *The Six-Gun Mystique Sequel*, John G. Cawelti makes a shocking statement when referring to the cowboy's gun "as the means by which the cowboy drove out the Indian" (39-40). Granted that the historical cowboy occasionally met the Indian in armed fight, chasing Indians was not included among his chores for that was a prerogative of the US Army or the Texas Rangers of that particular state. Extrapolating from Walter Prescott Webb's suggestion that the Colt revolver made possible the defeat of the unbeatable Indian enemy, Cawelti confuses the cowboy with the Ranger and lets himself be deluded by the myth that turned the fictional cowboy into the historical character defeating the Native American. Consequently, Cawelti too readily dismisses the phallic symbolism of the gun and seems to forget that diminishing the enemy is crucial in the justification of war or battle. Feminizing the Other, as bestializing him, is one way to do so. In the Western genre, the six-shooter needs to be seen as a tool of rape that, in the code of hegemonic masculinity, humiliates and debases the Indian by feminizing him. As James McBride says:

The feminization of the enemy is therefore not incidental but rather essential to the social dynamic of sacrificial violence in a patriarchal social order. The enemy is woman because she is what men are not but fear they might become. Ritual victimization of the enemy as female confirms male identity. Male territorial games prove that men are men—to men—and ensure the solidarity of the homosocial community. (135-36)

At the turn of the 20th century, several institutions seek to reinforce definitions of a masculinity based on masculinism. Facing the rise of an industrial world where the male feels disoriented and fragmented and reacting against a perceived feminized society, male fraternities and other male homosocial communities²¹ revive the ideal of the strong, virile, decisive American male while also providing emotional comfort through bonding. Quite

significant is the creation of the Boy Scouts of America in 1910, an institution meant to lead thousands of American young males into American manhood. Even when the ideology of its three founding fathers -Dan Beard, Lord Robert Baden and Ernest Thompson Seton- did not always converge, they all shared the dream of the American fraternity of males and participated of the fantasy of the fantasized past. As Philip J. Deloria has observed, it is because “those seeking authenticity have already defined their own state as inauthentic” that “they easily locate authenticity in the figure of an Other” (*Playing Indian* 101).

While Dan Beard had his Scouts impersonate the American pioneer and Lord Robert Baden Powell favoured a military model, Seton established Indian Programs in the Scouts summer camps where the young boys emulated the primitive Indian. The “Indian” in this program was an incorrupt, childlike creature in close contact with nature. Seton thought that national identity was reinforced by recreating a world where the modern lazy man was replaced by an industrious primitive man. Deloria points at the clash between the three models of training in the camps -the pioneer, the military and the Indian model- and suggests this was a result of the way in which each one of the co-founders interpreted American History and the modern world (95-127). But the interpretation of history is always culturally and socially mediated, and behind this particular interpretation lies the dominant ideology that has generated a particular notion of American national identity and constructed American hegemonic masculinity. All three Scouts programs rely on a same concept of masculinity that contrasts the tough and resolute male body to a weaker and feminized one. Powell’s is closer to the Self-Made Man model and both Beard and Seton’s reflect the Masculine Primitive, one focusing on the primitive as white man, the other on the primitive as Indian. As we have seen, both the Self-Made Man and the Masculine Primitive rely on the idea of the Indian Other to assert their value.

The construction of American national male identity required both the interiorization and the exteriorization of the Indian. The white man displaces the Native American from his rightful claim to the land first by adopting the “positive” qualities of Indianness and second by transforming the Native American into a racial fetish. In the first part of this process the white man sees himself as natural, pure and authentic as the Indian thus differentiating himself from the corrupt European. In the second part, he distances himself from the Native American by exteriorizing him, by turning the Native American into the alien Other. The degree to which exteriorization and interiorization of the Indian is shown or concealed marks the presence of one or another type of hegemonic masculinity. Thus, the militarized model masks interiorization and focus on exteriorization by demonizing the Indian Other. Seton’s fake Indians conceal exteriorization and highlight interiorization by overtly adopting Indianness. Dan Beard’s fake pioneers, as Buffalo Bill’s cowboy type, both exteriorize and interiorize the Indian Other. As representative of American hegemonic masculinity, the 19th century narrative cowboy moves along the same lines: different degrees of exteriorization and interiorization of the Indian Other result in different cowboy typologies.

The Western genre in cinematic format²² enjoyed its Golden Age for some twenty five years right after World War II. In the classical Westerns of the 40s and 50s,²³ the cowboy hero hardly ever escapes the common characterization that contrasts toughness, virility, integrity, stoicism and essential goodness with softness, femininity, corruption, frivolity and meanness. This is the male that once and again appears in Ford’s *Stagecoach* (1939) and *The Searchers* (1956), Mann’s *The Man from Laramie* (1955) and *Bend of the River* (1952), Hawk’s *Red River* (1948), Walsh’s *Distant Drums* (1951) and *Gun Fury* (1953), just to cite a few. Meanwhile, the novelistic Western gains new thrust with the release of Louis L’Amour’s *Hondo*, written after the film with the same name. Even when thematic, plot, cinematography and approach vary from film to film, the image of the tough

hero with a gun remains. An in-depth analysis of the cowboy heroes in these films and novels may reveal the cracks and fissures in the construction of the hegemonic male figure, yet what has remained in the American collective imaginary is the relentless male whose integrity and bravery comes before anything else.²⁴

In the 60s and 70s, Louis L'Amour's Westerns continue to elevate the popularity of the novelistic Western while the cinematic Western enters what some critics have called its decline. The death of Anthony Mann (1967), John Ford (1973), Howard Hawks (1977) and John Wayne (1979) mark the end of an era. The films of directors as Sam Peckinpach and Sergio Leone introduce new male types that challenge the image of the sturdy, high-principled cowboy. In Sam Peckinpach's Westerns, heroes differ from villains just in their "desperate belief that they share a redeeming code of behaviour" (Mitchell 245). In Sergio Leone's Westerns, caricatured or alienated heroes act by convention and mechanical force rather than by nature and intention, like living dead who have been brought back to life by the illusion of the Western (Mitchell 235). Jeffrey Wallmann has called these films "amoral westerns" since they "stripped away all vestiges of moral dimensions, its antiheroes winning out solely because they are more cold-bloodedly vicious and treacherous than their opponents" (168). By distinguishing between moral and amoral Westerns however Wallmann falls victim to the construct of the cowboy which equates the Western hero with the American uncorrupted and incorruptible white male.

Rather than exhibiting "senseless violence", Leone's and Peckinpach's films show violence that renders the characters senseless, that is, the characters are trapped by the violence that has created them and which they in turn create. Yet, the director's detached look on degenerate, violent, robotized and unethical characters does little to invalidate the hegemonic male. Even Leone's parody works more towards the regeneration of the Western genre that towards its criticism.²⁵ The phantom of the old West and the old cowboy lingers

over Leone's and Peckinpach's films reminding the viewer of how different and purer life and men were back then. TV films and serials maintain the brave, sturdy and fast cowboy hero type in countless productions during the 60s, like in *The Outlaws* (1960-1962), *The Tall Man* (1960-1962), *Gunslinger* (1961), *The Dakotas* (1963), *Laredo* (1965-1967) or *The Iron Horse* (1966-1968) while the cinematic Western starts experimenting with new approaches. Thus, the satiric Western *Blazing Saddles* (1974) openly mocks the myth of the West and that of the almighty cowboy, the eco-friendly Western *Jeremiah Johnson* (1972) turns landscape into co-protagonist and Indian-friendly Westerns like *Little Big Man* (1970) or *A Man Called Horse* (1970) portray Native Americans in a much more sympathetic light even if they cannot escape the discourse of the Rousseanian primitive and the Vanishing Indian.

Among the young males in the counterculture movement of the 60s, the hegemonic cowboy type represented by Hondo Lane, Ethan Edwards or Lassiter is seen as a complete anachronism. As David Savran notes, the rebellion against militarized, authoritative and technocratic American society taken up by the American youth creates a new kind of male who incorporates elements of what up to then had been considered feminine. It is not only through exterior clothing and attire –loose and flowery shirts, long hair, necklaces and bracelets- that this feminization is shown but by the defiance of the masculinist taboo that made it impossible for the male to express emotion (Savran 104-122). This new American male is not afraid of displaying affection, tenderness or gentleness; he is eager to enjoy sexual and sensual pleasure and does not believe in the Protestant credo of success and salvation gained through hard-labour. All in all, he seems to challenge the three 19th century male models preceding him. The figure of the “responsible breadwinner, imperviously stoic master of his fate, and swashbuckling hero” (Kimmel, *Manhood* 173) enters a crisis which several authors have attributed to the loss of male confidence after the outcome in Vietnam, the rise of corporative America and the “white collar” job that alienates the worker, the end

of economic prosperity and the rise of feminism and minority movements.²⁶ But the disappearance of the breadwinner model neither invalidates hegemonic masculinity nor reduces male anxiety. As Savran observes, the counterculture model represented by the male hippy does not question the legitimacy of phallic power, it just rewrites it. Their feminization, their softening and their exotization works more towards a reassertion of the male self –by setting it against an anachronic and tyrannical father- than towards a liberation of the female or minority Other. Curiously enough, they generate a feeling of rejection in other males who consider real manhood is about to disappear.

The discourse of the victimised white male rises through the late 70s and gains force during the 80s. According to Susan Faludi, two male groups in particular feel the effect of a transforming workplace that leaves them in worse conditions than those of the previous male generation: blue collar-workers and baby-boomers (*Backlash* 62-64). Amongst these groups, some males feel aggravated and enraged and blame feminist groups, gays and racial minorities for an economic loss that is soon transformed into a loss of white male power. Although not all of them direct their anxiety towards other visible targets, many share feelings of isolation, disorientation and loss or reference. In this context, president Ronald Reagan’s self-confidence, optimism and lack of so-called “liberal guilt”²⁷ may have looked providential. In the mid 1980s, Reagan’s defence of values like family, religion and country reinstated the belief in traditional America. As writer John Patrick Diggins has observed:

On domestic matters, the Republican party represented broad, solid mid-America, while the Democrats appealed to some of the rich on the top and the dispossessed on the bottom (...) Wedged between “limousine liberals” and “welfare queens” were middle-class Americans (...) Democrats became associated with the shock of the new –feminism, gay rights, sexual freedom, abortion, legalization of drugs, single-parent households. Much of middle

America objected to the Democrats' giving pride of place to "deviant" lifestyles. Reagan came to the rescue, saving the hardworking citizen from the barbarians and the bohemians. (321)

For Reagan, faith in and encouragement of individual freedom was what ultimately made America assume an unquestioning leading position.²⁸ His own writings reveal a fierce belief in the individual to which he opposes a collective "we" that is ultimately identified with the interfering state. This vision of the individual is none other than that of the 19th century Self-Made Man model, now once more reinstated as American national male ideal.

As noted earlier, from quite early on in American history, the American male constructed a fictionalized story of national identity and hegemonic manhood that shaped him as heroic rescuer of a corrupted world. John Filson's appendix "*The Adventures of Colonel Daniel Boone*" in 1784 already thrived on the deliberate confusion between real exploits and pure legend. Theodore Roosevelt's experience of the West was soon transformed into the myth of the Aryan cowboy. Thanks to Owen Wister's fictionalization, that myth soon reached thousands of white males in growingly industrialized America and both audiences and authors came to believe in the regenerated male of the West. Buffalo Bill's Show was designed for the personal glory of its creator, a hunter who reinvented himself through spectacle and in so doing reinvented, or rather rewrote the spectacular white American male. One of Ronald Reagan's great achievements was to bridge the gap between the technological America of the real present and the agricultural America of the ideal past. As Gary Willis observes in *Reagan's America* "in several senses, he gives us the past as a present. The dizzy pace of change, the more desperate is the mind's need for continuity, stability, a guideline through chaos. America's remembered self is simplified to resist the endless impingements of disorienting change" (445). Reagan's invocation of traditional America and the free individual recall the idealised image of the pioneer, the hunter, the

lumberjack and the cowboy standing for the real America and the real American male. On the one hand, Imperialist Nostalgia²⁹ is activated by triggering the yearning for a past that only exists in a collective dream. On the other, the promise of a still brighter and greater future is kept by insisting on the limitless potential of the free American individual.

During the 1980s, cinematic “hard bodies”,³⁰ mythopoetic males, angry fathers and vindicating males go to the woods of timeless America to restore the essence of the American male. Among the hypermasculinized cinematic heroes, Sylvester Stallone’s Rambo achieves huge popularity. As Susan Jeffords contends, “one of the reasons for the success of Rambo’s body and the ease of its recognition in 1985 lies in Ronald Reagan’s own achievement of the hard-body imaginary that would typify his presidency” (35). Rambo’s absolute self-command and mastery of the environment around him lie not so far from the idealised American male that Reagan is promoting from his presidency. Similar to the narrative cowboy before him, the hard-body of the 80s corresponds to an stoic, unflinching, highly-skilled, strong, quick, individualistic male who stands against and alien Other to prove his manliness. He is similarly set in an unyielding, often alien environment – in this case Russia or Afghanistan- where internal and external demons appear to test his endurance. Rambo’s body is often exhibited bare but the scopophilic look is once more deviated, this time through the brutalisation of the white male’s body.³¹ Of particular interest in the Rambo series, and often by-passed or underestimated by critics, is the character’s link to an Indian-German heritage. David Savran has argued that the reference works both to highlight his wilder side as Indian and his superior Aryan side as German (200, 201). While this holds true, the origins and the implications of the reference reach much further and should be carefully looked at.

In his Leatherstocking series, Fenimore Cooper made sure that Natty Bumppo’s “natural aristocracy” clearly stood above Chingachgook’s Indianness. In his search for

American national identity, Cooper set his hero in a testing wilderness where the European male was reborn as American through a return to nature. Yet, envisioning the danger of becoming the Other, Cooper established Bumpo's higher status by a reference to a superior, aristocratic race: the white American of European origin, the Anglo-Saxon. As we have seen, the discourse of the Vanishing Indian rested on the alleged superiority of the white race, a theme that was further propagated by the Western genre. No other Western writer stated the belief in the superior Anglo-Saxon more clearly than Owen Wister when lamenting the disappearance of the cowpuncher. Wister linked the American cowboy directly to the mighty Viking through the Anglo-Saxon race.³² Through an amazing composite genealogy of legendary and glorified male characters, he transformed the sordid cowpuncher into an aristocrat of Celtic origins governed by an intrepid and indomitable spirit. The romantic references to Albion and Camelot enabled Wister to construct his Western cowpuncher as an Arthurian hero in quest of the Holy Grail. Buffalo Bill aimed at something similar when exhibiting himself on a white horse in his romantic extravaganza of the West. During the 20th century, the Western genre may have concealed or suppressed references to a "Saxon aristocracy" yet, the construction of the American male as "natural aristocrat", in the way Fenimore Cooper envisaged it, maintained itself all through the genre.

In the 1980s the Rambo series once more digs out the Wisterian construct of the Anglo-Saxon race when "casually" throwing in the German ancestry of the protagonist. In order to recreate the narrative cowboy, Wister pronounced the real cowpuncher "departed, never to return"; similarly, the Rambo series triggers the myth of the Anglo-Saxon warrior when placing Rambo as unique representative of an almost extinct breed. This has another sought-after effect for Rambo can be identified with the victim of political genocide, the Vanishing Indian. The interiorization of the discourse of the noble savage added to an

external appearance borrowed from the counter culture youth of the 70s turns Rambo into another white Indian.

The desire to recover male confidence not only finds expression through hard bodies or through a new regeneration through violence.³³ In the mid 80s, the mythopoetic movement sought to provide an answer for the lack of self-confidence and need for emotional support of the middle-aged, middle-class, and predominantly white, Americans. In the words of Shepherd Bliss, the term mythopoetic referred to “re-mythologizing” in the sense of “re-visioning masculinity for our time” (Bliss 292,293). Mythopoets like Robert Bly, Michael Meade and Shepherd Bliss believe that young males in modern societies have been left without the male mentors that more traditional societies provided for them to secure a successful passage from childhood to adulthood. Male mentors are essential in order for the young male to successfully integrate into adulthood. Replacing them with the mother often results in the creation of a “soft male”, an adult male who feels ashamed to acknowledge his more “natural” and wilder male soul. Mythopoets gatherings were devised as a means to heal the wounds caused by the absent father and recover the spirit of the male which lay dormant beneath the “soft male”. Initiation through ritual would provide access to the “deep structures of manhood” as well as establishing a male bond through the sharing of a common experience.

Criticism of the movement mainly focuses on the mythopoets’ separatism from women (Kimmel, “Born to Run” 117; Faludi, *Backlash* 304-312), on their belief of male and female essentialism (Clatterbaugh, “Mythopoetic Foundations” 49; Schwalbe, “Why Mythopoetic” 326), or on their denial of male guilt (Connell, “Men at Bay” 78). On the other hand, some have defended the movement for just the opposite, for creating a responsible and highly socially committed model of masculinity that veers away from patriarchy (Benjamin, “Healing, Community” 285-291; M. Allen, “We’ve Come” 310-312; Kipnis, “The

Postfeminist” 280). Yet if the movement does reject patriarchy, as most of the mythopoetic leaders contend, it is difficult to understand why they have not positioned themselves closer to organizations clearly condemning sexism. What looks most worrying is that the liberation of the “emotional male” proposed by the mythopoets does not necessarily involve gender integration. The mythopoet male does in fact run the risk of turning into the Genteel Patriarch of the late 20th century, that loving and compassionate 19th century family man who clearly maintained patriarchal control. This fear is backed up by the reliance of mythopoet leaders on fairy tales that typically describe the story of a young male in a journey quest and reproduce the pattern of the brave and successful male hero testing his manhood through strength and cunning while invariably relegating women to marginal, or even antagonistic, roles. Robert Bly resorts to the traditional fairy tales in the belief they provide a more straightforward approach to human life and a better grasp of the human being than the one offered in the contemporary world. This view is in itself problematic since traditional heroic tales are known for reproducing the deep-lying political and social structures of the societies they are set in. Furthermore, by connecting the story of the traditional fairy tale heroic quest to that of the American male, Bly gives in to the construct of the male as mythified hero.

There is a common trend running through the various attempts to search for the “lost” manhood in the 80s taking the American male back to the mythified time of his entering the wilderness and meeting the Native American. In the case of the mythopoets movement, drumming, dancing, mock costume and shamanistic rites were conducted during the male gatherings as a means to reconcile the modern American male with his more primitive spirit. Mythopoets’ retreat “to the woods” was both a physical retreat from the immediate alienating environment and a psychological retreat from alienating society. Meetings included the use of Native American rites such as the burning of sage, the invocation of the four directions, the use of sweat lodges, the organization of clans called after Native American warrior

societies, or the search for an animal spirit. These rites were included in a composite ritual made up of rites and patterns taken from very diverse traditions and were deprived of their religious meaning and considered outside their integration into the complex Native American cosmogony. Appropriation of shamanistic rituals and adoption of Native American appearance was also a constant in counterculture movements of the 60s as a means to express rejection towards the system. As in the case of the mythopoeists, feigning Indianness did not mean approaching the real Native American and even counter-culture hippies turned their back on the doors of the reservation. Even amongst the male elite and ruling class, retreats to the woods were organized where male members bonded fraternally through ritual, as in the case of the meetings at the Bohemian Grove which Ronald Reagan himself attended. At the turn of the 21st century, the white Indian continued validating American national identity.

Larry McMurry's Hat Creek outfit cowboys make their appearance right at the moment when claims from minority groups to achieve equal rights meet with the backlash from a reactivated hegemonic masculinity and with the attempts to regain male confidence. As previously indicated, early criticism of McMurry's novel often interpreted *Lonesome Dove* as a nostalgic proto-Western thus concluding that McMurry praises the hegemonic masculinity represented by the classical cowboy figure. Later criticism considers McMurry's revisionist intention, basically agreeing that the novel contains strong anti-mythic elements.³⁴ From this last perspective, McMurry is censuring masculinist attitudes and criticising any essentialist definition of the male. My contention lies somewhere in between these two perspectives while at the same time trying to move past them. I argue here that McMurry's particular representation of manhood cannot escape the broader framework within which the construction of American manhood has taken place. Thus, while the author intentionally portrays different contesting masculinity models which question the prevalence of hegemonic phallic trends, his narrative is also immersed in a complex and contradictory

discourse that feeds the same trends it is criticizing. In other words, it is impossible to escape the phallogocentric American construction of manhood without dismantling the whole history/story of American national identity. As I have extensively argued in this chapter, the narrative cowboy epitomized Inindianation at its best. Better than any other narrative character, he summarized the process of creation of a national manhood that relied on two axes: the presence of the threatening Other -the Indian- and the support of the idealised fraternity of males. The history Larry McMurtry had to deal with when choosing the mythical American cowboy as subject of his Western saga was not only narrative but cultural and political. The previous pages have shown the process of how this history/story came to be. The following ones will show how deep the story has rooted and what it means for the American male to root them out.

The Plains Indian Male: Blackfoot and Lakota Sioux Manhood and Identity

In his 1906 description of the Northwest Plains Indian written for Scribner's magazine, renowned photographer Edward S. Curtis wrote:

The Northwest Plains Indian is, to the average person, the typical American Indian, the Indian of our school-day books--powerful of physique, statuesque, gorgeous in dress, with the bravery of the firm believer in predestination. The constant, fearless hunting and slaughtering of the buffalo trained him to the greatest physical endurance, and gave an inbred desire for bloodshed.

Thousands of peace-loving, agricultural-living Indians might climb down from their cliff-perched homes, till their miniature farms, attend their flocks, and at night-time climb back up the winding stairs to their home in the clouds, and attract no attention. But if a fierce band of Sioux rushed down on a hapless emigrant train the world soon learned of it. ("Vanishing Indian" par. 1)

Although Curtis lived amongst some of the Northwestern Plain tribes and directly witnessed their traditions and way of life, his interpretation of the Native American was highly influenced by the preconceived dual stereotype of the Native American as *bon savage* and wild Other. In the cited passage, Curtis identifies the Plains Indians with the “typical American Indian” in the mind of the average Euramerican and assumes that his passion for hunting caused an “inbred desire for bloodshed”. He highlights traits in the Native American directly taken from the Masculine Primitive myth like physical endurance, fearlessness and bravery. To round off the paragraph, he casts the Plains Indian in the role of bloodthirsty attacker and opposes him to the “hapless emigrant”. This is the same image of the fearful Other that McMurtry consistently refers to in *Lonesome Dove* but it bears little resemblance to the Blackfeet or the Sioux that Welch portrays in *Fools Crow* and *The Heartsong of Charging Elk*. Whilst hunting and warfare did indeed shape the life of the Plains Indian male, these could not be considered outside the broader context of community life.

The lifestyle of the Plains Indian tribes -among which we find the Crows, the Sioux, the Blackfeet or the Cheyene- pivoted around buffalo hunting. There were notable differences between all the Northwestern Plains Indian tribes in language, mythology, traditions and political and social organization. Yet, they all shared a nomadic life based on the chase of the buffalo; likewise, they had similar notions of warfare and communal life. These two determined notions of masculinity and identity on its turn. Manly virtues were not only restricted to the battle arena where warriors displayed their bravery and warfare skills but expanded to communal life where they had to show commitment to family and tribe. I will be here exploring Blackfoot and Sioux masculinity in particular not because they better exemplify Plains Indians masculinity ideals but because this is the tribal extraction of the protagonists of Welch’s *Fools Crow* and *The Heartsong of Charging Elk*.

The Blackfoot tribes -Kaina, Pikuni and Sitsika- were subdivided into bands, each band being constituted by a group of blood kin in the male line. Marriage was usually exogamous and patrilocal, that is, the woman joined her husband's band when marrying but bands were not fixed and it was possible to change band affiliation if desired. Masculinity was exalted in traditional Blackfoot societies, which by no means implied that women were subservient to men. Women actually enjoyed a degree of autonomy that early European traders and ethnographers did not understand at the time.³⁵ Furthermore, they were thought to have a greater connection with the creative forces of the universe than men and certain sacred roles in the Blackfoot ceremonies were strictly reserved for them, as that of Medicine Women in the Sun Dance ritual.

The division of labour assigned the role of food provider and protector to the Blackfoot male. He was also the one who could acquire property from the enemy through battle, thus increasing family and/or communal wealth and prestige. In pre-contact time, being a successful food provider meant to be swift on foot and quick with the bow and arrow -a skill also necessary in battle. Attacking other tribes was risky in those times and warfare had to be carefully planned. As Theodore Binnema points out, in the pedestrian era small mobile bands did not have that much to gain in battle for even when they achieved a victory they could not easily transport the profit gained or control the area they had seized (Binnema, *Common and Contested* 57). Furthermore, since it was the male who sought and brought the food to the family, the loss of a male in battle could endanger the survival of his family. Manhood was not only associated with the mastery of hunting and battle skills, though. Virtues such as generosity and honesty were highly regarded since communal life was at the centre of the Blackfoot social world (Grinnel 220).

The Sioux Native Americans are divided into three main groups: Teton Sioux or Lakota, Dakota and Nakota. Each is in its turn subdivided into seven bands. The Oglalas

belong to one of the bands of the Teton division (Walker, *Lakota Society* 18-19).

Anthropologist James R. Walter noted that amongst the Lakota, descent belonged to the father's group although kinship was both traced through the father and the mother. As with the Blackfeet, women were assigned the task of cleaning and preparing the buffalo skins and meat once the warriors brought them to camp. The tipis were also their property, as the skins which they did not give away to their men or prepared for commerce (Walker, *Lakota Society* 43). They could also separate from their husband if her friends agreed with her on her case against him. Children belonged to them up till puberty, the time when the father took over, as he was the one to instruct the young Lakota into the adult male world. Central to tribal Lakota culture was the *tiyospaye* or extended family to which one belonged by blood, marriage or adoption. Under *tiyospaye*, children had more than one mother or one father, since the mother's sisters and the father's brothers were also considered father and mother and often helped them in their roles as instructors or replaced them when absent (E. Deloria 24-38).

Both Blackfoot and Lakota young males were trained for battle and hunting from an early age. Children often played mock warfare and hunting games and practised sports that built them up physically such as swimming, running, shooting or riding. They were expected to join a raiding party or even a war party in their teenage years. Communal responsibility, tribal religion and ceremonies were also taught from a very early age and training for battle was closely tied to spiritual growth. When the boy was between twelve and fourteen years old, he was encouraged to go on a vision quest as a rite of passage into adulthood. The purpose of the quest was to find the animal helper that would teach him how to behave and would tell him how and where to get his power. The young boy was usually led by a medicine man who taught him how to prepare himself. Preparations for the vision quest required a sweat bath where he was purified physically and spiritually. Ritual praying and smoking took place after the sweat bath. Then the boy left for a high and isolated place where he would remain from

three to five days and nights awaiting his vision. The time he spent in isolation was quite a test of endurance for besides the natural hazards he faced –dangerous animals, adverse weather conditions-, he was required to fast (Grinnel 163-171; Dempsey, “Blackfoot” 614; Walker, *Lakota Belief* 132-135). When the vision came it was in the form of a helper animal that taught the boy a dance or a song and gave him the amulets that he should wear to get power from the spirit.

It was not always the case that the young boy got his vision. On some other occasions, he was not too sure about its meaning or doubted it and felt huge disappointment. Although the young male went on his vision quest alone, it was by no means an individual act. Once back in camp, the boy’s father or the Medicine Man helped the boy interpret his dream and the tribe would later prepare him to enter adulthood in the way the animal helper had advised him to. The tribe trusted the young boy’s dream and the boy in turn followed their advice in interpreting the dream and preparing for adult life. He also started preparing his personal medicine bundle with the objects he had been given in his dream and these objects would become the symbols of his power. Bundles could belong to an individual, a family, a society or to the whole tribe although they were always in the charge of an individual. They could be acquired by purchase if so desired although this was no mere trifle for owning a sacred bundle meant to learn and understand the meaning of all the songs, dances and the medicine related to it, a task which could be extremely complicated. Owners of the more important and sacred bundles were highly respected individuals since it was thought they could administer the medicine that the bundle contained.³⁶

Acquisition of the horse by the Blackfeet and the Sioux caused big changes in the tribes’ habits. In all likelihood, the Blackfeet got their first horses at some time between 1730 and 1750 from Flathead or Kutenai bands who, in turn, had acquired them from southern tribes with access to Spanish horses in the Southwest (Ewers, *The Horse* 15-19; Binnema,

Common and Contested 86-106). The Sioux acquired them via the Arikaras, some decades later than the Blackfeet (Ewers, *The Horse* 10-11). Not only did horses allow locating and getting food much quicker but it was now easier to transport goods, hence, also to accumulate them. Horses turned into economic assets and possessing them and acquiring them either by trade or by raiding turned into a priority for any male. For the poorer members of the tribe, horse raiding was about the only means to get a better economic position so they were always eager to participate in one. Later in the 18th century, trade with the British and French employees of the Hudson Bay Company and North West Company in the Saskatchewan area provided northern tribes with European objects such as guns, kettles and other metal objects. Although the Blackfeet acquired these new implements later than other northern tribes, the alliance and friendly relationship with the Crees, Assiniboine, Gros Ventre and Sarcee allowed them to expand and prosper quickly. The possession of guns enabled the Blackfeet to defy other tribes like the Shoshone and Crows who were not equally armed. During the late 18th century, the three divisions of the Blackfeet started extending their influence south of the Saskatchewan River and soon became the most powerful tribe in the northwestern Plains (Binnema, *Common and Contested Land* 85-106; Judy, "Powder Keg on the Upper Missouri: Sources of Blackfeet Hostility, 1730-1810" 130-141; Ewers, *The Blackfeet: Raiders on the Northwestern Plains* 19-44; Harrod, *Mission Among the Blackfeet* 8-11).

The mounted warrior was now the symbol of Blackfoot and Sioux manhood: a highly skilled horseman and fighter, a brave, fearless and proud warrior but also a generous and honest individual who was ready to sacrifice personal glory if the common good of his tribe so required. Anthropologist Clark Wissler observed that self-control, bravery and firmness were taught from a very early age ("Social Organization" 29-30). George Bird Grinnell pointed out that treachery and cowardice were serious crimes among the Blackfeet (220). Yet, individual decisions were respected, and if a warrior decided not to join a warfare or a raid

party because of a warning or a premonition in his dream, he was free to do so. Raiding parties were voluntary and led by a leader who called on friends or able men who were interested in participating in that precise raid. Amongst the Lakota, a man who did not agree with the regulations set in the camp could place his tipi far from the main camp and become chief of his own group of people (Walker, *Lakota Society* 24).

Young males usually engaged in their first war raid after having had their vision, although not every male had one. In this last case, young males borrowed their medicine from older members in the band. Preparation was also necessary before battle and ritual praying, smoking and sweat baths had to be taken. Dreams were taken very seriously for favourable ones built up the warrior's confidence while bad omens diminished it and caused the group to question the expedition. Dreams, amulets and songs worked to prepare the warrior for battle by giving him confidence, which translated into renewed spiritual and physical strength. Preparations also meant that the warrior acknowledged and accepted the possibility of defeat and even death. Even when the individual warrior strived for personal honour in battle, the common good came first and to neglect that duty was considered shameful behaviour. Warriors were expected to show bravery but not bravado, to show their skills in battle but to be responsible at the same time and avoid unnecessary daring. This is why at the top of the hierarchy of battle deeds figured counting coup³⁷ rather than killing, scalping or engaging in bodily fight. By approaching the enemy and touching him, the warrior was exhibiting a complete lack of fear.

The purpose of a raiding party was to steal horses, not to kill the enemy: stealing property right under the enemy's nose involved courage, self-control, and ability. For the coup to be valid, the warrior had to take a token of his battle deed –a scalp, a gun or any other trophy. Evidence from sight witnesses further validated the warrior's bravery act and worked against lying or unjustified boasting on part of the warrior. One of the most anticipated

moments took place after the battle, when the warriors gathered to tell the battle and recount the coups. This was a moment for the warrior to receive acknowledgement from the other male members. Coups were not only retold in public but also reproduced on tipis, robes and pictographs for it was a source of both individual and communal pride (Wissler "Social Organization" 36-4; Hassrick 65-66). If the young male had scored well in battle, the tribe could find a new name for him that recalled his performance and that replaced the name he had been given by his parents in birth (Wissler, "Social Organization" 16-18). Once again, warfare was seen as both an individual and a collective experience. It was through the community's acknowledgment that the individual was enhanced and it was the community that helped him attain his identity as an adult male. The warrior's reputation started building from the time of his first armed encounter, hunting expedition or raid party if successful and both the warrior and his medicine were held in high respect. Likewise, performing poorly was a source of shame and anxiety in the young boy who impatiently waited for the next occasion to prove his manhood.

Warriors, medicine men and mythical heroes provided masculine role models for young boys. Male friendship was actively promoted from an early age and boys usually had a male companion with whom they engaged in sport or hunting and warfare games and with whom they developed a very close friendship through life. *Kola* was the term to designate such male companion amongst the Lakota, somebody with whom to share everything. Amongst the Lakotas, friends could perform a ceremony that would tie them as if they were blood relations. Those who had performed that rite wore a red stripe across the forehead and considered each other kindred (Walker, *Lakota Society* 40-41). One of the fundamental Blackfoot myths, Scarface, stresses the bond between the two friends Morning Star and Scarface and points at virtues like courage, quickness, loyalty and communal responsibility.

Sioux and Blackfoot males mostly belonged to a society. The Blackfeet call these societies *ixkonnokatsiyiks*, or All-Comrades societies. They were all male with the exception of the Motoki female society which gathered the wives of prominent band members. The *ixkonnokatsiyiks* were divided according to ages and they were pan tribal, that is, members from different bands belonged to the same society since it was not organized by kin but by affiliation. Membership was bought from other members in the society who wanted to move upwards (Dempsey, "Blackfoot" 615-616; Grinnel 221-224; Ewers, *The Blackfeet* 105). Each society had a sacred bundle containing the objects that the leader of the society had originally been given in his vision quest. These societies had several functions which Edward Curtis described in the following manner:

The function of the societies was primarily to preserve order in the camp during the march, and on the hunt; to protect the camp by guarding against possible sunrise by the enemy; to be informed at all times as to the movement of the buffalo herds; and secondarily by intersociety rivalry to cultivate the military spirit, and by their feasts and dances to minister to the desire of members for social recreation. (17)

Thus, these societies functioned as bodies of law regulating civil life. They were also the places where male members bonded not only by sharing songs, dances and rituals but by the constant retelling of war deeds and acts of bravery.³⁸ Lakota warrior societies functioned in a similar way. Particular of the Sioux were the Akicita societies, whose members were in charge of maintaining order in camp and making sure that all individuals in the band complied with the traditions and regulations (Walker, *Lakota Society* 58-61).

Within the band, the leader and the medicine man were two of the most respected positions. A band leader should not only have numerous war honours in record but also show wisdom, common sense and display generosity with the whole band in general and with less

favoured members in particular. Generosity was often shown through the giving away with part of one's property so males who wanted to become band leaders needed to have some property to dispense with. This meant in turn that he would have to join raiding parties frequently in order to get access to more property. The position was not hereditary and even though it could last for a life time, the band could replace their leader if he was too impoverished or if he had lost the favour of the tribe by acting foolishly or against common opinion (Walker, *Lakota Society* 25-28). In matters of diplomacy with other bands, the leader was the visible head. Band leaders had to be consulted before any decision affecting the whole tribe was taken. As explained before, any warrior could lead a raid party or even a war party although big war parties were decided in council first with the presence of the band leader and the leaders of the societies. Medicine men, who handled the secret bundles, also occupied a prominent place in society. Since bundles could be bought, some Blackfoot males purchased different bundles throughout their lives, gradually building up their knowledge about the rituals, stories, song, dances and powers of the tribe through each successive bundle. Medicine men who had acquired such knowledge were held in the highest esteem for they were repositories of memory in the tribe and were often approached for advice, cure, spiritual healing or initiation (Curtis, *The North* 15; Ewers, *The Blackfeet* 96; Wissler, "Social Organization" 22-26).

While access to European items and early contact with the white man during the 18th century and early 19th century altered the political and economic life of the Blackfeet and the Lakota, it barely affected their religious system, their traditional beliefs or the cohesiveness of their social system. The advancement of white settlement coming from the East and the South would radically change that situation in the second part of the 19th century (Binemma, *Common and Contested* 114-134). The discovery of gold in the Montana region in the 1850s and 1860s attracted land prospectors, miners, speculators and settlers to Lakota and Blackfoot

lands. Hostilities between Native Americans and the white Euroamericans inevitably increased although incidents involving loss of lives were isolated. Answering the call for protection against the “hostile” Native Americans who were preventing white advancement, the US government sent a part of the Army to Blackfoot country. The subsequent treaties between the US government and the Blackfoot and Sioux tribes worked to the effect of confining the Native Americans to reservations and freeing land for the white settlers at their expense. The massacre of the Marias River in 1870, which caused the death of around 200 Pikuni at the hands of the US Army, forced the Blackfeet to sign a peace agreement with the US Government and to give in to their demands. Pressure from the incipient stock raising market and the Great Northern Railroad resulted in more land concessions (Ewers, *The Blackfeet* 196-276; Dempsey, “Blackfoot” 18-19; Harrod 19-48).

After Custer’s expedition into the Black Hills, tensions between the Sioux and the whites increased. The American government tried to buy the Black Hills where gold was discovered without much success at first and the Sioux were asked to stay within the limits of the recently created Great Sioux Reservation or else be treated as hostile. After the 1876 Battle of the Little Horn River where Custer and his men were killed, the circle around the Sioux got tighter. With Crazy Horse’s death in 1877 and Sitting Bull’s surrender in 1881 ended the time of organized resistance (Walker, *Lakota Society* 142-157; Washburn 40-50; Brown 277-313).

At the end of the 19th century, the reduction of tribal hunting land and hunting rights, the displacement of tribal power in favour of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the gradual disappearance of the buffalo, smallpox and the confinement to reservation had devastating effects on the Native American community. For the Native American male, confinement in the reservation meant little chance to prove his manhood through hunting, battle or raiding. Tribal power of decision was decimated by the federal Indian Bureau Agency through the

figure of the Indian Agent. Tribal spirituality was infantilized, mocked and prosecuted and ultimately tribal organizations such as the Warrior Societies and complex rituals such as the Vision Quest were emptied of meaning. The Native American male was faced almost overnight with a nullified masculinity.

In his 1881 First Annual message to Congress, President Chester Arthur defined the Indian policy that the US Government followed at the turn of the century:

[...] Of even greater importance is a measure which has been frequently recommended by my predecessors in office [...] The enactment of a general law permitting the allotment in severalty, to such Indians, at least, as desire it, of a reasonable quantity of land secured to them by patent, and for their own protection made inalienable for twenty or twenty-five years, is demanded for their present welfare and their permanent advancement.

In return for such considerate action on the part of the Government, there is reason to believe that the Indians in large numbers would be persuaded to sever their tribal relations and to engage at once in agricultural pursuits. Many of them realize the fact that their hunting days are over and that it is now for their best interests to conform their manner of life to the new order of things. By no greater inducement than the assurance of permanent title to the soil can they be led to engage in the occupation of tilling it. (Woolly par. 143, 144)

Assuming the role of a concerned father who knows how to care for his children best, the US government advised the disruption of tribal life and the separation of the individual from his community for the Native American's own good:

A resort to the allotment system would have a direct and powerful influence in dissolving the tribal bond, which is so prominent a feature of savage life, and which tends so strongly to perpetuate it.

[...]

They [Indian schools] are doubtless much more potent for good than the day schools upon the reservation, as the pupils are altogether separated from the surroundings of savage life and brought into constant contact with civilization.

(Woolly par. 145-149)

The American Government's final objective, to "gradually (..) absorb them into the mass of our citizens" (par. 141), would be achieved by transforming the Native American into a yeoman farmer, into the small entrepreneur who by hard work and perseverance managed to turn the sterile land into a lush garden. The mythical construct of the yeoman farmer had been invoked from the times of the first white settlements in order to advance westwards and submit Native American peoples. It was highly ironic that the people against whom that model had worked should now turn to it, particularly at a time when the rise of industrialized America was rendering it obsolete. Certainly, the change would not prove easy for the Plains Indian nomadic warrior, since the model of the sedentary farmer fully challenged his conception of masculinity.

At the turn of the 20th century, the United States government was forcing acculturation among the north-western Native Americans. The 1887 General Allotment Act³⁹ worked to "break up tribal lands and to make each Indian an independent property owner" (Harrod 81) while Christian schools and Indian boarding schools were designed to turn the "primitive Indian" into a civilized American. In 1841, Jesuit priest Father De Smet established the first Catholic mission in Montana although it was not until later on in the century, at the time of the Blackfoot political defeat, when they would seriously start their work of "civilizing the Indians". In 1887, the Catholic Holy Family mission opened near the Two Medicine River on a permanent basis. As Howard L. Harrod has observed,

the Catholic missionary movement was often a force which further robbed Indians of life rather than a force for renewal of life. At just the appropriate time in history, missionaries joined their belief that Blackfoot culture was depraved with government ethnocentrism and power; and with their combined strength, they further emasculated the Indian life forms that had survived conquest. Catholic attacks upon Blackfoot polygamy and religion diminished the Indian's inner world at a time when his outer world was disappearing.

(188)

Intermarriage between Native American Blackfoot women and white settlers increased with the affluence of Euroamericans, and the mixblood individual ceased to be an exception. The early 20th century witnessed a polarization of factions where a decreasing number of poor full-bloods striving to maintain their rights and customs opposed an increasing number of better positioned mixed bloods who advocated for the end of the tribal estate (Rosier 13-16). Young Blackfoot males saw how acculturation could lead to an improved economic and social condition while keeping true to their traditions meant exclusion from the dominant means of production. But to accept the white man's creed meant to assimilate a highly individualistic culture that stood in clear contradiction with the traditional Native American conception of the human being. While the Western model conceives the human being as "essentially an individual who is potentially autonomous", the Native American believes that humans are social beings who "exist in the state of the 'We'" (Cordova 173, 174). Because Euramerican hegemonic masculinity is based on the "principle of the I as the essential bargaining unit" (Cordova 174), the white male is perceived to be in constant competition with his peers. If the Self-Made Man is to succeed, he needs to make a space for himself by excluding others. The very definition of the word points to the exclusivity of the individual and the rejection of the social Other. Within this tradition, the

Westerner hero appears not only as a self-sufficient individual but as a solitary male whose alienation from society is not perceived as a great loss but as a step towards expansive manhood. Opposing that model, the traditional Native American male relies on communal ceremonies and rites of passage to shape and develop his manhood. Voluntary isolation from the community is hard to conceive since the individual exists in his condition of social being.

Alienation from the tribe, hence from communal history, and self-estrangement are two direct consequences of forced acculturation. In the case of the mixed blood male, what at first seemed to work in his favour –access to the dominant structure through lighter skin– eventually turned against him since “the breed is an Indian who is not an Indian. That is, breeds are a bit of both worlds, and the consciousness of this makes them seem alien to Indians while making them feel alien among whites” (P.G. Allen 129). In the 20th century, self-rejection, self-hatred, anger and nihilism increased dramatically among relocated Native Americans. Resistance to acculturation on an individual or even tribal level took place from the very beginning although organized political movement towards Native American enfranchisement and, later, Native American sovereignty took a bit longer. Among the Blackfeet, the clash between tribalist members and more white-oriented, “progressive” members initiating at the beginning of the twentieth century continued for three decades until interests of both factions converged in the common aim of achieving self-determination and reaching a position “as both a tribe in the nineteenth-century cultural sense and a municipal corporation in the twentieth-century political sense” (Rosier 8, 9).⁴⁰ Frictions between full-bloods and mixed bloods would nonetheless persist throughout the century.

For the 20th century Native American male, more urgent than the subject of manhood was that of identity. This implies not only a definition of an individual identity but, most importantly, that of a collective identity. From early on in the century, the white man had been redesigning “Indianness” to suit the political needs of the US government. The blood

quantum introduced in the Dawes Act for the assignment of tribal land to Native American individuals defined the “Indianness” in every Native American according to a measure of blood. The Euramerican was appropriating land from the Native American, destroying its political and cultural coherence and now also deciding who was and who was not Indian. He was imposing an identity based not on heritage but Euramerican economic and political need. The Euramerican attempts to make “Indianness” dilute into the American flow were met in parallel with the desire to recover the image of the *bon savage*. In *Inventing the American Primitive*, Helen Carr observes that the image of the “Indian warrior-stoic” of the previous century was now being replaced by the friendly and environmental Indian, adding that “in the early years of the century, the idea of Indian society as a close-knit and interdependent kinship, in contrast to the modern world’s independent but isolated units had a powerful appeal” (203). Carr argues that the modernist interest in the Native American derived from a “postcolonial crisis of confidence, which they solved by reinventing Americanism, and a new version of the Indian as, in Cahill’s⁴¹ phrase, the ‘American primitive’” (214). In other words, Imperialist Nostalgia was reconstructing the American primitive.

In the 1960s, the American Indian civil rights movement⁴² brought widespread attention to the plight of the Native American and showed to the public an image far from that of the American primitive. Early activists like George Mitchell, Vernon Bellecourt or Dennis Banks rejected both Euramerican representations of the Indian and the idea of the acculturated Indian. They reverted instead to their Native American tribal heritage in order to denounce unemployment, housing conditions, police brutality and deficient education, and to start fighting for self-determination. Young Native Americans were soon attracted by the idea of AIM activists openly exhibiting their “Indianness” and taking a confrontational attitude towards the US government. AIM particularly appealed⁴³ to the urban relocated⁴³ Native American who felt isolated in his urban environment and alienated from his tribal

community and who now found a cause through which to access communal, personal and gender identity. To the urban Native American male, the activist reinterpreted the figure of the traditional warrior who in the past had exhibited bravery, self-confidence and male prowess in the face of the enemy while being ready to sacrifice himself if the common good so required. But for those tribal Native Americans living in the reservation –usually full-bloods or elder members- it became harder to identify with the urban, mixed race activist and to understand the pan-indigenous orientation of the movement. AIM actions succeeded in attracting public and mass media attention to the plight of the Native Americans. Yet, particularly during the incidents following the 1973 occupation of the Wounded Knee Massacre Site by AIM members, media coverage often relied on stereotyped images of the Indian either focusing on the image of the belligerent, militant Indian –the menacing Other- or the spiritual, environmentally friendly Indian – the American primitive (Baylor, “Media Framing”).

Far from vanishing from the American imagination, the “hyperreal Indian”, as Louis Owens has defined the Euramerican construct of the Indian, came back with force in the 1980s when “a significant number of white affluent suburban and urban middle-aged baby-boomers complain[ed] of feeling uprooted from cultural traditions, community belonging, and spiritual meaning” (Aldred 329). New Age spiritualism, Lisa Aldred says, offered a response to this feeling of detachment and the romantic image of the Indian was once more invoked to relief the white man’s thirst for spirituality and meaning. Aldred marks a difference between the appropriation of the Indian by the Euramerican at the beginning of the century and at the end of the 20th century, arguing that commoditification had not taken place in the first case. Yet, this is not an accurate observation since, as we have seen, the Buffalo Bill Show had already transformed the Indian into a commodity object when turning him into a pay-per-view spectacle. In the 1980s the process came to its logical conclusion when not

only the appearance of the Indian but also his inner self was commodified. As was the case at the beginning of the century, the interest for the fake Indian coincided with a federal Indian policy that tried to absorb the Native American into mainstream America. Following the pattern of the 1953 Termination policy, Ronald Reagan's administration carried out serious cuts in Indian employment programs, education and health services while doing little to promote Native American self-determination. As Samuel R. Cook observed in his analysis of Ronald Reagan's Indian Policy,

To assume that Reagan adamantly opposed the concept of Indian self-determination would be extreme, but his perception of self-determination was a matter of economic self-sufficiency and competitiveness in the private sector. If Reagan considered the enhancement of tribal self-governance or cultural integrity as goals of self-determination, he did so only marginally. Essentially, he expected private-sector activities to compensate immediately for budget cuts, without considering how tribal values might play into this scheme. (22)

On the one hand, the Native American was allured by the image of the assimilated Indian that promises access to better economic and social opportunities. On the other, he had to confront "the hyperreal simulation [...] while simultaneously recognizing that only the simulation will be seen by most who look for Indianness" (Owens, *Mixedblood* 13).

"Indianness" was becoming a highly contested site at the turn of the 21st century, right when the Native American urgently needed to find a habitable space from where to assert his identity.

The rapid increase of hybridization made identity matters more complex as mixed bloods started overtaking full-bloods, particularly in urban areas. Among the Blackfeet, already in the 1940s "the exploding population of mixed-bloods sharpened the full-blood's sense of cultural self" (Rosier 195). Friction between mixed bloods and full-bloods escalated

as the full-bloods perceived they were being threatened by assimilated Indians enjoying better economic conditions. There were some positive aspects within this class conflict since it “helped engender among a diverse group of Blackfeet reconstituted or syncretic conceptions of tribal and Indian identity that were based more on the common ground of economic dislocation and invidious class distinction than on shared blood quantum” (Rosier 166). In the last decades of the 20th century, friction continued as both mixed bloods and full-bloods looked for a meaningful Native American space from which to assert their identity. Within the battle to occupy “Indianness”, full-blood essentialist fighting for what Elizabeth Cook-Lynn has called “tribal indigenoussness” (“American Indian” 124) suspected those mixed bloods inhabiting the borderland and accused them of focusing “on individualism rather than First Nation ideology” (67). For his part, the mixed blood who had not been “strong enough or fortunate enough to cling to family, community, clan, and tribe through this half millennium of deliberate, orchestrated, colonially and federally designed physical and cultural genocide” (Owens, *Mixedblood* 147) needed to come up to terms with a history denying him authenticity. In the late 20th century, the Native American found himself in a position where it was not only necessary to defend his identity against that posed by Euramerican constructs but also to be recognized and accepted by his peers as Indian.

James Welch’s 1986 *Fools Crow* comes out at a time when the Native American male is joining the pieces that can put his present, past and future together. Questions on masculinity and male identity are diluted within the complex matrix of race, ethnicity and identity. Whether he is born a full-blood, a half-blood or a mixed blood, the Native American is immersed in an ongoing battle where he needs to negotiate between the “state of the I” and the “state of the We”. 15 years later, when James Welch publishes *The Heartsong of Charging Elk*, the battle has not subsided. The Native American is still confronting the Euramerican constructs and taking positions to defend Indianness from within hybridity, full

indigenusness or a combination of those. The manly virtues which the Blackfoot warrior aspired to achieve -bravery, endurance, skill, spiritual strength and generosity- seem as suitable now as they were before, and it is towards this ideal that Welch's novel wants to lead the Native American man.

NOTES

¹ During the late 20th C and 21st century, the boundaries of Western fiction have largely expanded. I maintain a distinction here between American fiction of the West and Western fiction so as to differentiate, on the one hand, works from authors like Mari Sandoz, Willa Cather, Dee Brown, James Welch or Louise Erdrich and, on the other, works from authors like Elmer Kelton, Richard S. Wheeler, Ernest Haycox, Norman Zollinger, Jack Schaefer, Zane Grey, Louis L'Amour or Owen Wister. The themes, characters, setting and subject matter of Western fiction have been developed from a line of narrative originating with Cooper's *Leather Stocking Tales* and Owen Wister's *The Virginian*. Common themes are wilderness versus civilization, the male individual versus the community and the heroic cowboy versus the outlaw. The genre is highly codified and lies on the Turnerian idea of westward expansion. There is a strong stress on male dignity and prowess and the freedom provided by the open space. On the other hand, fiction of the West sets plotline and characters in the West but differs in tone and intention and its subject matter is not restricted to the themes above.

² Wister's *The Virginian* has traditionally been regarded as the first novel initiating the Western genre. Some other authors like John Cawelti think James Fenimore Cooper's Leatherstocking hero provided the model for the Western hero. Jeffrey Wallman considers John Filson's *The Adventures of Col. Daniel Boone; containing a Narrative of the Wars of Kentucky* (1784) the promoter of the genre. While acknowledging Cooper's role in making the frontier popular through his character Natty Bumppo, Richard Etulain claims Bill Cody's Wild West Show was itself a narrative that created the mythic story of the Western (1883-1910). In "Precursors of the Literary West", James K. Folsom considers Timothy Flints'

Francis Berrian or the Mexican Patriot “the first western ever written”. See Wallman 43; Cawelti 60; Etulain 16; Folsom 143.

³ Among these, The Western Literary Association through its journal *WAL*, *Western American Literature*, which issued its first number in 1966.

⁴ A.B Guthrie’s *The Way West* and Robert Lewis Taylor *The Travels of Jaimie McPheters* had also been awarded Pulitzer prizes in 1950 and 1959 respectively.

⁵ Frederick Jackson Turner took 1890 as the official date for the closing of the American West frontier, citing the census report of that year compiled by the superintendent of the US, Patrick Porter. Patrick Porter’s report, though, was not thought to be accurate by all of his contemporaries. Some other eminent geographers of the time, like Isaiah Bowman, would later note that frontier-type settlements could be traced up to the year 1930. For more information see Gerald D. Nash, *Creating the West: Historical Interpretations, 1890-1990* and “The Census of 1890 and the Closing of the Frontier”.

⁶ The term was coined by Kenneth Lincoln in the book with this same title. According to his own definition, the Native American Renaissance designs “a written renewal of oral tradition translated into Western literary forms” (8). It includes writers like James Welch, Scott Momaday, Simon Ortiz or Leslie Marmon Silko.

⁷ The number of books, articles and studies on Indian misrepresentation is far too long to cite here. I will mention though some of the books which have been particular relevant to my analysis of the misrepresentation of Indian history: Robert F. Berkhofer’s *The White Man’s Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present*; Brian W. Dippie’s *The Vanishing American: White Attitudes and U.S. Indian*; Jill Lepore’s *The Name of War: King Philip’s War and the Origins of American Identity*; Richard White’s *It’s Your Misfortune and None of My Own* and also *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region 1650-1815*; Patricia Nelson Limerick’s *The Legacy of*

Conquest; Robert V. Hine and John Mack Faragher's *The American West. A New Interpretive History*; Elizabeth Bird ed. *Dressing in Feathers. The Construction of the Indian in American Popular Culture*.

⁸ For an insightful analysis of Costner's character as white Indian, see Robert Baird's "Going Indian: Discovery, Adoption, and Renaming toward a 'True American', from Deerslayer to Dances with Wolves".

⁹ According to Ewers, their area of influence extended from the North Saskatchewan River down south to the northern tributaries of the Missouri and from Battle River to the Rockies. See Ewers, *The Blackfeet* 30.

¹⁰ The novel is called after its main protagonist, Fools Crow.

¹¹ For detailed information on the first dime novel cowboys, see Richard W. Etulain, *Telling Western Stories* 22-25 and Jeffrey Wallmann, *The Western. Parables of the American Dream* 55-92.

¹² In this first order, Barthes considers the signified as providing the primary meaning to the signifier.

¹³ In *Cowboys of the Americas*, Richard W. Slatta observes that "Both vaqueros and gauchos disdained firearms, which were considered unmanly. Vaquero folklore emphasized the value of outwitting an adversary, rather than confronting him with a gun. The gaucho relied on his long knife and the bolas, the vaquero on his rope, which served as both a tool and a formidable weapon. Vaqueros looked disdainfully at the gun-toting Anglo who could not protect himself like a real man"(43). In *The Cowboys*, William H. Forbis notes that even when Anglo cowboys carried guns around, they only used them to kill injured horses, scare off rattlesnakes, help redirect cows in a stampede and only occasionally used them against Mexicans or Indians. It is true however that they liked to boast of guns when in company of women although they hardly ever used them to confront other men (26-29).

¹⁴ The tension between the illiterate Heroic Artisan and the literate Christian Gentleman was already present in Cooper's Natty Bumppo, who identified himself as Christian gentleman but admitted to never having read a book.

¹⁵ A simple comparison between the characters portrayed by Gary Cooper in *High Noon*, Gregory Peck in *The Big Country*, John Wayne in *The Searchers* or James Stewart in *The Man from Laramie* will show that even within the classical cinematic Western, the typology of the cowboy hero is quite varied.

¹⁶ Sewell, "McMurtry's Cowboy-God in *Lonesome Dove*".

¹⁷ See Leslie Fiedler, *Love and Death in the American Novel* 214.

¹⁸ Emerson Bennet's 1859 *Wild Scenes on the Frontier; or, Heroes of the West* starts with the story "The Mingo Chief" which describes the massacre of an Indian family by a band of white scalpers. Indian women and children are first portrayed as victim, but the Indian male is hypermasculinized and Chief Logan's thirst for revenge turns him into a fearful character. In 1863 *Single Eye, A Story of King Philips' War*, Warren St. John describes the deeds of Peter Simpson and his sidekick, his Indian friend Assawomset. The brave and loyal Indian scout is also a recurrent theme in dime novels as in Mark Wilton's 1873 *Big Brave Scout of the Mohawk. A Story of the French Indian War*.

¹⁹ It is obvious that the Indian was also the object of the white female's gaze. Since my study focuses on the relationship between the white male and the Native American male, I will not turn my attention to gender issues at this point.

²⁰ In *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, Karl Marx defines commodity as "an object outside us, a thing that by its properties satisfies human wants of some sort or another" (41). Commodity fetishism is explained on Section Four, pages 81-96.

²¹ Amongst them, Muscular Christianity which identified physical male strength with moral and religious strength.

²² The release of *The Great Train Robbery* in 1903 by film director Edwin S. Porter officially marked the beginning of the cinematic Western.

²³ John Ford, Raoul Wash, Howard Hawks or Anthony Mann's filmography are often quoted as classical Western directors even when some of their films belong in the late 60s and even 70s.

²⁴ Studies on the Western cowboy have increased in number from the late 20th century. To get some in-depth information about the classical cowboy hero in films, see Lee Clark Mitchell's *Westerns. Making the Man in Fiction and Film*; John G. Cawelti's *The Six-Gun Mystique Sequel*; Richard W. Etulain's *Telling Western Stories*, Jim Kitses & Gregg Rickmann's *The Western Reader*; Jeffery Wallman's *The Western. Parables of the American Dream*; Buck Rainey's *The Reel Cowboy. Essays on the Myth in Movies and Literature*; Ian Cameron & Douglas Pye's *The Book of Westerns*.

²⁵ Leone's mockery of classical Western conventions such as that of the shoot-out scene or the arrival of the lone rider and his parody of archetypal Western characters do not actually question the validity of so-called manly values like toughness, stoicism, honour and loyalty. If anything, movies like *For a Fistful of Dollars* surround the figure of the lone hero with yet another aura of mysticism.

²⁶ For more information on the crisis of traditional models of masculinity see Faludi, *Stiffed. The Betrayal of Modern Man* 03- 47; Kimmel, *Manhood in America. A Cultural History* 137-191; Savran, *Taking It Like A Man. White Masculinity, Masochism, and Contemporary American Culture* 190-197.

²⁷ John Patrick Diggins thinks Reagan's stress on the "need to overcome the doubts and worries that plague a troubled conscience" has its origins in Emersonian thought. According to Diggins, Reagan "thought that liberals suffered from too much guilt on many

subjects” (38-39). It was that guilt which ultimately unabled them to fight the cold war successfully.

²⁸ References to Reagan’s faith in the individual abound in his speeches and radio broadcasts. See Skinner & Anderson ed., *Reagan In His Own Hand* 443; Reagan, “Farewell Address to the Nation” par. 29.

²⁹ Imperialist Nostalgia is defined by Renato Rosaldo as “a particular kind of nostalgia, often found under imperialism, where people mourn the passing of what they themselves have transformed.” Rosaldo, *Culture and Truth. The Remaking of Social Analysis* 69.

³⁰ Susan Jefford uses the term “hard bodies” to identify the hypermasculinized male as portrayed by Stallone in *Rambo*, Mel Gibson’s in *Lethal Weapon* or Bruce Willis in *Die Hard*.

³¹ At the sight of violence being exerted on the white body, the spectator flinches and deviates his gaze although David Savran has noted that narcissistic desire works also in the opposite direction causing the spectator to assume a sadistic role. Regeneration through violence, one of the keystones in the construct of American hegemonic masculinity, has systematically been shown in the cinematic media through the mutilation of the male body and the subsequent rebirth of an even harder, and purer, body. The violence/destruction/re-emergence structure was a trademark in the Western genre, as Paul Smith has demonstrated in his essay “Eastwood Bound”. Early Westerns avoided the bare torso altogether, the classical Western started introducing it in scenes of violence or scenes implying manly hard-work and then avoided the erotic look by showing fetishized parts of the body. During the 70s, scenes of male violence increased and so did the exhibition of the male body. While the male gaze was asked to linger, it was at the same time deviated by new techniques as the carefully orchestrated ritualisation of violence. During the 80s, the focus on the naked male

torso appears more often and stays longer and the dissuasive techniques employed to avert the gaze also get more complex. Once the objectification of the male body has been firmly disavowed, the new body of the 80s male re-emerges cleaner, harder, readier and more powerful than ever. For more information on the gaze on the masculine body, see Neale 09-19; Savran 197-206; P. Smith 77-97.

³² Wister, “The Evolution of the Cowpuncher” par. 7.

³³ Richard Slotkin has used the term “regeneration through violence” to refer to the American narrative tradition that considers violence –particularly in the frontier or the wilderness- a means to achieve the moral regeneration of the American male. Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence; The Fatal Environment: The Myth of the Frontier in the Age of Industrialization, 1800-1890; Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America*.

³⁴ Janis P. Stout, Ernestine Sewell, David Mogen and Don Graham amongst others consider *Lonesome Dove* in the light of the elegiac Western while Elliot West, John Miller Purrenhage or Mark Busby take into account the counter-mythic intention of the author.

³⁵ Women participated in the killing and the butchering of bison, they owned property – tipis, travois, utensils, meat once it reached the tipi- and could inherit. It was possible for some women to transcend their assigned roles. Women who chose to behave in a more aggressive, outspoken and independent way sexually, economically and socially were referred to as manly-hearted. Manly-hearted women did not show the humble and submissive ways of other females in the tribe. They could own horses, choose and divorce their husbands and even turn into warriors or shamans. For specific information on Blackfoot manly hearted women, see Lewis, “Manly-Hearted Women among the North Piegan”.

³⁶ For a detailed explanation of Blackfoot Ceremonial Bundles and Lakota Ceremonies see Clark Wissler & Duvall, *Ceremonial Bundles of the Blackfeet Indians* and

Clark Wissler, "Societies and Ceremonial Associations in the Oglala Division of the Teton-Dakota."

³⁷ Counting coup involved touching the enemy with the lance or another object in the warrior's hand.

³⁸ For a detailed explanation of Warrior Societies among the Blackfeet see Wissler, "Societies and Dance Associations of the Blackfoot Indians".

³⁹ The General Allotment Act, or Dawes Act, provided the allotment of tribal land to individual Native Americans. To each head of a family belonged a quarter of a section -160 acres-, to each single person over eighteen an eighth of a section -80 acres- and the same for orphans under eighteen. Further smaller allotments were provided for other individuals under eighteen. The Act provided for the sale of surplus land -land that had not been allotted- to white settlers. Compensation was provided for this sale but what the sale meant in practice was that by 1934 Native Americans had been deprived of 90 million acres. The Dawes Act was passed in Montana in 1906. In 1906, the Burke Act introduced some modifications to the Dawes Act. The Burke Act provided that fee simple allotments would be issued to the Indian "capable and competent enough to manage his or her affairs" at the discretion of the Secretary of the Interior. If this was not the case, trust patents under "the exclusive jurisdiction of the United States" would be issued. In practice this translated in full-bloods mostly being issued patent trusts and mixed-bloods being issued fee simple in account of their white blood quantum. For the complete text of the Dawes Act and the Burke Act, see Kappler, *Indian Affairs. Laws and Treaties*, Vol. I Chapter 119 and Volume III Chapter 2348. To see the specific provision of the Act for the Blackfeet, see Volume I Chapter 2285.

⁴⁰ The 30s also marked the end of the General Allotment era. In 1934, the Indian Reorganization Act, or Wheeler-Howard Act, was passed. This new Act seemed to reverse the objectives of the Dawes Act in defining itself as "An Act to conserve and develop Indian

lands and resources; to extend to Indians the right to form business and other organizations; to establish a credit system for Indians; to grant certain rights of home rule to Indians; to provide for vocational education for Indians; and for other purposes” (Chapter 576). Voices critic with this act think that the Act was not intended as a way to restore Native American land or to provide for Native American well-being but as a way of maintaining them out of the public domain land which contained very valuable mineral reserves or as a way to organize the tribal council like a corporate business. The whole Act can be read in Kappler, *Indian Affairs. Laws and Treaties*, Vol. V. Chapter 254.

⁴¹ Edgar Holger Cahill. In the introduction of her book, Helen Carr refers to Cahill’s article “America has its Primitives” from which she quotes the following lines:

“We great Machine People, who have carried ugliness well-nigh to apotheosis in the fairest of lands,... may forego the conqueror’s pride and learn wisdom from our humble brother of the pueblos, who has made the desert bloom with beauty “ (1).

⁴² The American Indian Movement or AIM, which was the first organized movement to voice the civil rights fight for Native Americans, was founded in 1968.

⁴³ Relocation of Native Americans from tribal reservation to urban areas was actively promoted by the US Government right after the II World War, during the 1950s, 60s and 70s. In the fifties, relocation came hand in hand with termination policies addressed to remove the Indian and his land from federal trust. To the general public, termination and relocation made economic sense while promising to get rid of poverty in the reservations. But it was also a way to make the Native American disappear by “integrating” him into mainstream America. Adjusting to the urban environment proved particularly hard for reservation Indians. On top of problems derived from the isolation from the community and the adaptation to Euramerican way of life, Native Americans were usually placed in poor class neighbourhoods with deficient services. For more information on relocation, see Fixico,

Termination and Relocation: Federal Indian Policy 1945-1960; and Burt, "Roots of the Native American Urban Experience: Relocation Policy in the 1950s."

CHAPTER 2

HISTORICAL WEST AND FICTIONALIZED WEST

“We’ve heard Montana’s the last place that ain’t settled” (McMurtry,
Lonesome Dove 781)

The present chapter assesses the accuracy of the historical West portrayed in Larry McMurtry and James Welch’s narratives. It focuses on some of their non-fictional work to consider their perception of historical facts before they are diluted in their fictionalized world. The first section analyses Larry McMurtry’s book of essays *Sacagawea’s Nickname* taking into account the myth of the West that the Lewis and Clark narrative helped to propagate as well as the history of the contact between the white man and the Blackfeet prior to the arrival of the famous expedition.

The second section discusses McMurtry and Welch’s portrayal of the historical figure Crazy Horse in *Crazy Horse* and *Killing Custer. The Battle of the Little Bighorn and the Fate of the Plains Indians*. My assessment is framed in the light of Robert F. Berkhofer’s concepts of Great Past and Great History, Krupat’s observations about Native American historiography and Satya P. Mohanty’s postpositivist realism theory. I claim that Welch’s narrative successfully challenges and poses an alternative way to reconstruct history while Larry McMurtry’s portrayal of the past is too immersed in the notion of the Great Past and the narrative of the Vanishing Indian to reach any similar result.

The White Men and Blackfoot Montana: Early Contacts, Lewis and Clark and the Myth of the Journey of Discovery

There exists ample documentation and ethnographic evidence about the history of pre-contact intertribal relationships in Northwestern America as well as records of contact between white traders and travellers with Native Americans before the Lewis and Clark expedition. Yet, the American mind has perpetuated the myth of the vast wilderness in the West where the uncivilized and primitive Native American lived in complete isolation before the Corps of Discovery reached him. In reality, the land laying in between the Rocky Mountains to the west, the source of the Yellowstone to the south, the Milk River up north and the Little Missouri to the east was already a battleground for various economic and political struggles. These battles included the fight for the fur trade between the French and the British, the fight for the monopoly between the Hudson Bay Company and the North West Company and the territorial and economical battles between the northern Native American tribes.

As early as 1691, The British Hudson Bay Company sent Henry Kelsey to explore the territory in Rupert's Land –the hydrographic basin of Hudson Bay- and convince Native American tribes to take their furs to the trading post at York Factory at the mouth of the Hayes river. He is the first known European to have kept a written record of his encounters with the Indian tribes of the Northern plains. He was also the first white man to venture south of the Saskatchewan and see the great herds of buffalo. Blackfeet Indians lived at the time in the valley of the North Saskatchewan River (Ewers, *The Blackfeet* 20). It is possible that Kelsey was referring to their land when mentioning “enemy country” on his journal entry of September the 1st, 1691.¹ It is also possible that he was the first white European to encounter the Blackfeet although there is no conclusive proof of this in his journal or anywhere else.

As I stated in the previous chapter, the Blackfeet started trading with white men indirectly via neighbouring tribes. With the acquisition of horses and guns they started pushing the Shoshone south and west and the Flathead and Kutenai off the plains. They gradually moved on westward reaching the Rocky Mountains in Montana, establishing themselves in between the Saskatchewan on the north and the Yellowstone on the south. The first recorded white people to travel into Montana country were the French brothers Louis-Joseph and François de La Vérendrye, sons of Pierre Gaultier de Varennes et de La Vérendrye, who in 1742 began their journey from the Missouri River in Dakota westwards in search of a route to the Pacific Ocean. In 1743 they reached the eastern fringes of the Rocky Mountains. François Vérendrye's journal refers to several of the Native American tribes his expedition came by but he uses French names to refer to them, making it difficult to determine with all exactitude which tribes they were. It is highly likely that they belonged to the Crow, Kiowa, Arikara, Sioux and Cheyenne tribes. Although they ventured into Blackfeet territory, it is not known whether they met any Blackfeet.²

With all probability, it was the French who first established communication with the Blackfeet, since by 1748 they had built trading forts on the lower Saskatchewan, Fort à la Corne being but just a few days' journey from Blackfoot territory (Ewers, *The Blackfeet* 23). The Hudson Bay Company was growing alarmed at seeing how their French rivals, who did not recognise the charter privileges granted to HBC by King Charles II, advanced positions and started sending men to spend the winter with Native American tribes and thus gain the trust of the tribes. In 1754, Anthony Hendry was sent to convince Blackfoot Indians to take their furs to York Fort. Hendry left York Factory on June 26, 1754 and on September 4th, he saw for his first time two Archithinue Natives, very likely Blackfoot men.³ On the 14th of October, he arrived in the "Archithinue" main camp and described his encounter with the tribe in his journal.⁴

The Hudson Bay Company started building trading posts near the northern boundary of Blackfoot territory from 1770, and the North West Company soon did likewise. The white traders got beaver furs, dried and fresh meat from the Blackfeet in exchange for knives, guns, kettles and other goods. In 1772, young Matthew Cocking, also working for the Hudson Bay Company, undertook a journey following the waters on the North Saskatchewan. One of his main objectives was to secure Blackfoot trade and veer it away from the hands of the French. The earliest written classification of the Blackfoot tribes has reached us through his journal. His description includes comments on the character of the Blackfeet, such as the one written on the 5th of December: “Our Archithinue friends are very Hospitable, continually inviting us to partake of their best fare” (Cocking 111).

Direct regular trade with the Blackfoot tribes started after 1782. In 1784, the HBC sent James Gaddy and Isaac Batt to the Pikuni and Blood tribes to learn the Blackfoot language. They were sent again in 1786, when they wintered with the Pikuni. In the summer of 1787, David Thompson, also working for the HBC, started his trip from the mouth of the Saskatchewan looking for Blackfoot tribes with whom to trade. He had already met some Blackfeet near the Rocky Mountains in 1780 and seen that they had horses. Thompson spent the winter of 1787 with Pikuni in the Bow River, learning much about their culture and befriending some of the members in the band (Binnema, *Common and Contested* 29; Ewers, *The Blackfeet* 8, 21). In 1792, another employee of the HBC, Peter Fidler, spent much of the winter with the Pikuni (Binnema, *Common and Contested* 135). It was from Peter Fidler’s surveys in the northwest, among others, that Aaron Arrowsmith drew his 1795 and 1802 maps of North America later used by Lewis and Clark in their expedition.

Patterns of trade with the Euramericans were complicated and varied according to the band alliances and enmities kept at the time. Every tribe worked for their particular advantage and trade alliances moved according to political and economic interests. Thus, the alliance

kept by the Blackfeet during the late 18th century with the Crees, Assiniboines and Gros Ventre worked against tribes like the Crows, the Shoshone and southern tribes, preventing them from carrying regular trade with the Euramericans. At the beginning of the 19th century, the alliance with the Crees and Assiniboines dissolved and relationships with the Gros Ventre grew cold. Soon the power the Blackfeet had gained began to diminish. The traders also worked for their advantage which meant they tried to keep politically neutral in order to establish trade agreements with different tribes at different moments. Yet, establishing a trading post in one or another area usually meant to favour the particular tribe or alliance that had an easier access to that post, so neutrality was impossible to keep. For the most part, the Blackfoot tribes limited contact with the Euramerican traders to the trade transactions conducted at the posts or to those very few times when the traders spent some time with them, basically carrying on with their lives without much interference from white traders (Binnema, *Common and Contested* 161-194).

On the 26th of April 1806, the Lewis and Clark expedition reached the confluence of the Missouri and Yellowstone rivers and three days later they proceeded with their journey along the Missouri, in Montana territory. In June of the same year, the Canadian fur trader Francois Antoine Larocque started a five month trip up the Yellowstone River in order to assess the viability of establishing fur trade in the area. His exploration of the Yellowstone area preceded 10 months that of Lewis and Clark. The latter has remained in the American mind as a scientific journey of exploration and adventure led by two intrepid and heroic men but is has less often been considered as part of the ongoing American plan of domination and expansion towards the West. It was President Thomas Jefferson who most vehemently planned and worked out how the expedition was to proceed. Jefferson's interest in exploring the West began before his presidency and the acquisition of Louisiana. Peter Jefferson, Thomas Jefferson's father, had an interest in land surveying and mapmaking which led him,

along with Joshua Fry, to produce the first map of Virginia. He also belonged to the one of the land companies, the Loyal Company, which had been awarded land by the British Crown west of the Allegheny Mountains, in present day Kentucky. Robert Lewis, Meriwether Lewis' grandfather, belonged to the same company. In 1753, the Company planned an expedition to the Missouri river that had to be called off because of the French-Indian war. Their objective was the same that had taken La Vérendrye, father and sons, to undertake their journeys: finding the route to the Pacific Ocean (Jackson, 3-24).

In 1783, Thomas Jefferson asked George Rogers Clark to lead an expedition to the West although Clark declined and suggested that his brother William go instead. In the letter he sent to Clark in 1783, Jefferson wrote:

I find they have subscribed a very large amount of money in England for exploring the country from the Mississippi to California. they pretend it is only to promote knolege [sic]. I am afraid they have thoughts of colonising into that quarter. some of us have been talking here in a feeble way of making the attempt to search that country. but I doubt whether we have enough of that kind spirit to raise the money. how would you like to lead such a party?

(“Jefferson to George Rogers Clark, 1783” 673)

Clearly, the objective was to precede the English in their attempts at “colonising” the region. In 1786 and again in 1793 Jefferson supported different expeditions to the West but both had to be called off for political reasons. In 1802, Jefferson read Alexandre McKenzie's accounts of his journey to the Straits of Georgia in the Pacific Ocean. Britain's access to the Pacific Ocean posed a threat to US economical interests so finding a viable route from the Mississippi to the Pacific proved more urgent than ever. Finally, in January 1803, four months before the Louisiana Purchase, Jefferson managed to secure agreement from Congress⁵ to fund an exploration up the Missouri River (Ambrose 51-80). Considering this

chronology of events, it is quite simplistic to think Lewis and Clark's expedition was merely a scientific exploration to map the territory recently acquired in the Louisiana Purchase.

In the letter Jefferson sent to Meriwether Lewis with the instructions for the journey, he wrote:

The object of your mission is to explore the Missouri river, & such principal stream of it, as, by it's course & communication with the waters of the Pacific Ocean, whether the Columbia, Oregon, Colorado or any other river may offer the most direct & practicable water communication across this continent, for the purposes of commerce. (Letter 20 par. 5)

The economic purpose was quite clear from the beginning. Later in the letter, Jefferson addressed Lewis on how to deal with the Native tribes he may encounter and what kind of information he was required to get from them:

The commerce which may be carried on with the people inhabiting the line you will pursue, renders a knolege [sic] of those people important. You will therefore endeavor to make yourself acquainted, as far as a diligent pursuit of your journey shall admit, with the names of the nations & their numbers [...] And, considering the interest which every nation has in extending & strengthening the authority of reason & justice among the people around them, it will be useful to acquire what knolege [sic] you can of the state of morality, religion, & information among them; as it may better enable those who endeavor to civilize & instruct them, to adapt their measure to the existing notions & practices of those on whom they are to operate. (Letter 20 par. 9-10)

It is important to bear in mind that the Louisiana Purchase had not yet taken place at the time Jefferson wrote this letter. What the above paragraphs reveal quite clearly is the covert colonising discourse based on the Christian Doctrine of Discovery.⁶ The doctrine justified European sovereignty and property rights on discovered territories which had not been

previously claimed by a Christian nation. Under that doctrine, the Christian nation that had “discovered” the territory had pre-emptive rights on the land which excluded other European nations from acquiring it. It was understood that the American colonies applied the Doctrine from the English Crown (R. J. Miller, 1-94). Once America obtained its independence, the American states continued using the pre-emptive right on tribal lands. This meant that Native Americans could only sell their land to the US government. They had the right of occupancy but not the right of ownership. The Doctrine would gain status of law with the 1823 Supreme Court decision in the Johnson v. M'Intosh case (R. J. Miller, 1-94).

When Jefferson got news of the Louisiana Purchase, he realised the US government had acquired the French pre-emptive right on tribal land. In the letter he sent Lewis on the 23rd of January 1804, Jefferson wrote:

Being now become sovereigns of the country, without however any diminution of the Indian rights of occupancy we are authorised to propose to them in direct terms the institution of commerce with them. It will now be proper you should inform those through whose country you will pass, or whom you may meet, that their late fathers the Spaniards have agreed to withdraw all their troops from all the waters & country of the Mississippi & Missouri, that they have surrendered to us all their subjects Spanish & French settled there, and all their posts & lands: that henceforward we become their fathers and friends, and that we shall endeavor that they shall have no cause to lament the change.

(Letter 22 par. 1)

As Robert J. Miller demonstrates by examining Lewis and Clark's letters, Lewis and Clark followed Jefferson's instructions carefully and behaved as agents of the Doctrine of Discovery when meeting the Native American tribes on their way. Their expedition's main

goal was not just to determine the extent of the Louisiana Purchase but, more importantly, to establish US sovereignty up to the Pacific Coast.

Meriwether Lewis' first encounter with the Blackfoot Pikuni Indians took place on the 26th of July of 1806. In his journal entry for that day, Lewis made a detailed account of the skirmish between the party of Pikuni Blackfeet and his expedition party. After spotting the men, he decided they were Minnetare (Gros Ventre) Indians of Fort de Prairie and confirmed this assumption when he talked to them later that day (M. Lewis, lines 56-71). Historians have corrected his version and agreed it was Pikuni Indians he encountered (Ewers, *The Blackfeet* 48). Lewis' mistake was based on information he had received some time before warning him about the presence of unfriendly Minnetares nearby. Furthermore, Lewis could only communicate with the Pikuni Indians using very basic sign language and had to use his interpreter, the Canadian George Drouillard, to do most of the talking.

What could be considered just an anecdotic and quite trivial misunderstanding becomes a more serious matter when examined in the light of the long story of misunderstandings and misperceptions the Native American have suffered in the story of the US expansion towards the West. From their unfortunate meeting with Lewis and Clark, Blackfoot Indians started to acquire a reputation among white men as savage, fierce and hostile Indians. At the beginning of the 19th century, John C. Ewers says, the Blackfeet "made life miserable for white mountain men, who sought to trap beaver in the Missouri headwaters region" ("Intertribal" 404). Ewers calls the Blackfeet "warlike people" and traces Blackfoot "hostility" back to the encounter with Lewis, concluding that the episode "hardened the hearts of Blackfeet against Americans" (*The Blackfeet* 48). Later on he observes that "the American trappers had never become well enough acquainted with their opponents to identify them by tribe. To them the Indian raiders were all Blackfeet" (*The Blackfeet* 51), which hints at what the real problem may be. Not only did the white men mistake tribes but they had little

notion of the complex system of tribal relationships and alliances in the Northwestern region. Theodore Binnema, Clarisa Confer and Mark A. Judy have examined the intricate network of relationship among the tribes living in the Upper Missouri region.⁷ Their studies show that Lewis and Clark's attempts to "pacify" the region and establish a new system of trade alliance working in the US economic interest actually brought havoc to a complicated system of tribal alliances and enmities.

As already seen, the first contacts between Blackfeet and white men had not been hostile at all. Far from that, the Blackfeet were fully aware that their economy had highly benefited from the wolf fur and beaver trade with the white men, since trade had provided them with horses and guns. Meriwether Lewis himself wrote that the Pikuni he met on the 26th of July "appeared much agitated with our first interview from which they had scarcely yet recovered" and he added that "in fact I believe they were more alarmed at this accidental interview than we were" (*The Journals* 26 July 1806, line 63). Lewis' comment leaves little doubt in determining who feared whom most of the time. Blackfoot policy towards white trappers and traders was dictated by their economical and political necessities. Blackfoot power in the Missouri area depended on their superiority over Crow and Shoshone and on the alliance with Crees and Assinibionnes. Any deference from the white men towards any of those could easily disturb the Blackfoot status quo. At the time of Lewis and Clark's arrival, the alliance with the Cree and Assiniboines was entering a crisis. As Theodore Binnema and Mark A. Judy's studies point out, when the Pikuni heard from Lewis that he wished to trade both with them and with their neighbours in the West, they must have grown extremely alarmed since that meant the Crows, Shoshone and Flatheads would gain access to trade, become better armed and thereby pose a serious threat to Blackfoot economy and lives (Binemma, "Allegiances" 327-349; Judy 135-142). The fact that the Blackfeet prevented American traders and trappers from entering the upper Missouri river area beyond the

Yellowstone River for 16 years was not a consequence of whites having killed two Pikuni but an attempt to maintain their economic interests in the area.

The territory Lewis and Clark entered was only unknown and unexplainable to the white foreigners who tried to interpret and decode it according to their own white American perspective. Lewis and Clark's journals were first published in 1814 and although their journals would not reach the public until the publication of later versions, the story of their journey was soon romanticized into a tale of adventures and personal achievement which matched the American myth of the West: a male journey of hardship and victory into uninviting, unyielding land. It is important to realise that the Lewis and Clark expedition was already in the American subconscious before they had even set off. Thomas Jefferson had his own particular vision of the West shaped both by his imagination and by the vast amount of literature, travel books and historical records he had read before (Ronda, "Counting Cats" 21-26).⁸ Jefferson's maps of America showed only a big blank space not yet filled with any accurate historical, geographical or ethnological description. That space would later be called The Great American Desert,⁹ a stretch of thousands of miles which was turned by the white American man into a fantasized terra incognita. Into that space would pour tales of Indian Welsh,¹⁰ mountains of salt¹¹ and fictional or semi-fictional worlds like the ones devised in Charles Brockden Brown's *Edgar Huntly*, Filson's *The Adventures of Colonel Daniel Boon*, or even Crèvecoeur's *Letters from an American Farmer* as well as all the myths of the Garden of Eden which had been imported from Europe by the first settlers.

In *National Manhood*, scholar Dana Nelson examines the Lewis and Clark's expedition from the perspective of the construction of American national manhood. Nelson contends that the Lewis and Clark expedition followed the new democratic ideas that made it possible for the American males to "stand for the nonbiological Father, as enforcers of discipline through 'caring', civilizing familial order, to the world around them" (76). She

argues that appearing as fraternal manhood, the expedition actually assumed “the practice (...) of domestication” (76). To the general public, Lewis and Clark were “representatives of civic unity and national order, thereby participating both in the imaginary exchangeability of fraternal manhood and in the privileges of domesticating command“ (77). But the expedition was organized by a hierarchy that placed Lewis and Clark clearly at the top of the other members of the expedition. The construct of the fraternity of males and the democratic organization of the Lewis and Clark expedition has reached our times almost intact, pervading a great part of the American narrative of the West and helping to construct the mythical West still lingering in our minds.¹²

Three of the essays in Larry McMurry’s *Sacagawea’s Nickname* refer directly to the Lewis and Clark journals and expedition. In “The American Epic”, McMurry considers the journals in their literary sense and compares Lewis and Clark’s achievement to that of Johnson and Fielding by pointing both at the quality of the language and at the Captains’ narrative skills (*Sacagawea’s Nickname* 151). In “Sacagawea’s Nickname”, the essay which gives title to the collection, McMurry speculates about the nickname the Captains found for Sacagawea, Janey, and ventures a possible romantic infatuation of Clark with the Native American woman. In his essay “Old Misery”, McMurry reflects on the poor attention the Missouri river has drawn from writers that have ignored its rich history and discovers the river as a central point in the combined narrative of Lewis and Clark.

In the introductory pages of *Sacagawea’s Nickname*, McMurry reverts to Northrop Frye’s theory of modes to account for the story of the narrative West. Written in 2001, *Sacagawea’s Nickname* appeared thirty-three years after *In a Narrow Grave*, the 1968 collection of essays on Texas that included McMurry’s earlier reflections on the West and where McMurry first referred to Frye’s theory of modes. In 1968, McMurry was focusing mostly on the filmic Western genre when borrowing from Frye:

If one can apply to the Western the terminology Northrup Frye develops in his essay on fictional modes, we might say that in the fifties the Western began working its way down from the levels of myth and romance toward the ironic level which it has only recently reached. (*In a Narrow* 45)

In 2001, McMurtry develops his theory further to account for the history of the narrative West:

Frye's modes descend from god-stories or myths through romance and realism to irony; it seems to me that, in truncated form, some such progression did happen in the West. The Indians had the godstories, Lewis and Clark provided the epic, and the romance came in a century and a half of hero-tales, as the memoirs of mountain men, explorers, merchants from the Santa Fe Trail, emigrants on the Oregon Trail, gold rushers, soldiers of fortune, or real soldiers, come to fight the Indians, found their way into print. (...) Frye's modes end with irony, from whence there is sometimes a circling back toward myth (*Sacagawea* xii-xiii).

McMurtry's explanation of the development of the narrative West seems to reflect his own literary career in reverse, as scholar Linnora Holleman has aptly noted in her dissertation on McMurtry. From low mimetical Westerns like *Horseman, Pass By* and *The Last Picture Show*, McMurtry has moved on to ironic Westerns like *Lonesome Dove* and lately resorted to highly mimetical Westerns like the prequels to *Lonesome Dove* or the Barrybender series. But more important is the way McMurtry's interpretation of Frye's theory of modes allows him to incorporate the narrative of the Native American into the narrative of the Euramerican. By placing the Indian "godstories" within the realm of the mythic, McMurtry is following the Euramerican tradition that equates "myth" with "fable" and that distinguishes between "real" and "fictitious". Yet, for the Native American, the split between the real and the unreal

does not exist since the “mythical” is the way to reach further within the “real”. By placing Native American spirituality within the realm of the Euramerican “mythic”, McMurtry continues to conform to the construct of the American Primitive. Furthermore, his reflection also implies that the Euramerican narrative of the West is a continuum originating in Native American forms. His use of the word “truncated” may refer to the distinction between the Native American and the Euramerican narrative tradition but even so, he immediately talks about “progression”, suggesting that the American advanced from the more primitive form of the Native American. What may pass as a fair recognition of Native American tradition hides in reality the desire to claim the American primitive as container of the original spirit of Americanness.

In the two introductory essays of *Sacagawea's Nickname* - “The West without Chili” and “Inventing the West”- McMurtry states quite clearly that what has pervaded the American mind is the “West-in-the-mind’s-eye” or psychological West (9), despite all ongoing efforts by historians, scholars and critics to deconstruct it. McMurtry provides his personal list of people contributing to the creation of that West -Theodore Roosevelt, Zane Grey, Louis l’Amour, Billy Cody, Annie Oaklie or Ned Buntline. He tries to discern the historical West from the West-in-the-mind’s eye, concluding that the second is the one that has created an inescapable American national conscience. McMurtry concedes that recent revisionist historicism, or New Western History, has rightfully managed to challenge the “long-prevailing triumphalist view of the winning of the West” (6) by bringing to light the forgotten history of the West and its forgotten participants. But his review of Patricia Limerick Nelson’s *The Legacy of Conquest* later on makes it clear that he is not fully comfortable with New Western History for it decries and ultimately condemns the “West-in-the-mind’s-eye”.

As a novelist and critic of the West, McMurtry is trying to balance his position between the more objective account of history and the more subjective perception and remembrance of that history. This is no easy task though and it is not infrequent to see him misdirect his course. "Chopping down the Sacred Tree", a review of James Wilson's book *The Earth Shall Weep: A History of Native America*, is such an example. While McMurtry acknowledges and decries the white man's genocidal attempt against the Native American, he does not likewise dismiss the myth of the Vanishing Indian. Thus, one of the aspects he finds at fault in James Wilson's book is his failure to "push a discussion of the merging of races very far" (*Sacagawea's* 45) when Wilson contends that even now many Americans believe the Indian has vanished. McMurtry enters the muddy and controversial terrain of Native American identity when observing that races have been mixing for five hundred years and that the full blood is almost extinct. Ambiguity surrounds a remark like "with this long mixing of bloods and cultures it is now less easy, in speaking of Native Americans, to know to what extent they are we and we they" (*Sacagawea's* 45) for even when that observation holds true to the evidence of an ever increasing mix-blood presence, one perceives in it the echoes of Euramerican assimilationist ideology. McMurtry places himself in that politically correct position from where the Euramerican denounces what his ancestors did to the Native American but who finds it more difficult to denounce and acknowledge what they are still doing to them.

In his three essays about the Lewis and Clark expedition, McMurtry finds an uncompromising balance by being rather harsh about 19th century expansionism while at the same time praising its literary results. That is, criticizing the Historical West but eulogizing the psychological West. In the first essay, "The American Epic", he challenges the myth of Lewis and Clark as first explorers of the Wild West while praising the uniqueness of their endeavour. McMurtry is well aware of the long history of non-American inhabitants and

visitors in the West before the Corps of Discovery and the essay starts with a brief account of some of the first French, British and Spanish explorers and traders who ventured into the West. Soon he introduces Lewis and Clark with a highly ironic remark:

But these men –De Vaca, Coronado, De Soto, La Salle, the Vérendryes, Vial, David Thompson, Larocque, and many, many more- were all Europeans, or else were representing European countries or companies. Lewis and Clark were our own boys, working for Mr. Jefferson and the greater glory of the young republic. (140)

McMurtry is considering the expedition a reflection of 19th century Manifest Destiny politics, hence his use of irony. But this consideration poses an ethical problem since it presents the explorers as willing agents of American expansionism. It becomes imperative then to somehow disassociate them from history. McMurtry achieves this by focusing on narrative instead and considering Lewis and Clark in their role of writers and creators of the American national epic.

In the last of the essays, “Old Misery”, McMurtry writes about the Missouri river as focal trading point in the West and briefly refers to the fights between the Native American -Arikara and Mandan- and the white traders in their attempt to control trade in the area. He acknowledges the Spanish energy in “their efforts to extend their trading reach” (172) and even comments on useful bibliography to know more about pre-Lewis and Clark history in the West. Yet, the conclusion he reaches at the end of his essay seems to contradict the plural viewpoint he used at the beginning:

When I began this essay I thought I would follow Missouri River narratives from Father Marquette in the seventeenth century to Custer and Cody, near the end of the nineteenth. If there were forty or fifty expeditions that followed the river for at least some little distance before Lewis and Clark, hundreds poured

up the river in the decades after the captains came home [...] I thought it might be fun to ramble around in all those purple autobiographies and pull out a quote here and a quote there: but that was before I read *The Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition* [...], after which reading the purple autobiographies ceased to be half as much fun. Lewis and Clark loom over the narrative literature of the West as the Rockies loom over the rivers that run through them. These Journals are to the narrative of the American West as the *Iliad* is to the epic or as *Don Quixote* is to the novel: a first exemplar so great as to contain in embryo the genre's full potential. (176-177)

From an initially multi-focal consideration of the Missouri that considers the river as confluence of European and non-European cultures and people, McMurtry moves into a uni-focal view only taking into account the Euramerican perspective.¹³ McMurtry's last words are even more clarifying in that respect:

Thanks to the character, courage, and ability of these few men [referring to the Corps Expedition] we can now know what the West was like before the prairie was plowed, the buffalo killed, the native peoples broken, and the mighty Missouri dammed. (178)

It is quite surprising that after having referred to all the people who explored the West before Lewis and Clark he dismisses them in just one stroke. McMurtry mentions "character, courage and ability" as the conditions which make possible the knowledge of history and links these adjectives to the American males of the expedition, leaving out both the non-American male explorers before them and Sacagawea, the only female in the Corps of Discovery, the Native American woman to whom he has recently devoted one of his essays. The discovery of the literary quality of Lewis and Clark journals leads McMurtry to bypass his initial vindication of the pre-Lewis and Clark history. It is only Lewis and Clark and the

Corps of Discovery who can tell us what the West was like, McMurtry is saying.

McMurtry's reflection certainly bears a tinge of Jefferson's nationalistic pride and romantic thirst for the West. Unlike him, however, there is no blank terra incognita in McMurtry maps of America.

The essay "Sacagawea's Nickname" starts as a fair reminder of the Native American woman whose life has been completely shaded by that of the male components of the famous expedition. McMurtry regrets the poor attention Sacagawea and Pocahontas have received from American history, comments on Sacagawea's lineage, and her function within the Corps and briefly describes some episodes in the journals which reveal the brave and resolute woman she must have been. Scholars James V. Fenelon and Mary Louise Defender-Wilson have recently questioned some of the widespread assumptions about Sacagawea, like that of her Shoshone lineage. They argue that both Hidatsa and Dakota oral story account for Sacagawea as Hidatsa and that the only piece of evidence for calling her Shoshone is Sacagawea's reference to the leader of the tribe as "brother" (Fenelon 92-104). According to Fenelon, "this conclusion indicates cross-cultural ignorance more than indicates a direct familial relationship" (92) since it was quite usual amongst individuals from other societies to call a man from another tribe "brother". Fenelon and Defender-Wilson's study concludes that Lewis and Clark journals distorted Sacagawea from a "well-trained, highly capable, intelligent native woman" to an "enslaved savage" a "bartered squaw" "a heroine" an finally "the inevitable noble savage" (97). Although there is no conclusive evidence for Sacagawea's either Hidatsa or Shoshone lineage, it is clear that American history has spent little time corroborating the story and preferred to make an article of faith of Lewis and Clark's assumption.

McMurtry shows us how easily assumptions can be borrowed and made.

"Sacagawea's Nickname" soon forgets the Native American Sacagawea and rather focuses

on the American males of the expedition and their problems in pronouncing her name correctly. Captain Clark finds a name for her, Janey, which he uses once in the journals and again in a letter. We could go along with McMurtry and believe the more familiar name Janey suggests a deeper level of affection between them, at least on the part of Clark, but we can also regard Sacagawea's renaming as part of that huge task that the Corps of Discovery imposed on themselves which consisted in renaming the whole "wild" territory ahead of them. The essay concludes with McMurtry's vision of Clark as a "family man who suddenly misses his family [...] He missed that little boy, and he missed Janey" (161). McMurtry is more infatuated with Janey than with Sacagawea, with the suggestive stories the American recalling of her make possible than by the hidden story of the real Native American woman.

McMurtry's appraisal of Lewis and Clark's journals in *Sacagawea's Nickname* fulfils both a public and a private function. It draws public attention to what he considers the germinal seed of the narrative American West and, on a more personal basis, it justifies his literary return to the mythic West. It is precisely within this loop of moving to and from the mythical origin that we should place McMurtry. He seems to be tangled up in the complex web of myth construction, myth deconstruction, historical evidence, historical fabrication, oral tradition, narrative account, interpretation and rendering of story and history which he has set himself to unravel. His trajectory as a writer has seen him experiment with all kinds of criss-crossings between fiction and non-fiction: novels in which historical characters were turned into fictional characters -*Streets of Laredo, Anything for Billy, Buffalo Girls*-, novels where fictional characters have been given a historical base -*Lonesome Dove*-, non-fiction books where historical characters have been revisited -*Crazy Horse, Oh What a Slaughter*- or essays which rescued the historical origins of legends -*In a Narrow Grave, Sacagawea's Nickname*-. High above these works, the Lewis and Clark narrative "looms over" him "as the

Rockies loom over the rivers than run through them”, reminding him of the inevitable weight of the psychological West every time he has to confront history.

Larry McMurry and James Welch’s Reconstruction of the Past: Great Stories and Realist Stories

Larry McMurry and James Welch are highly aware of the crucial role the writer is assuming when interpreting history, transforming it into narrative form and delivering it to an audience. For James Welch, it is of utmost importance to discern the real history of the West as experienced by the Native American from the mythified West lingering in the American mind. In Larry McMurry’s narrative, the exploration of the West of the Imagination and its intersection with the West “as it was” reaches a predominant position. In their non-fictional works *Killing Custer. The Battle of the Little Bighorn and the Fate of the Plains Indians* and *Crazy Horse*, Welch and McMurry assume the role of historians in order to dig out the factual past events upon which their stories rest.

In principle, the non-fictional format should offer a better platform to establish a stricter division between fact and non-fact than a fictional format like that of a novel. In practice though, the historian needs to resort to narrative to reconstruct history, which in effect turns him into a narrator. In his examination of the role of the contemporary historian, Robert F. Berkhofer argues that the traditional approach to history is based on contextualization. This means that the meaning of past events is derived “from interrelationships embedded in some temporal framework” (*Beyond* 33). Narrative, he contends, is the tool that the author uses to connect the events and actions in the past. If the historian uses narrative it is because he also conceives the past as a narrative, that is, past events respond to a narrative structure since they are part of a “contextual plenitude” (*Beyond* 37). As I explained in the Introduction, Berkhofer calls this contextual plenitude

the “Great Past” while he labels the evidence for all the total history and the textual plenitude as the “Great Story”¹⁴ or the “whole past conceived as history” (38). Historians acknowledge the existence of different interpretations of history but their belief in the Great Past makes them seek for the interpretations that best suit the History, that is, the Great Story for the Great Past. The quest for the best interpretation “denies multiple voices and viewpoints” and ultimately turns into a “battle for scholarly supremacy” (53). In normal historical practice,¹⁵ Berkhofer says, historians subscribe to historical realism: they try to bridge the gap between referentiality –the facts of the past- and the representation of that past by using referential illusion, that is, the illusion that past facts have determined the historian’s narrative. But contemporary literary and rhetorical theory, which he calls textualist, question this approach since they consider that reconstruction of the past is actually construction: all we can do about the remains of the past is interpret them from the present as once they were interpreted in the past. In other words, the Great Past is the Great Story (60-64).

Reputed historian William Cronon also concedes that the historian is giving history “a unity that neither nature nor the past possesses so clearly” (1349). In “A Place for Stories: Nature, History, and Narrative” Cronon tries to answer the question why environmentalist historians, who in principle should be more concerned with nature than with humans, favour the narrative form over less subjective forms like the chronicle when reconstructing history. As Berkhofer, he acknowledges the textualist’s claim that reality bears little resemblance to the plots which humans construct to explain it. Yet, he sides with positions like that of historian David Carr which defend narrativeness because that is the way in which humans organize experience. Because the environmentalist historian’s main concern is not nature per se but the meaning of nature for the human being, there is no escaping narrative and plot. This does not mean that discrimination between “bad” and

“good” histories is not possible, Cronon continues. Histories which contravene evidence or which do not take into account the communities “who have a present stake in the way the past is described” will never qualify as good histories (1373).

Cronon’s viewpoint needs to be contrasted with Arnold Krupat’s observations about the way the Native American past has been reconstructed in American history. Krupat’s main concern is the opposition that western thought has made between history and myth. This is the opposition William Cronon is drawing from when sustaining that the validity of a “good history” can be determined by its correspondence with factual evidence. By contrast, Krupat vindicates the inclusion of what Native historiography takes to be true “even when it is not factual accurate” (*Red Matters* 49). In the Native American conception of history, myth is a reality “very far distant from the present in time” (*Red Matters* 49) but in no way it is opposed to history. Traditionally, history was passed down orally from the elders. The fact that it was said over and over again precisely confirmed it as true. Moreover, communal validation of history was required before it was ever transmitted. Krupat notes that, unlike in western historiography, in Native historiography “communal, cultural agreement on the interpretive truth of the narrative is what determines its historicity, apart from any disagreement that might (or, to be sure, might not) exist to the facts of the matter” (53).

In my view, Cronon’s and Krupat’s viewpoint can be harmonized through Satya P. Mohanty’s postpositivist realism. Mohanty accepts that all knowledge is theory mediated although he criticizes cultural and historical relativism in postmodernist discourses because it “commits us all to radically separate and insular spaces” (132) and it implies the impossibility of translating cultures. Intercultural dialogue and contact are rendered impossible from the relativist position since any notion of explanation, objectivity or realism is considered suspicious. Instead, Mohanty insists on the necessity of a common

ground which enables us to “deal seriously with other cultures and not reduce them to insignificance or irrelevance” (139). Mohanty shares the Kantian view on the universality of rational agency and says it is human agency, the capacity to act purposefully and to reflect on that act, that the “I” shares with the “other”. Dialogue, the encounter between different systems of understanding, enables the possibility of change in both. Mohanty’s postpositivist theory stems from this common ground and, unlike relativism and scepticism, it poses a conception of objectivity which takes into account error and the possibility of improvement. Under such definition, objectivity is not an unreachable utopia but a socially negotiated achievement which allows us to establish a dialogue. According to Mohanty, sustaining that our beliefs and knowledge about the world are socially mediated is not incompatible with granting that everything is not subject to social consensus, that is, with believing in a “nonhuman universe about which we may find out more and more things (...) which then change the way we think of our own human world” (158).

After having established a theoretical framework to analyse Welch’s and McMurtry’s historical narratives, my examination aims now at assessing the choices that Welch and McMurtry have made as historians when selecting the events in the past and reconstructing them in their narratives, for these choices are already informing us about the choices they will later be making as narrators. James Welch’s non-fiction narrative *Killing Custer* was written as a result of Welch’s work with the filmmaker Paul Stekler in the documentary *Last Stand at Little Big Horn*. In the book’s prologue, Welch states that his intention is not just to give an account of the famous Little Bighorn River battle between the US army and the Indian Sioux but to explain what the battle meant for Native Americans:

I tell it not only because it happened to my own people, but because it needs to be told [...] if one is to understand this nation's treatment of the first Americans. And to understand the glory and sorrow of that hot day in June 1876 when the Indians killed Custer. (*Killing Custer* 23)

Although the central theme in the book is the famous battle, Welch's historical reconstruction weaves the account of that specific event into a wider multi-layered narrative that joins the voice of the Native American as individual with the common fate of the Native American nation. The historical reconstruction provided by Welch does not move in a chronological fashion. The first chapter starts with the account of the 1870 Marias river massacre where an entire Pikuni Blackfoot encampment was wiped out by the US, and that event is subsequently linked to the Bighorn battle where the whole US 7th Cavalry Regiment was wiped out by Sioux Native Americans. To the historical and ethnographic sources, James Welch's adds family oral tradition:

My great-grandmother Red Paint Woman had been a member of Heavy Runner's band and, although shot in the leg by the soldiers, had managed to escape upriver, to the west, with a few other survivors. Red Paint had told my father many stories of that time when he was a boy. (39)

While white sources of Native American culture mostly draw on written documents, Native American people themselves often rely on oral sources¹⁶ to account for their history. Berkhofer has noted that normal historical practice makes distinctions between folk and formal sources, between oral and documented histories and "often rely on them to justify the authority of their own texts" (*Beyond* 228) which, in the case of oral Native American sources, means that oral testimonies have for the most part been disregarded in favour of documents written by the white man.

Chapters 2 to 7 of *Killing Custer* deal with the Battle of the Little Bighorn. The narrative is non-linear and often flashes back and forth to incorporate other episodes from the history of the Sioux people, narratives taken from Crazy Horse, Sitting Bull and Custer's lives, recent episodes in the Native American fight for self-recognition and James Welch's experience as visitor to the battlefield. Chapters 8, 9, 10 as well as the epilogue deal with the last days of Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse. They also contain reflections on the implications of Custer's defeat, the fate of the Native American nation and the nature of the film crew's work. The story of Crazy Horse's life has to be extracted from the wider reconstruction of the Little Bighorn River battle in chapter 5. The account of his death is dealt with in chapter 9, although references to him abound throughout the whole book.

On the other hand, McMurtry's book *Crazy Horse* is the first of a series of short biographies targeting a newer generation of readers, according to the jacket cover. Larry McMurtry's book is wholly devoted to the reconstruction of the life of Crazy Horse. However, the reader should take into account that a short biography intended for "a new generation of readers" will probably be not as exhaustive, objective and evidence oriented as a biography meant for researchers of the field. The first and second chapter in the book serves a similar purpose to that of the Prologue in *Killing Custer*. Here, McMurtry states the reasons why he has written this biography:

This short book is an attempt to look back across more than one hundred and twenty years at the life and death of the Sioux warrior Crazy Horse, the man who is coming out of a mountain in the Black Hills, the American Sphinx, the loner who has inspired the largest sculpture on planet Earth. (6)

Later on he adds:

Still, I am not writing this book because I think I know what Crazy Horse did – much less what he thought- on more than a few occasions in his life; I'm

writing it because I have some notions about what he meant to his people in his lifetime, and also what he has come to mean to generations of Sioux in our century and even our time. (12)

Chapters 2 to 10 deal with Crazy Horse's life up to the Little Bighorn River Battle and also include personal comments about Sioux traditional life. Chapters 11, 12, 13 and 14 move away from Crazy Horse and centre on the significance of the gold discovery in the Black Hills and the battle of the Little Bighorn River. The last chapters describe Crazy Horse's intervention in the battle and his last days. Throughout the book, McMurtry often stresses the problem of dealing with Crazy Horse's life given that not much is known for certain, that there are some contradictory accounts of his life and that Crazy Horse has reached a mythical stature that makes it difficult to tell the real man from the constructed icon.

McMurtry cites his sources at the end of the book in bibliographical form, also providing a brief comment for each. He does not include notes on each chapter specifying where he is drawing the information from; neither does he provide an indexical reference. Welch does the opposite: he provides both a notes section where all his sources can be traced and a final index, although he does not include a bibliography. Both authors refer mainly to the same sources when dealing with Crazy Horse's life: Stephen E. Ambrose, Evan S Jr. Connell, Ian Frazier, Robert Utley, Stanley Vestal, Mari Sandoz, Dee-Brown, the Hinman-Sandoz interviews and John G. Neihardt although McMurtry also heavily borrows from Bourke and Briningstool. To these written sources, both authors add to a lesser or greater degree other stories taken from Native American oral sources which they usually document during their narratives. The extent to which the authors rely on these sources can be inferred from some of the comments they make in the bibliography or the endnotes. A detailed contrast of these sources with the author's own reconstructions of Crazy Horse's story would

certainly offer quite revealing data about the way McMurtry and Welch select and reuse that information. Yet, that task would take a whole volume itself and would move the present research beyond its central point. Hence, I will be only comparing Welch and McMurtry's narratives with their cited sources at very specific times for very specific reasons.

In *Crazy Horse*, McMurtry soon makes a point of the lack of evidence surrounding the Oglala's life. In Chapter 2 he states that "any study of Crazy Horse will be, of necessity, an exercise in assumption, conjecture, and surmise" (7) and later adds that "if the word record is to mean anything, one would have to say that for much of Crazy Horse's life there is no record" (10). Because of this lack of evidence, McMurtry often keeps a sceptical approach to the historical character which, paradoxically, he frequently colours adding his own interpretation. To introduce the character, McMurtry borrows the Oglala Short Buffalo's physical description of Crazy Horse and later portrays him as a loner: "There was a bit of the hermit, the eremite in him" (8). Further on, he mentions some data about his birth, his parents, and again he makes a point of Crazy Horse's introspective character: "Crazy Horse, from the first, was indifferent to tribal norms. He had no interest, early or late, in the annual Sun Dance rite, and didn't bother with any of the ordeals of purification that many young Sioux men underwent" (16-17). This first introduction contrasts with that of Welch's, who first presents Crazy Horse in an episode where as chief of the camp he offered food and shelter to some Cheyenne that had escaped from an US army attack (65). A bit later Welch refers to Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse and their stand against the white men: "Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse, by contrast, wanted nothing from the white government but to be left alone" (75). The first physical appearance of Crazy Horse in Welch's book is during the preparations of the Rosebud Battle. To McMurtry's solitary and strange Crazy Horse, Welch opposes a very definite Crazy Horse first seen in full accordance with his community. A detailed analysis of the episode where both authors reconstruct Crazy Horse's first vision

quest will show much light on the reasons why McMurtry and James Welch read Crazy Horse so differently. McMurtry description reads:

Not long after the Grattan massacre, Crazy Horse, who was then living with his mother's people, the Brulés, rode off alone to seek a vision, ignoring the rituals and procedures of purification that would normally precede a vision quest. He felt that he needed a vision and simply rode off to seek it, across the prairies of what is now western Nebraska. To have done this right he would have had to fast, be purified in a sweat lodge, and perhaps be given a lecture or two by a holy man -his father, for example. But orthodoxy was not his way, would never be his way. When Crazy Horse felt like doing something, he just did it. Perhaps because he didn't fully prepare himself for this vision quest, he only achieved what to him at the time seemed a rather mediocre vision. (33)

McMurtry writes in a sequential manner but does not link Crazy Horse's decision to go on a vision quest to any particular event in his life except for his whim at the moment. He uses a semi-didactic tone when referring to the right way of performing a vision quest, intended for an audience presumably alien to the rites of the Sioux Native Americans. Welch, however, writes:

Although most of the people thought they had done the right thing to the bullying Lieutenant Grattan, the incident seriously disturbed the youthful Crazy Horse, who was named Curly at the time. He seemed to sense that things were going to be different now, that the whites were not going to let this incident pass and in fact would use it to drive the Sioux farther from their country. (118)

McMurtry depicts Crazy Horse as a strongly independent character who disregards communal tradition and is driven by his own impulses. He does not refer to Crazy Horse's

inner worries about his people and does not pay attention to the young man's physical and spiritual suffering when trying to obtain his dream. By contrast, Welch shows that Crazy Horse's quest search is driven by his deep concern for his people. The incident with Lieutenant Grattam makes Crazy Horse realise that problems between the Sioux and the white people are going to multiply and this reflection leads him to search for a vision quest.

While the people were moving north, Curly left them and climbed a high butte, where an Oglala eagle catcher had dug his pit and caught eagles every year. Curly lay down and stared up at the blue sky. He tried to think of what had just happened and what it meant to the future of this people, but mostly he tried to have a vision. He fasted, he went without water, he lay on a pile of pebbles, he put sharp stones between his toes to keep from sleeping. He lay there for three days, but no vision came. No animals, no birds, not even an insect came to help him. He began to think that he was not destined to have a vision, that he was somehow different from his people [...]

But up on the bluff, young Curly felt only weakness and a growing sense of despair. At the end of the third day, he arose and walked down to get his horse and make his way back to camp. But when he came to the low place where his horse stood, he was too weak and dehydrated to go on. He sat down with his back against a cottonwood tree-and he dreamed. (119)

Welch also describes the careful preparations for the vision and shows Crazy Horse's emotional self. Both authors next describe Crazy Horse's dream. McMurtry writes:

The vision Crazy Horse (the still called Curly) achieved, after fasting alone for two days, has been variously reported. It seems he dreamed of a horseman, floating above the ground. The horseman was dressed plainly, was not painted, was in no way grand; the horse may have been dancing, or in some way

magical. The horseman told Crazy Horse not to adorn himself, not to wear a war bonnet; he was permitted a single feather at most. He was instructed to throw a little dust over his horse before going into battle, and to wear a small stone behind his ear. There may have been a battle in the vision, a battle in which the horseman had his arms held by one of his own people. But neither bullets nor arrows touched him. The horseman told Crazy Horse *never* to keep anything for himself. (33-34)

To describe the vision, McMurtry first mentions that there are several versions of Crazy Horse's dreams, which once again stresses the difficulty of finding verifiable facts about his life. He then proceeds to reconstruct the dream from these versions. He writes short sentences in an almost journalistic style, using expressions like "it seems", or, "there may have been" which convey a sense of uncertainty. McMurtry is more concerned about the veracity of the dream than about its significance for Crazy Horse and for his people. By drawing a strict line between factuality and myth, McMurtry is missing essential information to understand how that past was lived by the Oglala Sioux. By contrast, Welch says:

He dreamed of a horse moving through a sacred world –it was the real world behind this one. A man was riding the horse. The horse did not touch the ground, and the man was still, only the buckskin fringes of his moccasins stirring as he rode. In the dream were sky, trees, grass. The horse was so light on the earth it seemed to float. The man rode without effort. Then the horse changed colors, many different colors. The man wore blue leggings and a white buckskin shirt. He did not paint himself. He wore a small brown pebble behind his ear. The man rode the changing-color horse through enemy shadows; all the time streaks came toward him like arrows and bullets, but they never hit him. They disappeared. And he was riding through his own

people. They tried to touch him, to grab him, but he shook them off and rode on. Then he was in a thunderstorm and the man had a lightning streak on his face and hailstones on his body. The storm disappeared, and the people were grabbing at him again, making noises, and overhead a small hawk with a red back flew, crying. And that was the end of the dream. (119-120)

Whereas McMurtry draws a very general outline of the dream from unspecified sources, which probably include Mari Sandoz and E. A. Brininstool, Welch exclusively borrows from Mari Sandoz.¹⁷ He relies on her description of the dream and borrows the close connection between the dreamer and the protagonist of the dream. Sandoz establishes that connection by saying that Curly's horse "started toward him, his neck high, his feet moving free" (104) thus turning Curly's horse into the horse within the dream. Welch, on his part, indulges in a richly evocative and poetical prose where he becomes the story-teller and where he identifies with the subjects of his tale: Crazy Horse and the horseman. For the historian, such a move involves a radical shift from his position as translator of verifiable past events to a position as subjective narrator in the fiction genre.

McMurtry tries to offer an accurate description of what Crazy Horse must have seen in his dream by distancing himself from the sources and offering a basic outline of the facts. Yet, his reconstruction sounds hasty, bare and quite alien to Sioux traditions of dream interpretation and story telling. Rather than approaching Native American history from within, McMurtry interprets it through western parameters. Although McMurtry draws from several and varied sources when selecting information about Crazy Horse and he also acknowledges the long story of US affronts to the Native Americans, his historical reconstruction does not represent viewpoints beyond that of his own. McMurtry's reading of Crazy Horse derives directly from his vision of the West as a white man and his ideas about manhood stem from that white man's culture.

We must also consider whether James Welch is similarly representing just one viewpoint and ignoring other perspectives of history. Berkhofer rephrases this same question when asking: “Why should a historian accept those versions of others’ past experience as both representative and the best representation?” (*Beyond* 182). Berkhofer’s concern about the representation of past experience is also echoed by critic Satya P. Mohanty when pondering who best represents “the real interests of the group without fear of betrayal or misrepresentation” (Mohanty 202). To answer that question, Mohanty explores the subject of cultural identity, aligning himself neither with the essentialists who believe in the stable identity of the members of a group nor with the postmodernists who believe in the constructed nature of all identities. His definition of identity comes from the belief that experience can indeed provide reliable knowledge when properly interpreted since it can be evaluated in relation to the subject. Cultural and social identity, Mohanty says, is theoretically constructed but it refers outward, to the social world and that is what causes it to be real. In other words, experiences and identities can be evaluated taking into account how well they explain social reality. This approach makes it possible to account for epistemic privilege in oppressed or marginalized groups. Mohanty believes that granting epistemic privilege to the oppressed may be “the only way to push us toward greater social objectivity” since it brings forward an interpretation of experience to which our own epistemic views may be blind, thus allowing for the possibility to revise them (232-233).

Paula Moya has explained epistemic privilege as “a special advantage with respect to possessing or acquiring knowledge about how fundamental aspects of our society (such as race, class, gender, and sexuality) operate to sustain matrices of power” (Moya 80-81). Even when socially oppressed groups may have epistemic privilege, Moya says, that privilege is not inherent to social location that is, being a member of a socially oppressed group does not automatically provide someone with a better understanding of his experience. However, it

makes that access to knowledge possible in the sense that a person can extract information from a direct experience in a way a person outside the socially oppressed group cannot. In our context, that means James Welch has not been granted automatic epistemic privilege for having been born a Native American and lived in a Native American context but because he has actively engaged in the interpretation of the experience of the Native American within that very social location. As Sean Teuton states in his insightful study of Welch's *Winter in the Blood*, "identity functions as a *cognitive* (as opposed to a purely affective or emotional) apparatus through which American Indians evaluate personal and tribal experiences to produce more accurate knowledge of the social facts that constitute social locations" (635). It is epistemic privilege which James Welch is claiming in *Killing Custer* when stating that:

One of the common fallacies in regard to the Battle of the little Bighorn is that there were no survivors. There were plenty of survivors -Sioux and Cheyennes. Many of the seeming contradictions in their accounts have been reconciled with the new research. The village was three miles long, and the various participants were at different parts of the battlefield, seeing what was in front of them. The wide-angle lens wasn't available to them at the time. That is why there is no comprehensive Indian view of the battle. But their individual accounts can be stitched together to provide a very plausible story of the fight.

(22)

Recent archaeological and historical research has validated Native American accounts that had been disregarded up till now. James Welch is adding those testimonies to the vast bibliography on the battle and on the life of Crazy Horse while contextualizing that information within the Native American tradition. He is not exactly replacing the "white" viewpoint with the "Native American" one but questioning the former by introducing new perspectives and proposing a different social location from where to focus history. Thus,

dialogism enters the scene. Welch's Crazy Horse seems closer to the real historical character than McMurtry's Crazy Horse because the author has drawn him in accordance to Native American people and tradition. He has focused both on the individual Crazy Horse and on the communal and mythical Crazy Horse. Although at times fictionalized, Welch's Crazy Horse is a recognizable figure for the Native American, a character they can claim as part of their community. Welch's translation of Crazy Horse's dream points to the fusion between the real and the mythic dimension which lies at the core of Native American tradition and belief and which allows their people to find coherence in a meaningful whole. In Mohanty's terms, Welch's assessment of Crazy Horse has a better claim to truth than that of McMurtry's because it better accounts for Native American experience and Native American social location.

After Crazy Horse's dream, both authors comment on the role his father played in deciphering that dream. McMurtry's reconstruction shows a foolish young man who acts by impulse and an authoritative father who basically tells him off. His tone continues being flat and unemotional and he does not pay special attention to the father-son bond. He uses highly judgmental words like "right", "proper" or "violation" when referring to the way things were or were not done (34). Welch's choice of words and tone refer to a more intimate kind of relation between father and son, a relationship which talks about the fears and shames of an adolescent youth and the father's concern and understanding toward his coming-of-age son. Moreover, Welch stresses the spiritual significance of the dream for both the young Sioux and his father (120). In McMurtry's reconstruction, Crazy Horse follows the horseman's instructions telling him to dress like him whereas in Welch's reconstruction, Crazy Horse becomes the horseman. This semantic difference alone reveals the huge distance between McMurtry and Welch as historians of Native American experience and also tells us a lot about each author's understanding of terms like myth, reality, experience and legend.

In *The Sacred Hoop*, Paula Gunn Allen has defined myth as “a kind of story that allows a holistic image to pervade and shape consciousness, thus providing a coherent and empowering matrix for action and relationship” (104-105). She explains that “In the culture and literature of Indian America, the meaning of myth may be discovered, not as speculation about primitive long-dead ancestral societies but in terms of what is real, actual, and viable in living cultures in America (...) American Indian myths depend for their magic on relationship and participation (...) Only a participant in mythic magic can relate to the myth, can enter into its meaning on its own term” (105). Allen further describes how vision and visionary experience provide the base for this concept of myth: “Vision is a way of becoming whole, of affirming one’s special place in the universe, and myth, song and ceremony are ways of affirming vision’s place in the life of all people” (116). In James Welch’s work myth and visionary experience are understood in this sense.

In *Crazy Horse*, McMurtry follows the Western tradition of translating “myth” as fable instead of translating it as “ritual” so that the centrality of visionary experience for the Sioux people and, specifically, the Sioux male is lost in his portrayal of Crazy Horse. To ignore this central fact of Sioux experience seriously threatens the validity of Larry McMurtry empirical inquiry in the reconstruction of Crazy Horse’s history. Experience for the Sioux Native American included the belief in vision as ritual and myth as part of the real. This means that all present experience came to the Sioux individual loaded with that socially generated information and all future experience would necessarily be generated from that socially loaded premise. Establishing some kind of objectivity in the reconstruction of Crazy Horse’s experience as Sioux implies considering social location and all the webs of meaning generating inwards and outwards from that location.

In spite of all its criticism against the US policy towards the Native American and his attempt to render an unbiased and faithful reconstruction of Crazy Horse’s life and death,

McMurtry's biography reverts to the discourse of the Vanishing Indian and its image as primitive. This is overtly shown in his references to the 1851 Fort Laramie treaty and Native American tribal warfare. Here he cites passages from Wilfred Thesiger and Peter Matthiessen's reports on African and New Guinea tribes as valid examples of what the Native Americans must have been like at the time. In the first of these passages, McMurtry quotes Wilfred Thesiger's words:

The Zulu impi parading before Chake, or the dervishes drawn up to do battle in front of Omdurman, could have appeared no more barbaric than this frenzied tide of men which surged past the royal pavilion throughout the day, to the thunder of the war drums and the blare of the war horns, [...] they were still wild with the excitement of those frantic hours [...] The blood on the clothes which they had stripped from the dead and draped over their horses was barely dry ... (21-22)

McMurtry has selected this passage as the one that "best suggests the splendour and the wildness of the tribes" (21) gathered at the 1851 Fort Laramie council. Welch does not provide a description of this particular council but in his historical novel *Fools Crow* he reconstructs the 1870 New Year's Day meeting between General Alfred H. Sully and four chiefs of the Blackfoot Nation, a meeting called by General Sully to ask the Blackfeet for the delivery of the murderers of the trader Malcolm Clark (273-284). The two meetings may differ in the numbers and rank of people attending, the final outcome and maybe in the nature of the business but they both took place between people who mistrusted each other, whose interests were radically opposed and who wanted to get the most for their people. In that respect, Welch's description is far more accurate in its conveyance of the tensions, the misgivings and the seriousness of the meeting than McMurtry's reference to the exoticism of the Addis Ababa meeting.

Further on, McMurtry quotes a passage from Peter Matthiesen that describes the latter's impressions about African tribal warfare. McMurtry's intention is to provide the reader with a visual image of what Sioux raiding expeditions may have been like. Again, this has the effect of stressing Native American primitivism and barbarism:

The shouting was increasing in ferocity, and several men from each side would dance out and feign attacks, whirling and prancing to display their splendor. They were jeered and admired by both sides and were not shot at, for display and panoply were a part of war, which was less war than ceremonial sport, a wild fierce festival [...] Toward mid-morning a flurry of arrows was exchanged....soon a great shout rose up out of the distance, and the Kurely answered it exultantly, hoo-ah. Hoo-ah-h, hua hua, hua... (31-32)

To this passage, McMurtry adds some comments of his own:

Add horses and you get something not very unlike what the Sioux did when they went out on a day's raiding. Once the two sides faced off, there would be lots of shouting, taunting, feints, dashes, with now and then an injury and now and then a death, after which, tribal honor having been defended and acts of individual bravery performed and witnessed, everyone yelled a few more times and went home. (32)

McMurtry's description of Sioux raiding expeditions makes us think of childish games of pretence and dare. Instead of considering Native American social location and examining the raiding expeditions within the more complex categories of Native American manhood, individual and communal identity, McMurtry uses the white lens to describe a raiding party as primitive performance. In *Fools Crow*, James Welch describes first a Pikuni raiding party and then a vengeance party against a Crow camp (12-39, 142-148). The episodes do not reproduce any specific historical Pikuni raiding party but are shaped in the

fashion of usual Pikuni raiding parties at the time. James Welch's narrative not only follows the moment of the attack but all the preparations beforehand, the actions leading to it and the consequences afterwards. The narrative is focalised through the eyes of the protagonist, White Man's Dog / Fools Crow, which allows the reader to see both the external action and also the inner anxieties and conflicting tensions of a young Pikuni male during his coming of age. Individual worth, bravery, shame, guilt, communal responsibility and thirst for recognition are all carefully exposed in these two accounts.

McMurtry retakes the account of Crazy Horse's life in chapter 14. Interestingly enough, he introduces the chapter with these words: "This book is about Crazy Horse, not Custer. That erratic egoist has been studied more than enough" (97) which almost sounds like an apology for having suspended Crazy Horse's life narrative for three chapters. As the Lewis and Clark Great Story, though, the Custer Great Story also "looms" over the narrative of the West and over McMurtry's account of Crazy Horse. The link is historically necessary because of their encounter in Little Bighorn and in the August 4th 1873 skirmish where they saw, but did not recognize, each other for the first time. Yet, Welch and McMurtry have a different perception of these encounters. They both coincide in the initial narrative of the first encounter: a force of Sioux and Cheyenne warriors led by Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse surprised the 7th Cavalry as they were having a nap. There are two essential differences between both accounts, though. The first one deals with the reasons why the Cavalry came almost unharmed out of the skirmish. Welch thinks it was caused by the "impetuousness of the young warriors and their lack of firearms" (91) whereas McMurtry ascribes it to faulty planning on the part of the attackers. The second deals with the myth of Custer. In *Killing Custer*, Welch writes:

Neither he (Crazy Horse) nor the other Indians recognized "Long Hair," just as they didn't later at the Little Bighorn. It has become part of the Custer myth

that all the Indians on the northern and southern plains knew him on sight and called him “Son of the Morning Star”. It was only the Arikaras, and possibly the Crows, both allies, who called him that. (91)

But McMurry’s version clearly contradicts Welch’s when saying that: “the Cheyennes noticed Custer’s hair, which was still long, and remembered the massacre on the Washita” (76). The Sioux and Cheyennes certainly did not recognize Custer in the Battle of the Little Bighorn¹⁸ and it is very likely that they did not recognise him before either, as Welch states. In any case, McMurry’s remark skilfully turns a mundane surprise attack into a vengeance attack, which is much more powerful narratively. Surprisingly enough, he feels the need to justify why the Cheyennes recognised Custer and ventures that “perhaps a few of the warriors who had survived that fight were now back visiting their cousins”.¹⁹

McMurry’s speculation is on the loose on several occasions throughout the book. One of the most flagrant cases is the description of the Indians camped at the big bend of the Rosebud River in Montana on early June 1876 and the subsequent portrayal of Sitting Bull’s Sun Dance ceremony. Chapter 13 begins thus:

What we know for sure is that when June rolled around in 1876 there were a great many Indians, of several tribes, camped in southern Montana, with a fair number of soldiers moving west and north to fight them. Early June of that year may have been a last moment of confidence for the Plains Indians: they were many, they had meat, and they were in *their* place: let the soldiers come. (92)

McMurry’s trick in this paragraph is to secure objectivity by means of a strongly assertive sentence: “what we know for sure”. “What we know for sure” implies not only the information we can gather from historical sources, which once more he does not provide, but also all that the American public knows/imagines about the Native Americans who

fought Custer. Objectivity is not what the paragraph exactly provides, though. It is understandable that given the constraints of the narrative form used -the short biography- and the intended audience of the book, McMurtry does not linger on explanations about the different tribes and the everyday life activity going on. Yet, “a great many Indians” and “a fair number of soldiers” sounds a bit too rash and general. The reference to their numbers, supplies and confidence suggest the Indians were actually waiting for the white man to come, and the whole paragraph climaxes towards a final sentence, “let the soldiers come”, that has the effect to turn the historical scene into a more familiar scene of a cowboy and Indians movie. “What we know for sure” is actually far better described by Welch:

In early June of 1876, on a hot dry plains day, several bands of Teton Sioux or, as they called themselves, Lakotas, held a sacred ceremony at the Deer Medicine Rocks [...] Present were the Hunkpapas, Oglalas, Minneconjous, Blackfeet Sioux, and Sans Arcs, and a few families of the Bruleés. A holy man, experienced and honored by the people, selected the right rustling-leaf tree for the lodgepole, the centerpiece of the ceremony. Several warriors counted coup on the trunk before a group of chosen virgins set upon the tree with axes. (49)

Welch’s account is more faithful to the historical accounts that include explanations on the gathering of the Indians and the Sun Dance ceremony.²⁰ His paragraph focuses on the work of the holy man and the warriors, making it clear that the reason for the gathering was not to prepare war on the white men but to prepare a religious ceremony. After carefully explaining the preparations for the Sun Dance Ceremony which took place annually, Welch explains why this particular gathering was so exceptional:

But this Sun Dance on the Rosebud in early June of 1876 was a special one, if only because it had been called for by the head chief, Sitting Bull. He had prepared for this dance a few days before by losing his long braids, removing

the feather from his hair, washing off his red paint, and filling his long pipe with tobacco. He climbed a high butte along with his nephew White Bull and his adopted brother Jumping Bull and vowed before these witnesses that he would sacrifice for the good of his people. (50)

McMurtry refers to the Sun Dance soon afterwards but again considers it from the viewpoint of an individual instead of connecting it to the whole community, thereby ignoring all the ritual significance of the ceremony. The complex Sun Dance ceremony is here reduced to the shocking experience of having one hundred strips of skin cut. Sitting Bull's huge physical and emotional strain is translated as a "swoon" and the intimate bond established between the sun dancer and the community around him, which actually invests the ceremony with significance, has disappeared (93). Welch's account on page 51 leaves aside the neutral voice of the historian and focalises the historical episode through the characters. This time, the narrative style includes filmic techniques that have the effect of carrying the reader into the heart of the event.

Focalization here comes not only from Sitting Bull but also from Jumping Bull, from the Indians sitting around the chief and from Black Moon. Every change of focus implies a change of shot and angle so that the reader not only sees Sitting Bull, Jumping Bull, Black Moon and the other Indians from an extradiegetical position, but sees Sitting Bull diegetically from Jumping Bull's eyes, sees the sitting Indians from Sitting Bull eye's in high angle shot, and inversely sees Sitting Bull in low angle shot from the Indian's eyes. Instead of using adjectives to colour the description of the ceremony, Welch combines nouns and verbs to create clear images that the reader/viewer can easily visualize: legs straight out, long hair loose, arms covered in blood. Third person narrative is even replaced by Black Moon's first person voice that, in another diegetical movement, jumps into Sitting Bull's vision when telling the audience what Sitting Bull has seen. Black Moon's use of direct speech "I give

you this because they have no ears” (*Killing Custer* 51) shortens the distance between the two diegetic levels within the narrative: the intradiegesis where Sitting Bull, Black Moon and the sitting Indians are located and the hypodiegesis from where the man in the dream speaks. Not only that, Black Moon is also the narrator who enables us readers in an extradiegetic level to access hypodiegesis. What James Welch accomplishes throughout this passage is to place readers within the social location of the Native American, a position from which they can grasp the intricate social and cultural web of communal ritual.

Welch describes the killing and death of Crazy Horse in Fort Robinson using a similar technique. After reconstructing the violent scene of his death in the open space of the reservation ground, Welch takes the reader into a more intimate space where Crazy Horse lies dying on the floor of an office surrounded by his father Worm and Touch the Clouds. Night sets in and Crazy Horse whispers onto his father’s ears: “Ah, my father, I am hurt bad –tell the people it is no use to depend on me anymore” (251). Crazy Horse dies and Touch the Clouds walks outside and says to the Oglala Indians in the reservation: “It is well, [...] He has looked for death and it has come” (251). Both the scene of the killing and the death of Crazy Horse are narrated in a highly filmic visual style. Focalization changes from Crazy Horse to the guards, to Touch the Clouds, to Crazy Horse again and back to Touch the Clouds who, as Black Moon before, works as mediator between the audience and one of the characters. Welch cites Frazier, Ambrose, Sandoz and the Eleanor Hinman interviews as sources although most of it, including Crazy Horse’s words, come mainly from Sandoz.²¹

Unlike Welch, who decides to fictionalize the episode of his death, McMurtry offers what seems an objective voice which again introduces reports from various witnesses and makes use of the third person neutral narrator. Written accounts of the killing and death of Crazy Horse abound and they include the oral testimonies of both Native American and white witnesses.²² McMurtry mainly draws the information to describe the episode of his arrival to

Fort Robinson and his killing from Brinnigstool and Bourke²³ and, to a lesser extent, from the Hinman interviews and Sandoz²⁴. For once, McMurtry is very explicit in citing and commenting on the sources used to describe the scene of Crazy Horse's death: Sandoz, Ian Frazier, Peter Nabokov, Evan S. Jr. Conell, the Baptiste Pourier Interview²⁵ and Neidhart's Black Elk. Yet, the scene is not described in much detail. Far from it, the comments about the sources and McMurtry's scepticism towards them turn the reconstruction of Crazy Horse's last moment into a sketchy, patched and distanced account. Curiously enough, McMurtry decides to include Crazy Horse's alleged speech to Agent Jesse Lee²⁶ in its supposed totality, even when doubting its ever having been uttered.

Whereas Welch chooses to stress the close and intimate bond between father and son by including the supposed word interchange between them,²⁷ McMurtry prefers to focus on the encounter between the red man and the white man by writing the words told to Agent Jesse Lee. In this speech, Crazy Horse refers to the Native American traditional way of life and the tragic end put to it by the sudden arrival of the white man, and this clearly serves McMurtry's purpose of contextualising Crazy Horse's death within the white discourse of the Vanishing Indian. What is surprising is that McMurtry expresses his doubts about the veracity of the account only after having fully quoted the speech and that, right after, he refers to Sandoz' account of the conversation between father and son. He introduces some slight variations: ““Son, I am here.” [...] ‘Father, it is no good for the people to depend on me any longer- I am bad hurt’”, he writes (138). McMurtry omits from Sandoz the onomatopoeic word “Ahhh-h”, the possessive “my” accompanying “father” and he changes the order of Crazy Horse's first and second clauses. The effect is radically different. There is no reference to Crazy Horse's physical pain and no warmth between father and son. McMurtry thus deprives Crazy Horse of his emotional self. Furthermore, he interprets this interchange in the

light of a “tragic simplicity” that “puts us back with the Greeks” and he adds a last paint stroke by qualifying Touch the Cloud’s possible intervention as “Shakespearean”.

In all likelihood the authors are citing either from *On the Border with Crook* by John Gregory Bourke, or from other authors who have included the Baptiste Pourier Interview.²⁸ Bourke quotes Touch the Cloud as having said: “It is good; he has looked for death and it has come”, and he continues “The body was delivered to his friend after his death” (422). In *Killing Custer*, Welch writes:

Touch the Clouds, sensing that the death of his great leader might trigger a new round of hostility, a senseless, futile violence when survival was all that mattered, walked outside and addressed the dark assemblage: “It is well,” he said quietly. “He has looked for death and it has come.” (251)

Welch transcribes almost the same words quoted in Bourke except that he replaces “good” with “well”. He focalizes the scene through Touch the Clouds, shows his concern for his people and moves him outside of the office where he says those words to soothe the expecting audience. This last interpretation contrasts with the accounts that keep Touch the Clouds inside the office. Touch the Clouds works as a mediator figure between the leader and the community, between the characters and the readers. Welch’s “It is well” means not only that Crazy Horse is finally at peace but also that his people should not look for trouble by claiming revenge. It is his intervention that prevents possible violence. McMurtry writes:

When he saw that Crazy Horse was dead, he pulled the blanket over him and said. “This is the lodge of Crazy Horse.” He may also have said: “This is good. He sought death and now he has found it”. (138)

This passage is more faithful to the source since McMurtry keeps Touch the Clouds inside and refers to him covering Crazy Horse’s body. Some changes and omissions should be noted, though. The Baptiste Interview refers to Touch the Cloud touching Crazy Horse’s

chest, which McMurtry omits. McMurtry again distances himself from the historical character by including two versions of Touch the Cloud's words. Finally, he makes a significant change by replacing "has looked for" with "sought" and "has come" with "has found". McMurtry's words imply that Crazy Horse actively sought death, that he preferred to die rather than to live behind bars. Further on he contrasts the Oglala chief's attitude to that of Sitting Bull and Geronimo saying that "Crazy Horse, daring and brave as a warrior, was in other ways not as tough a nut" (138). In Welch's account, seeing that his time has come, Crazy Horse is ready to die. Crazy Horse does not stop wanting to live but, following the Native American code of the warrior, accepts death as it comes. Seeking objectivity, McMurtry is in fact offering an interpretation that goes against all ideas of Native American honour, bravery and commitment to the people.

According to Satya R. Mohanty's postpositivist realism theory, objectivity is not reached through the elimination of all bias, which is impossible since experience is theoretically and socially mediated, but by examining the consequences of all those biases through the account of causality. In *Crazy Horse*, McMurtry wants to achieve neutrality as a historian using two main strategies: first, by criticising the American scheme of colonization, he tries to eliminate what we could call the Turnerian bias, the right of white Manifest Destiny at the expense of Native American people. Second, he doubts the claim to truth of all the historical accounts which cannot be empirically verified or which contradict each other. This combined move leaves him with scant material for his historical reconstruction, a problem which he seems to solve by providing his personal comments about Native American culture. When judging that culture from his constructed social location as a white American male, he is however providing his own claims to truth, something which he has denied others. In the approach to the historical figure of Crazy Horse, McMurtry applies Euramerican notions of masculinity to qualify him, completely disregarding Native

American considerations of manhood. Rather than a Native American Sioux chief, McMurtry's Crazy Horse is a combination of Vanishing Indian and glorious cowboy in the guise of the iconic Marlboro man. Thus, from the beginning McMurtry's defines Crazy Horse as a "loner" and an enigmatic chief, fitting him into the mould of the solitary cowboy who willingly rejects life in society but who will nonetheless come to the rescue of his people in time of need. McMurtry stresses Crazy Horse's independence and free spirit, but persistently fails to address the subject of Crazy Horse's profound spirituality and deep connection with his people. This disassociation makes it possible to consider Crazy Horse as the primitive American holding the essence of the Euramerican original soul. Even when McMurtry's intentions were to denounce the white construct of the Indian, he has not been able to escape its hold.

Welch's strategy in dealing with Crazy Horse takes a more radical turn. It is quite risky in the sense he highly favours fictionalized history and chooses to focalize history through the eyes of some of its participants. But this apparently subjective bias turns out to be much closer to how Native Americans lived reality. As McMurtry, Welch also seeks objectivity in the reconstruction of history. Yet, the Native American conception of reality requires to define objectivity in slightly different terms. As Arnold Krupat notes in *Red Matters*, in Native historiography "communal, cultural agreement on the interpretive truth of the narrative is what determines its historicity, apart from any disagreement that might (or, to be sure, might not) exist to the facts of the matter" (53).

From a postpositivist perspective, it is possible to gain knowledge through experience even when it is socially mediated. Actually, it is only from social location and experience that some kind of knowledge can be reached. This means Native American culture cannot and should not be approached from Euramerican scepticism for this will leave us with a skewed and inaccurate explanation of how Native Americans are shaped and in

turn shape experience. Crazy Horse cannot be considered outside the context of his social location as nineteenth century Sioux male, so any portrayal approaching that social location will always lie closer to the truth than any other portrayal overlooking it. Because Welch has taken Sioux social location into account when dealing with Crazy Horse's masculinity, identity and mythical dimension, he has a better claim to knowledge.

James Welch's *Fools Crow* has been qualified as historical fiction since the events it describes keep a close resemblance with historical facts and since the characters appearing, even when fictitious themselves, emulate the lives and context of other people who did exist in that past. Confronted with the events in the past, Welch finds himself in the role of the historian who uses a text to represent and interpret that past. His is the choice to regard that past either as contextual or as textual that is, to go for the Great Past or to analyse the past as another text arranged in layers. From a Native American perspective, this choice can prove extremely tricky. Adding the Native American viewpoint contributes to the decentering and the demystification of history as Great Past and Great Story. Yet, considering reality as a socially constructed text endangers the referentiality that Native American communities need to make a stand against ethnocentrism. While in McMurtry's case the encounter with the Native American compels him to choose between appropriation/mystification or recognition/demystification, in Welch's case the historical encounter with the white man poses a more complicated problem. On the one hand, representing Pikuni history as referential past for the Native American community allows to debunk the Great Story of the American West, that is, it unveils the trope of the American West as a social construction. On the other, the commitment to a referential past may create another Great Story, in this case the Great Story of the Native American West. James Welch's narrative uses several strategies to solve this problem and to present Pikuni history both as referential and as textual past. One of these is the inclusion of "retroactive prophecy".²⁹

In her study of retroactive prophecy in contemporary Native American texts, scholar Lori Burlingame refers to Jarold Ramsey's definition: "one of a numerous set of native texts, some mythological and others historical or personal, in which an event or deed in pre-contact times is dramatized as being prophetic of some consequence of the coming of the white" (1). As Ramsey observes, the important thing about retroactive prophecy is that the tragic consequences of the arrival of the white man are already inscribed in Native American cosmogony. For Burlingame, the use of retroactive prophecy in contemporary Native American literature allows "empowerment through self-responsibility and cultural awareness and reconnection" (2). Burlingame argues that retroactive prophecy can challenge Euramerican constructions of the Indian by letting the Native American reinscribe the past (2).

Retroactive prophecy as inserted and incorporated in *Fools Crow* defies normal historical practice in several ways. First of all, it challenges the tradition of considering chronological time as an objective entity that sequences the narrative. Robert F. Berkhofer has noted that in normal historical practice past time is invariably taken as chronological time: "Historical time as chronology is treated as exterior to the events said to occur (...) historians assume chronological time to be as universal, directional and measurable as physical time" (109). The introduction of flashback, flash forward or/and synchrony, Berkhofer argues, subverts chronological sequencing and the consideration of history as an arranged and unilinear succession of events. In *Fools Crow* time ceases to be directional, measurable and chronologically sequential. Retroactive prophecy appears in chapter 33 with the effect of binding mythic past, critical present and uncertain future together. It is not just a metaphorical or an allegorical binding, for the passage brings together the physical presence of people inhabiting three different moments in time. When the vision takes place, mythical Feather Woman, the "real" Fools Crow in the present and the Pikuni of the future materialize in the

same frame. Rather than being an external agent, time in James Welch's narrative is completely embedded in social location.

Besides the challenge to linearity, retroactive prophecy introduces a strong political stance by calling for communal tradition at a time when modernity is about to shatter the Pikuni world. James Welch's summoning of the past as a source of tribal empowerment is an act of what scholar Tom Mould calls traditionalization, "a symbolic quality granted to elements of culture in an ongoing interpretive process that establishes continuity with the past by standing in opposition to modernity" (259). Inscribing the story of the arrival of the white man in Native American cosmogony is not just a strategy to cope with a tragic present but a political act of recovery, in this case, the recovery of Native American agency. Native American history is not divided into two distinct periods marked by the arrival of the white man but is considered an encompassing unity represented by the mystical circle where synchronic time is possible.

Larry McMurtry's *Lonesome Dove* is a fictionalized story set in a particular and very significant historical time. Most characters and events are pure fiction although some of the characters are inspired from real historical characters and many of the narrated events emulate incidents that took place in the 1870s West. The accumulation of all these events in just one story is what turns it into complete fiction but also what paradoxically makes some critics talk about the novel as a "portrayal of the American West as it really was".³⁰ The West of the Imagination is portrayed through the evocative tone of the novel, through the nostalgia for a bygone era, the sense of doom hanging on the characters or the presence of almost mythical figures like the brave Willbarger or the evil Blue Duck. Even when McMurtry challenges a triumphalist conception of the West and persistently uses irony to turn upside down some of the most powerful myths of the West -like that of the stoic cowboy-, history seen as Great Past pervades great part of his narrative.

Linearity and empirical reality frame *Lonesome Dove*. Events in the novel follow strict chronological time. With the brief exception of Pea Eye's heroic walk in Chapter 94, there is no incursion of the supernatural world into the real world because for the Euramerican cowboy this earth is all that exists. Even in the passage when Pea Eye feels that the dead Deets is guiding him towards the cowboy outfit, it is clear that the apparition is only answering Pea Eye's inner fears and anxieties. While *Fools Crow* tries to bridge the gap between the past and the present, *Lonesome Dove* seems to delight in the contemplation of an irretrievable lost past and to stress disruption and discontinuity. One such example is the reference to the archetype of the loss-of-community. According to Robert F. Berkhofer, one of the Great Stories in normal historical practice is the change from *Gemeinschaft*, community, to *Gesellschaft*, association, a change which implies a movement "from an older, usually static model of earlier era or society to a newer or present-day, usually dynamic, society or era" (*Beyond* 132). Examples of this Great Story are history books which present The Middle Ages against the Industrial Era of the 18th and 19th or static Native American cultures as opposed to dynamic America. The *Gemeinschaft* to *Gesellschaft* Great Story relies on the idea of progress. The narrative model for this loss-of-community archetype is what Berkhofer calls the "community-go-smash-plot" which is so pervasive that even conscious historians "who try to sidestep the traditional Great Story of community from *gemeinschaft* to *gesellschaft* organize their texts according to this model" (*Beyond* 132).

The community-go-smash-plot appears as leitmotiv in many of McMurtry's novels. Many of his novels are located in an age of transition between the agrarian and the industrial eras. On the other hand, several of the characters appearing in these novels are often at a loss when having to adapt to the new circumstances. In *Lonesome Dove*, the cowboys of the Hat Creek outfit foretell the arrival of industrialization in Montana just as McMurtry exposes, ironizes and recreates the elegiac spirit of the Western Great Story. Western stories usually

contrast the white Euramerican *Gesellschaft* to the Indian *Gemeinschaft*. In McMurtry's novel, the white *Gesellschaft* appears even more atomized, scattered throughout vast deserts and unforgiving land or, when concentrated in big cities, surrounded by game, liquor and lust. The cowboy *Gesellschaft* as represented by the Hat Creek outfit strives to turn into an all-male *Gemeinschaft* but gradually dissolves throughout the novel with the death of its members. Only women such as Clara and, eventually, Lorena, hold on and keep the promise of a longed for but rejected *Gemeinschaft*. Because the white man has "wiped out" the Indian, there is no trace of the Native American *Gemeinschaft* in the novel either. All that is left is poor, hungry or deranged Indians cut off from past and also future. Because McMurtry's aging protagonists are really mourning the loss of a community that never was, theirs will always be a never-ending journey proceeding in circles.

NOTES

¹ According to historian Charles N. Bell “enemy country” refers to Blackfoot territory. Kelsey’s journal entry as cited by Bell reads:

"Now, being in their enemy's country, I had eight Indians for my conduct, one of wch [sic] could speak both languages for to be my interpreter, so set forward, and having travelled to-day nearer 30 miles in ye [sic] evening came to in a small poplo Island wch [sic] standeth out from ye main ridge of woods because these Indians are greatly afraid of their enemies". See Bell par. 48.

² For more information on their journeys and their encounters with Native American tribes, see La Vérendrye.

³ Archithinue is a Cree term meaning “outlanders or strangers”. Although Hendry did not specify who the Archithinue Indians were, it is believed that he most likely met Blackfeet. For the description of this meeting, see Hendry 331.

⁴ For journal entry, see Hendry 337-338.

⁵ See Jefferson, Letter to Congress. 18th January 1803.

⁶ The Doctrine can be traced back to the times of the Christian Crusades in the 11th century and was further elaborated and reinforced by the Spanish and Portuguese monarchies in the 15th century. It rested, among other documents, on the Bull Romanus Pontifex of 1459 issued by Nicholas V to Portuguese King Alfonso V, the Papal Bull Inter Caetera of 1493 issued by Pope Alexander VI at the request of the Spanish King and Queen Isabela and the 1512 Requerimiento.

⁷ Binnema, *Common & Contested*; and also Binnema, “Allegiances and Interests: Niitsitapi (Blackfoot) Trade, Diplomacy, and Warfare, 1806-1831”; Judy “Powder Keg on

the Upper Missouri: Sources of Blackfeet Hostility, 1730-1810"; Confer, "The Beginning and the End. Lewis and Clark among the Upper Missouri River People."

⁸ John Leydard's account of James Cook's exploration and Alexander Mackenzie's book on the journey to the Pacific Ocean had a particular influence on Lewis and Clark's expedition since the publication of those books made Jefferson see the urgency to undertake the journey before the British and the French could claim sovereignty to the West. See Munford; McKenzie.

⁹ The term was coined by US explorer Major Stephen H. Long in 1820 and referred to the expanse of territory which encompassed most of the country west of the Missouri river (nowadays Oklahoma, Kansas, Nebraska, Montana, the Dakotas and Wyoming) and east of the foot-hills of the Rocky Mountains (Colorado, a part of Texas and New Mexico).

¹⁰ The legend of the discovery of the New World by the Welsh Prince Madoc in 1170 and the existence of a tribe of Welsh Indians that descended from him produced a considerable amount literature at the time. Amongst the active seekers of this legend was John Evans, whose maps of the Missouri were sent to Lewis and Clark for their expedition by Jefferson. For more information on the John Evans journey into the West, see Williams.

¹¹ For information on the Salt Mountain legend, see Thomas D. Isern.

¹² The myth of male fraternity has particular force in the filmic Western. Relevant examples are *Red River*, *The Magnificent Seven*, *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* or, more recently, *Open Range* and *Unforgiven*.

¹³ Even when the Nebraska version of the Journals includes the journals from Meriwether Lewis, William Clark, Charles Floyd, John Ordway, Patrick Gass and Joseph Whitehouse, any dialogism that may arise from the different narrators is neutralised by the spirit of the Doctrine of Discovery guiding the whole expedition.

¹⁴ Berkhofer differentiates between Great Story and metanarrative or grand-recite saying that whereas all metanarratives are Great Stories, not all Great Stories are metanarrative since they “can be organized according to a scheme different from any of the classic or more recent metanarratives.” See Berkhofer, *Beyond* 39.

¹⁵ Normal historical practice is the name Berkhofer has given to the traditional approach to history. He defines it in the following way: “Normal historical practice depends on the use of professionally accepted methods for obtaining facts about the past from surviving evidence, or sources. [...] Thus from sources presumed to be about as well as from the past or history, the normal historian creates generalizations that are assembled into a synthesis that is once again in the present called (a) history.” See *Beyond* 28.

¹⁶ Sources of Native American history also include rock, buffalo hide, robe, tipi and ledger paintings that usually depicted events in the life of warriors and chiefs through scenes of war, hunting or religious ceremonies.

¹⁷ See Mari Sandoz, *Crazy Horse* 104-105.

¹⁸ Chief Crow King reported that “No warrior knew Custer in the fight. We did not know him, dead or alive. When the fight was over the chiefs gave orders to look for the long-haired chief among the dead, but no chief with long hair could be found. (Custer had his hair cut short before starting on this march.)” while Black Elk said that “I did not see Pahuska, and I think nobody knew which one he was”. See W.A. Graham 76-78 and Neidhart 96.

¹⁹ Welch provides a direct source for the passage of the skirmish between Cheyennes and Custer: Stephen E. Ambrose, an author whom McMurtry does not seem to favour much if we are to judge from the comment he includes about his book *Crazy Horse and Custer: The Parallel Lives of Two American Warriors*. Although McMurtry qualifies it as “a good book” he adds that it is “not free of abundant speculation. The author is riding a hobbyhorse

and keeps it in a high trot throughout” (143). Yet, McMurtry’s own explanation of how the Cheyennes recognised “Long Hair” seems highly speculative.

²⁰ See Sandoz 311-313; Brown 287-289; Neihardt 95-99; Vestal 148-51.

²¹ There is controversy about the actual words that Crazy Horse uttered when stabbed and dying. Welch quotes Sandoz when transcribing Crazy Horse’s words but the Hinman interviews do not include the same words. See Sandoz 06-13; Hinman 21.

²² Native American accounts from He Dog, Red Feather and White Calf can be found in the Eleanor Hinman’s interviews. White accounts can be found in Hardoff and Brininstool.

²³ The information about the ride to Fort Robinson, references to Crazy Horse’s mood and Dr McGillicuddy recollections on pages 128-129 and 135 are from Brinningstool 45-48; references to Little Big Man’s version of the episode on pages 131 and 132 are taken from Bourke 415-422.

²⁴ References to He Dog’s account on page 134 are taken from the Hinman interviews. Crazy Horse’s words at being stabbed are from Sandoz, although slightly varied. Sandoz writes “Let me go my friends (..) You have got me hurt enough”, the words Welch also uses whereas McMurtry writes “let me go my friend-you have hurt me plenty bad.” (408)

²⁵ The Pourier interview is taken from “Gen. Jesse M. Lee's Account of the Killing of Chief Crazy Horse at Fort Robinson, Nebr.” in E. A. Brininstool’s *Invincible Oglalla Sioux Chief*.

²⁶ See the Pourier interview in Brininstool.

²⁷ According to Sandoz, the conversation could have gone something like this: “Son, I am here” (..) “Ahh-h, my father, “he whispered. “I’m bad hurt. Tell the people it is no use to depend on me any more now” (412-413). Welch transcribes that almost word by word: “Ah, my father, I am hurt bad -tell the people it is no use to depend on me anymore.” See Welch 251.

²⁸ See Hardoff 185.

²⁹ The term was coined by Jarold Ramsey in *Reading the Fire: Essays in Traditional Indian Literatures of the Far West*.

³⁰ See *Lonesome Dove*'s backcover.

CHAPTER 3

MASCULINITY AND THE OTHER IN *LONESOME DOVE*

If I can find a squaw I like, I'm apt to marry her. The thing is, if I'm going to be treated like an Indian, I might as well act like one. I think we spent our best years fighting on the wrong side. (McMurtry, *Lonesome Dove* 358)

Anything could come out of the darkness –Indians, bandits, snakes.
(McMurtry, *Lonesome Dove* 705)

As seen in the first chapter, the rise of industrial America at the turn of the 20th century had invalidated traditional standards of masculinity, to which a significant number of white males responded by defining their masculinity against minority groups like blacks, women or homosexuals. At the turn of the 21st century, the expansion of corporate America caused similar feelings of confusion and fragmentation amongst the white male. The re-emergence of traditional ideals of masculinity within an important sector of American males was also set against minority groups perceived as Others: women, Latino, Asians, Native Americans, black or homosexuals. Parallel to this movement, another group of American males tried to rescue the real soul of the male without renouncing sensitivity or emotion. Inserted within this broader context, the question of male national identity not only concerns the characters in *Lonesome Dove* but the same Larry McMurtry who finds himself trying simultaneously to retrieve and to go past a definition of the American male based on multi-layered and paradoxical masculinities.

In the present chapter I postulate the following. First, that McMurtry's *Lonesome Dove* reads both as mythical and as anti-mythical Western for it eulogizes at the same time

than criticizes the conventions of the genre. Second, that McMurtry's exposure of the contradictions within the multi-layered masculinity of the Western is well-meant but partial because it undervalues the complexity of the construct of white masculinity. Third, that his critique of Western masculinism is incomplete because it misses a proper examination of *Inindianation*, that is, the process of constructing American national character through the erasure of the Native American and the subsequent appropriation of his identity.

The Huge Indian Haunting my Sleep:¹ the Fetishised Indian

In the Great Story of the American cowboy, the Indian is the fetishistic stereotype that allows the American male/colonizer to assume an identity based on the ideal of original purity. Homi Bhabha's interpretation of the colonial stereotype as fetish proves particularly apt to examine the contradictions inherent in the construction and development of American national identity, for it points at the ambivalence of colonial discourse in its reflection of both fear and desire. Bhabha argues that the colonizer projects his fears onto the Other at the same time that he desires him, since the colonizer places the colonized as repository of his hidden fantasies (66-84). In other words, the colonizer not only covets his own space but that of the colonized. In the case of the Euramerican colonizer, desire for the Native American exceeds fantasies about an unrepressed, wilder and more exotic self and appears as overwhelming urge to replace the Native American in his condition of original inhabitant of the land. The construct of American national identity rests upon a paradoxical foundation where both the white man and the red man have a claim to original purity. Occupation and violence towards the Native American is justified by a colonial discourse that constructs "the colonized as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin" (Bhabha 70). Within this discourse, it is the white man who has the claim to pure origin. On the other hand though, if the Euramerican is to construct himself as a new breed of man, he needs to claim another

kind of purity not shared by the European. As Helen Carr notes in *Inventing the American Primitive*, “The idea that the American colonist was, like the Indian, natural and virtuous by contrast with the corrupt, over-civilised European court was a constant motif in independence rhetoric” (24).²

I argue here that Larry McMurtry’s attempt to expose hegemonic masculinity as portrayed in the Western narrative succeeds only partially because it undervalues the conflicting relationship with the Other born out of the ambivalent play between fear and desire. In *Lonesome Dove*, McMurtry is at his best when revealing the high toll the American male and society at large have paid when glorifying a male role model based on masculinism; namely emotional drainage, social decomposition and a drive towards self-destruction. But when it comes to tackling the confrontation between the Native American and the white man, he loses insight. In my view, this is not caused by his nostalgia for an epic past or an epic narrative but by a failure in dealing with the paradoxes that the construction of American national identity had generated already two hundred years ago. McMurtry’s criticism of Western stereotypes fails to address the full extent of the effects of a colonial project that combined aggressiveness and narcissism³ to diminish the Other.

Criticism of *Lonesome Dove* has only secondarily focused on the question of the Other or the portrayal of the Native American. Although there are several studies referring to the inclusion of the Native American as alien Other, these examinations fail to deal with the appropriation of Indianness by the white male or the consequences of assuming an identity defined by opposition to the Other. Basically, criticism of *Lonesome Dove* falls into two main categories although a few position themselves in between. In the first category fit all the critics who consider the novel as pro-Western. They argue the novel reasserts the values and topics traditionally depicted by the Western genre: nostalgia for a lost past, praise for the individual, cult of the male and glorification of American expansionism towards the West.

Ernestine Sewell's "McMurtry's Cowboy-God in *Lonesome Dove*", Don Graham's "*Lonesome Dove: Butch and Sundance Go on a Cattle Drive*" or David Mogen's "Sex and True West in McMurtry's Fiction: from Teddy Blue to *Lonesome Dove* and *Texasville*" should be included in this category. None of these pay much attention to the portrayal of the Native American or to the question of borrowed or fake identities. In the second category fit the critics who think *Lonesome Dove* is clearly counter-mythical. They stress McMurtry's grim portrayal of the West, his irony when dealing with the male protagonist or his critical view on the process of disintegrating community.

Criticism of *Lonesome Dove* starts to consider the novel in its counter-mythical dimension in the 1990s. This change of perspective has to do with the rise of revisionist studies of the West as well as the increasing wave of studies on masculinity. New Western Historians⁴ initiate the debate of the representation of the West in history and fiction and bring to light subjects like the portrayal of women, labourers, Native Americans, blacks, Asians, Latinos and other racial minorities that openly question the traditional image of the American West. It is in this framework that D.L. Birchfield's "*Lonesome Duck: The Blueing of a Texas-American Myth*", Steve Fore's "The Same Old Others: The Western, *Lonesome Dove*, and the Lingering Difficulty of Difference" and Andrew Dale Nelson's *Intercultural Violence: the Rhetorics of Representation in Western American Culture* deal with the portrayal of the Native American in McMurtry's novel. All three studies harshly criticize McMurtry's inability to go beyond the stereotype of the Indian.

D.L. Birchfield maintains that McMurtry's choice of characters brings about the magnification of the Texas Ranger and the denigration of the Native American. Since Woodrow Call and Augustus McCrae are seen in an elegiac light that depicts them as heroes and because the Native American is stereotyped as ferocious Other, McMurtry does not step out from the ethnocentric portrayal of the West. Steve Fore's essay deals with the filmic

version of *Lonesome Dove* but his criticism can equally apply to the novel. Fore is one of the few critics to correctly analyze the novel within the historical-political context of Reagan's America. His criticism of McMurtry hits the mark when saying that "all potential 'competitors' for the westerner's turf –Native Americans, Mexicans, African-Americans, women of all racial and ethnic backgrounds- must be neutralized or eradicated" for the white Euramerican to excel (58). Yet he is too hasty in judging the novel as another clear example of "celebration of American expansionism" (53) and the male characters as representations of the triumphant white male. Dale Nelson holds similar views to D. L. Birchfield and Steve Fore. He sustains that McMurtry has only suppressed overtly racial views of Native Americans but has mainly kept faithful to the stereotype of the Indian meant to aggrandize the white hero. He carries out a thorough examination of the role of the Indian in the novel but does not consider the subject of the white Indian, does not sufficiently analyse the duality between fear and desire for the Other and ignores altogether the central subject of contesting masculinities.

Critics like Mark Busby and John C. Cawelti regard *Lonesome Dove* as basically anti-mythical despite its use of formulaic resources like the trail drive structure, the love plot or the story of male hardships. Busby acknowledges Ernestine Sewell's Freudian interpretation of the three main male characters but is more inclined to regard Gus and Call as balancing each other, observing that McMurtry may imply a "latent homosexual relationship between the two" (193). John G. Cawelti shares a similar point of view when he concedes the novel is thick with nostalgia but also acknowledges that there is a more "complex treatment of gender issues" (111). Other critics have engaged in the discussion of community and the alienated individual like Elliot West, John Miller-Purrenhage and Marion Tangun. Out of these three studies, John Miller-Purrenhage and Marion Tangun's offer a more detailed analysis on the subject of community and identity. Their reflection on the loss of community and the search

for a replacement reveal an essential aspect of McMurtry's cowboys which other critics have mostly ignored. Miller-Purrenhage's essay examines McMurtry's use of disrupted families to contradict the myth of unified national identity, observing that the novel attempts to "narrate a nation [...] confused about the value of community itself" (3). Tangun's study of heteroglossic discourse and dialogic interplay in *Lonesome Dove* focuses on the mythical image of "home", which he takes to be a composite of four myths: home as Garden of Eden, primeval wilderness, physical place and fraternity of men. Every one of the cowboys in the outfit has his own image of "home" based on one of these four myths. Tangun claims that the novel exposes the confluence of these images. Tangun's and Miller-Purrenhage's contention can be considered within the discussion of the "community-go-smash-plot" I referred to in the previous chapter, that is the Great Story that perceives civilized communities have progressed from *Gemeinheit* to *Gesellschaft*.

At first sight, *Lonesome Dove* does not present itself as a Western thick with "Indian plot". The main theme throughout is the cattle drive up north rather than the confrontation with the Native American. When the Native American appears it is in the shape of the "Indian", the alien Other. The first Indian in the novel, the fearsome Blue Duck, does not physically appear until halfway through. In fact, there are not many episodes in the novel with a physical presence of Indians. More than seen, they are felt. Yet, they directly determine the outcome of the plot. It is an Indian who kidnaps the prostitute Lorena and kills the sheriff Roscoe and his companions. It is also Indians who kill Elmira and Deets and who indirectly cause Augustus McCrae's death. Following the tradition of the classical Western, Larry McMurtry draws stereotyped characters as Native Americans that mostly fit the mould of the evil Indian or the Rousseauian *noble savage* about to disappear. The fearful Comanches, the evil Blue Duck or the poor and hungry Blackfeet are examples of these. While in later sequels and prequels to *Lonesome Dove* the Native American is depicted

somewhat differently, *Lonesome Dove* follows the classical Western tradition where the Native American is primarily the Indian serving as foil to the white hero.

The idea of the “wild, dark Indian” is established already in the second page of the novel by associating Comanches with gunshots, noise and disruption. In the introductory paragraphs of the novel, Augustus McCrae, Gus, thinks that if he shoots his gun to scare some snakes off, people will assume the shots come from Comanches “down from the plains” or Mexicans “up from the river” (4). Casual though it may seem, the passage deserves attention since it frames future allusions to Indians. In the first two pages, McMurtry introduces the two protagonists, their setting -desolate Lonesome Dove- and the threat of the Indian. Unlike the classical Western narratives introducing a resolute young cowboy, McMurtry presents old Augustus McCrae in a rather awkward and humorous situation. His main preoccupation is to find a shaded space free from pigs or snakes where to enjoy his whiskey jug peacefully. Interestingly enough, the first mention of Indians takes place when Gus spots a rattlesnake that is enjoying the coolness of the springhouse. Gus decides against shooting it for the noise would be probably mistaken by locals as an Indian attack. Mentioning snakes alongside Indians can hardly be casual. Even if that was the case, because the Western has fixed a tradition where the Indian is a “varmint”, a “pest” or a “snake”, the image of the Indian easily intersects with that of a snake “coiled in a corner”. By contrast, the cowboy is seen in command, with the power to decide whether to shoot the snake or to let it be for the time being. Furthermore, the reference points to a very clear status quo: troublesome Comanches from the north and Mexicans from the south both menace the peaceful white cowboys and settlers in the middle.

Some pages later, a connection between Comanches and Mexicans is repeated when Augustus refers to the origin of Captain Call’s mare. Hell Bitch, Call’s envied mount, has been acquired from two Mexican *caballeros* claiming to have killed a Comanche to get it. In

this case, the prestige of the mount is validated through the reference to the Mexican elite -the caballeros or charros discussed in chapter 1- and the fearful Indian. The Comanches were one of the tribes to first access horses from the Spaniards. Comanches were said to be among the best horse riders in the world and it was actually thanks to the horse or rather, thanks to their taming and horse breeding skills, that the Comanches managed to extend southwards, defeat both Mexicans and Spaniards for a long time and challenge Americans.⁵ Hell Bitch is a proud, brave, temperamental and stylish mare, and Gus implies that its character is a consequence of the time it has spent with Indians. In the collective unconscious lies the image of the defiant warrior riding astride an equally defiant mount. The connection between the Mexican caballeros, the Comanches, the horse and the cowboys is sustained through a basic identification: dominance and defiance equals masculinity. As domineering male, the Indian is admired or rather, his manhood is. From the very start, *Lonesome Dove* portrays the Indian as both dark threat and object of desire.

Before the first chapter is finished, there is another brief but significant allusion to the Comanche which directly recalls the myth of the Vanishing Indian. Call thinks about the arguments he had with Gus in the past. Past times are when Call and Gus “were in the thick of it, with Indians and hardcases to worry about” (16). The comment implies that there are no more Indians to worry about since they have all been “wiped out” probably by men like Gus and Call. But Call’s comment also contrasts a boring, uneventful present with an adventurous past when chasing Indians filled their lives. Three pages later, the third person narrator resumes Call’s nostalgic strain:

The business with the Comanches had been long and ugly –it had occupied Call most of his adult life- but it was really over. In fact, it had been so long since he had seen a really dangerous Indian that if one had suddenly ridden up to the crossing he would probably have been too surprised to shoot. (19)

The disappearance of the Indian menace has actually forced Call and Gus to stop working as Rangers and to set up their small business as cattle sellers. Similar to the Indian, their nomadic life has been replaced by a sedentary life for which they are ill suited. Bringing back that kind of life only requires bringing back the Indian foe. As Call immediately says afterwards, “Whipped they might be, but as long as there was one free Comanche with a horse and a gun it would be foolish to take them lightly” (19).

Passive and ineffective brooding gives way to active alert, as suits the spirit of the resolute cowboy. Call’s masculinity is asserted through the challenge of the Indian. When Newt asks Gus why Call separates himself from the rest of the cowboys every night, Gus answers that “He is just playin’ Indian fighter”(25). Gus means to be witty but nonetheless, the truth remains that both are actually playing Indian fighters in a Cowboy and Indian game intended to boost their male value. Within hegemonic manhood, the cowboy needs to keep on reasserting his manhood through competence, which means measuring up with peers and foes alike. To sustain white hegemonic manhood within the schema of the Imperial Subject, it is necessary to praise the Indian as matching contestant but also to debase him as uncivilized, primitive or sub-human. In other words, he is forced to occupy the site of sameness and the site of difference concurrently.

McMurtry’s treatment of historical facts regarding the Comanches and their presence in Texas is certainly selective and even deceptive at times but not outright false. In the second chapter of my thesis I discussed McMurtry’s technique to turn historical facts into fictionalized stories, which often involved the expansion of certain episodes and the reduction of others to a more basic plot structure. The objective in both cases was the creation of an appealing story loaded with action that kept a gripping rhythm and portrayed exceptional although plausible characters. Unlike *Crazy Horse*, where McMurtry’s showed great concern for verifying the exactitude of his sources, historical accuracy is hardly what McMurtry is

after in *Lonesome Dove*. Here he intentionally melts fiction into history and history into fiction to create something like the ultimate Western story. In the case of the recorded history of the Comanche presence in Texas and their later expulsion, McMurtry deals with facts that reinforce the story of the savage or the Vanishing Indian and eludes episodes which may introduce controversial debate. A brief summary of some of the essential facts in this history will clarify what I mean.

The Comanches first entered Texas in pursuit of their enemies, the Lipan Apache, in the 1740s. They pushed south from Arkansas to central Texas, reaching an area near San Antonio and onto New Mexico. Frequent raids in New Mexico by Comanches were aimed at getting horses with which to trade for French arms. When the first American settlers reached Texas, the Comanches did not make any distinction between Anglo and Spanish. In 1836, Texas got its independence from Mexico. In spite of a peace agreement between the Comanches and the Texans, the raiding continued when the Comanches thought their demands were not being met and tensions escalated during the following years. Comanches had taken white prisoners during their raidings and the Texans were trying to get them back. In March of 1840, a meeting took place to negotiate the release of the prisoners but no agreement could be reached. The Texans ambushed the Comanches right after the meeting and in the resulting fight thirty-five Comanches were killed. This incident caused the rage of the Comanches who, led by Buffalo Hump, retaliated by raiding south Texas and destroying the towns of Victoria and Linnville in central Texas. This was their last big raid, for the Texan Rangers intercepted the Comanches in their retreat up north and defeated them in the Battle of Plum Creek. After that, the Comanches lost much of their power and mostly limited their attacks to the frontier with Mexico. Nevertheless, in October of that same year, Co. John H. Moore led a successful attack against the Comanches in the upper Colorado River. By now, most raids took place in Mexico. There was another attempt at signing a peace treaty,

but again agreement could not be reached on establishing a line separating Comanches from Texans. When in 1845 Texas was incorporated into the Union, white settlements expanded thus threatening Comanche hunting grounds. Forts were established to protect the frontier but white settlers soon pushed beyond them and demanded further protection (Kavanagh 193-294; Webb 07-172).

In 1854, a law was passed providing two reservations for the Indians in Texas. Southern Comanches were placed in Camp Cooper, on the Clear Fork of the Brazos. Being in bad need of food, the southern Comanches were not in a position to reject reservation life. Once there, they would take up corn farming although their attempts resulted in failure due to harsh weather conditions. Problems in the reservation also came from the white whiskey traders and from the raids of the northern tribes. In 1859, all Indians in Texas territory were finally moved outside Texas, to Indian Territory. As Prescott Webb said “No Indian had any business in Texas. If he came now, it was at his own peril, and it was the duty of any Texan to kill him and then inquire as to his intentions. The Indians continued to come in spite of the danger, but they walked more circumspectly than ever along the borders where Texas Rangers stood to greet them” (Webb 172). With the outburst of the Civil War, the situation changed along the frontier. Most of the area was left unprotected due to lack of funds to create a permanent federal armed force and raiding resumed. The Texas Rangers mostly joined the Confederate lines and their work did not resume until 1874, when two military forces were created to protect the frontier. Captain Leander H. McNelly commanded the first of these forces. In 1875, they moved to the Nueces strip where they fought rustlers and Cortina’s men, often resorting to indiscriminate and controversial action.⁶ The second force, commanded by Major John B. Jones, effectively put an end to the attacks by the Comanches.⁷

McMurtry sets *Lonesome Dove* around the 1870s, when the Comanches couldn’t legally be in Texas territory. As mentioned earlier, the beginning of the book depicts Texas as

a threatened territory that fears Comanches from the North and Mexicans from the south when the opposite lays closer to the truth. Texas was not an empty land when the Euramericans arrived and their settlement involved kicking out Spanish-Mexicans and Native Americans. McMurtry has Gus observe in several occasions that men like him and Call are the real invaders irrupting into inhabited land. Nonetheless, chasing the Indian has been a priority in Gus' life. McMurtry on his part depicts the Native American as Vanishing Indian. In *Comanche Moon*, the prequel to *Lonesome Dove*, McMurtry amply refers to the Comanche raiding of Texas settlements and turns the leader Buffalo Hump into one of the protagonist of the novel. It must be said that his description of Comanche looting and indiscriminate violence is faithful to written records about Comanche attacks of white settlements. But McMurtry decides to put more emphasis on Buffalo Hump's desire for glory and recognition than on the Comanche's frustration and anger caused by the white man's aggression, broken treaties and false promises. In *Lonesome Dove*, the time of the Comanche raids is over and both Gus and Call know that the Comanche are too weak and too hungry to pose any real threat. Yet, the fear of the Indian threat looms over all the white characters.

Noting the large absence of the Native American in Texan narratives, scholar D.L. Birchfield has observed that somehow "the Indians manage to get portrayed as the invaders and the 'settlers' get portrayed as the ones defending the invasion of their homeland" (50). Birchfield is particularly critical of McMurtry's ambivalent attitude towards the Texas Rangers as well as of his flagrant dismissal of the Native American part of the story. Birchfield observes that in *In a Narrow Grave*, McMurtry disapproves of Walter Prescott Webb's portrayal of the Texas Rangers while ignoring "the glee with which Walter Prescott Webb reports the genocidal activities of the Texas Rangers against Indians" (50). Birchfield claims that by choosing two ex-Rangers as main characters of *Lonesome Dove* who "by age and circumstance" would have most likely participated in some of the brutal attacks

perpetrated by the Rangers against the Indians in the late 1850s, McMurtry is contributing to the tale of the glorified Texas Ranger at the expense of the Native American (56).

Birchfield's accusations seem justified, although I think they do not truly explore the reasons why McMurtry picked two Ex-Rangers as main characters. I argue that McMurtry's intention is the opposite, to expose the negative implications of such a glorification rather than perpetuating the myth of the Texas Ranger.

The problem McMurtry runs into is that, in order to demystify fictional characters who have fused with the real national character in the American collective mind, one needs to question the whole foundational story of the American man as frontiersman and pioneer. McMurtry must have asked himself whether it is possible to expose American hegemonic masculinity and colonial practice without permanently damaging the structure of the foundational American narrative. His answer is a novel that lies somewhere between the praise of the Western as formidable container of stories and its exposure as creator of fake identities. This is why he skilfully presents Gus and Call as a combination of several figures: ex-Rangers, part time cowboys and part time cattlemen. The fact that they are no longer young and no longer Rangers allows McMurtry to surround the two protagonists with the mythical aura of the legendary hero while avoiding their implication in real historical episodes that were ethically unacceptable. It is clear that the cowboys in the Hat Creek outfit glorify the figure of the Texas Ranger but McMurtry's view of those characters representing that figure is far more ambivalent. Bitter irony is often used to deflate magnification or to expose the emotional flaws of his main protagonists.

Call and Gus are meant to be tough, resolute, fair but unflinching. This is how their peers perceive them and what they themselves think they are. But McMurtry also highlights their weaknesses, even suggesting that emotional impoverishment, isolation and personal downfall is the price to pay for living up to the Ranger/cowboy ideal. Call's harsh judgment

of others and of himself together with his inability to express emotional sympathy and to come to grips with his inner-self eventually bring about total estrangement with his son and his own downfall. McMurtry also points at Gus' immaturity, for instance when he shows unjustified jealousy or anger for not receiving proper attention. At other times his joviality transforms itself into frivolity, particularly in his relationship with Lorena. Gus differs from Call in his inclination towards sensual pleasures but ultimately, his conception of the male is as essentialist as that of Call.

The removal of the Indian to Indian Territory, the retreat of the Mexican and the coming of old age have forced Call and Gus to quit as Rangers. Both feel a pang of nostalgia for those days when they were regarded as heroes chasing renegades, Mexican cattle thieves and wild Indians. The realization that time has gone by and that younger generations don't necessarily look up to them comes as a surprise and makes them feel outraged and cheated. Fighting occasional renegades, rustlers and Indians takes them back to the times when they were younger and renews the admiration of the men around them. But there are few opportunities to do that any more. The cattle drive up to Montana brings back that sense of adventure, while for the younger men in the outfit it provides an opportunity to come of age. From the beginning, the fear of the Indian is mixed with a desire to meet him, since that is the moment when the cowboy will be able to show his worth and outsmart him. Seen from this perspective, the trail up to Montana works as an attempt to chase the Indian and dig him out of his hiding place rather than as a wish to pioneer the cattle business in the Northwest.

Postponing the appearance of the Indian until almost half way through the story is not a mere narrative artifice to keep the plot rolling. Holding back the arrival of the "big shadow" whilst frequently announcing it works towards the politics of fear that drive the colonizing project. In *Lonesome Dove*, the image of the haunting wild Indian -that is, the fear or the threat of the Indian- is quite vivid for most of the cowboys. Young Newt and the Irish boys,

who have never seen an Indian before, are quite susceptible to the tales of ruthless Indians told every night by more experienced cowboys. They join the storyteller's circle, thus satisfying their compelling desire to hear those tales that give rise to their fears. Older cowboys who have seen real Indians know that for the most part the most dangerous Indians are defeated but still they fear the idea of the menacing Indian. Pea Eye admits that the Indians he had seen during all his years as Ranger were for the most part "scrawny little men" (25), but is nonetheless troubled every night by dreams of the "huge Indian" hovering over him, dreams that make him always keep a bowie knife at hand's reach. Even Deets, the black cowboy, has a deep, irrational fear of Indians that is "tied to his sense that the moon had powers neither white men nor black men understood" (170).

The anxieties experienced by the cowboys in the Hat Creek outfit emanate from a collective unconscious that projects fear onto the racial Other. Pea Eye imagines the Indian as a huge invisible presence while Deets pictures him as a superhuman aligned with the forces of the universe. What Frantz Fanon noted about the black man in *Black Skin White Masks*, applies equally to the Native American: the gaze of the white man on the Native American destroys the Other's basic corporal schema and replaces it by a historical-racial schema made up "out of a thousand details, anecdotes, stories" (111). In Fanon's study, a young boy in a train sees the Negro and exclaims to his mother: "Look, a Negro!" and later "Mama, see the Negro! I'm frightened!" (112). It is this irrational fear of the Other, which Fanon calls *phobogenesis*,⁸ that arises in McMurtry's cowboys at the thought of the Native American. As Sara Ahmed observes in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, "Fear creates the very effect of that which I am not [...] fear does not involve the defence of borders that already exist; rather fear makes those borders" (67). Picturing the Native American as barbarian, scalper, arsonist, killer and rapist defines what the cowboy is not by encapsulating all possible negative aspects of oneself outside the self.

Sara Ahmed's reference to Heidegger's temporality of fear becomes highly relevant to understand the stereotyped Indian in *Lonesome Dove*. According to her interpretation of Heidegger, fear actually focuses on what is not "quite here but getting closer". An object is fearsome because it is near and getting nearer, and it is even more fearsome because as it gets closer the uncertainty of its reaching us or its passing us by increases. As Ahmed explains,

The possibility of the loss of the object that approaches makes what is fearsome all the more fearsome. If fear had an object, then fear could be contained by the object. When the object of fear threatens to pass by, then fear can no longer be contained by an object. (65)

The threat of the approaching Indian increases as the cowboys distance themselves from *Lonesome Dove*, a threat that becomes more menacing through their suspect invisibility. What is more fearsome about the Indian is his passing by for "his proximity is imagined then as the possibility of future injury" (67).

The Comanche Blue Duck makes his appearance in full view, materialising out of an open country that seems to offer few hiding places. The second time he appears he is not seen, least of all suspected, and manages to fool a whole bunch of cowboys by successfully kidnapping Lorena. Blue Duck the Comanchero is the factual representation of Pea Eye and Deet's combined fears. He personifies Pea Eye's "big shadow", the invisible Indian, the huge presence that sees but is not seen.⁹ Because of his apparent indifference to thirst, hunger, cold, fear or even sexual desire, he places himself apart from the human condition. As Deets points out, he even kidnaps Lorena in a full moon's night thus confirming his suspicions that Indians do in fact master the moon. When Gus finally reaches Lorena and his captors, Blue Duck is no longer there. Even when heavily chained in jail, Blue Duck's presence terrifies those around him. The thought that he will eventually free himself is widespread for it is impossible for such a mythical character to end his days in such a sordid way. In a way, such fears come

true when Blue Duck, always the threatening Other, eludes his hanging by flying through the window of the courthouse,¹⁰ dragging one of the white deputies alongside. The encounter between Call and his opponent already announces such an outcome. After so many years of elusive chase, Call feels the need to see the shadow, to look at the man who managed to outsmart him. When he goes to see him in prison, he finds a man “larger than he had supposed”, with a huge head and eyes that appeared “cold as snake’s eyes” (McMurtry, *Lonesome Dove* 973). Described as something else than human, Blue Duck tells Call that he does have superhuman abilities: “I can fly (...) An old woman taught me. And if you care to wait, you’ll see me” (937).

Fear as the projection of negative aspects of the self has commonly been attributed to repressed sexuality, the perception of internal fragmentation and multiplicity or destructive tendencies of the self. Frantz Fanon ascribes Negrophobia to sexual perversion which in the case of the white woman hides a “putative sexual partner” and in the case of the white man a “repressed homosexual” (*Black Skin* 156). Fanon’s reading of Negrophobia has met with criticism because of its failure to be defined outside masculinist variables,¹¹ that is, to consider women’s psychologies outside that of the male frame. But it is precisely this interpretation -women’s psychology as interpreted by the male- that emerges in *Lonesome Dove* through McMurtry’s depiction of Lorena’s systematic rape by the group of Kiowas and Sally Skull’s reference to her experience with a Negro and her fantasies with an Indian. Both Lorena and Sally Skull approach Fanon’s pattern of women with dysfunctional or “abnormal sexuality” given their jobs as prostitutes and the abuse they have suffered at one or another stage in their lives. Jake Spoon is appalled by Sally Skull when she confesses that she paid a Negro to “turn whore” and is even more shocked by her remark that she would like to try it with an Indian (McMurtry, *Lonesome Dove* 158). According to Fanon, the white woman who fantasizes with the sexual Other is conferring “the Negro with powers that other men (fathers,

transient lovers) did not have” and could even be resorting to “the persistence of infantile formations: God knows how they make love! It must be terrifying” (*Black Skin* 158). But does *Lonesome Dove* approach woman’s Negrophobia or male Negrophobia? If we consider Sally Skull as the narrative creation of a male writer dealing with the myth of masculinity in the West, male Negrophobia would be more like it. In that case, *Lonesome Dove* depicts the white man’s fantasy of the raping Negro/Native American.

Lorena’s embedded captivity narrative, which spins around the image of the animalized Other, validates this last interpretation. Lorena does not fit the pattern of a married, pious or innocent woman of late 17th and early 18th captivity narratives. Unlike her predecessors, she is already a prostitute who, curiously enough, has just quitted by the time Blue Duck kidnaps her. Scholar Andrew Dale Nelson has noted that Lorena’s captivity narrative is not seen as a test of spiritual strength, moral rightness or physical endurance, as was the case with older captivity stories (A. D. Nelson 75). He also observes her captivity is a descent into the hell of carnal abuse and that it plays on the audience’s fears and fantasies of miscegenation. Nelson offers an insightful reading of Lorena’s captivity although in my view he misses an essential point.

In her study of captivity narratives, Pauline Turner Strong distinguished between original female narratives like that of Mary Rowlandson, and male reconstructions of those narratives like the ones written by Cotton Mather. Lorena’s captivity resembles the latter in that it is contained within the discourse of hegemonic masculinity. Her captivity brings a definitive end to her life as a whore. Her vicious abuse and rape by Ermoke’s Indian band and by Monkey John¹² functions as a female process of regeneration through violence where the body needs to be first desecrated in order for it to be reborn. As Turner Strong points out, Cotton Mather saw captivity as a “punishment for collective degeneration or ‘backsliding’” (119) and more so in the figure of the female “who personified [...] the collective

vulnerability of the dispersed and degenerate population both to physical and to spiritual onslaughts” (120). Lorena is the embodiment of that very female captive. More importantly, her rebirth and healing process takes place under Augustus’ tutelage, under the emotional dependence on the white male. In *Masculinity and Power*, Arthur Brittan calls attention to the extended use of this kind of male sexual narrative in films and television. Brittan argues that this structure works to reinforce the discourse of male sexuality relying on the valorised penis:

[...] the narrative highlights the absolute dependence of women on men.

Furthermore, there is often a merging of the rapist and rescuer in the narrative.

After the rescue, the hero takes advantage of the situation by making sexual advances to the victim. He is rewarded for his bravery; his reward is seen as being both necessary and logical –after all, isn’t this what the female victim really desires? (59)

Indeed, Augustus receives Lorena’s sexual reward and the reader perceives this as a fair and necessary exchange. The white hero appears as physical and spiritual hero and it is through him that the prostitute is legitimized and can incorporate into society.

Lorena’s rescue gives Augustus the chance to redeem his guilt and to show his manly courage in confronting the savage Other. As Turner Strong asserts, “Even as the nation became less vulnerable to Indian opposition, the typifications of the vulnerable female captive threatened by a brutal male captor remained potent justifications for aggression against, displacement of, and domination over Indians” (204). The narrative of Lorena’s captivity overtly portrays the Indian Other as a direct sexual threat thus offering a strong justification for the white man’s aggression. Franz Fanon’s reflections on male Negrophobia quite aptly explain why the Other is seen as a sexual threat since “the civilized white man retains irrational longing for unusual eras of sexual license, of orgiastic scenes, of unpunished rapes, of unrepressed incest [...] Projecting his own desires onto the Negro, the white man

behaves ‘as if’ the Negro really had them” (*Black Skin* 165). Because the male ideal is one of “infinite virility”, male Negrophobia transforms the negro/Indian into a “penis symbol” (159). The wild Indians who rape Lorena are a transposition of the sexual fears of the hegemonic white male.

Blue Duck’s lack of sexual interest for Lorena places him in the realm of the non-human. It is far more terrifying than Ermoke or Monkey John’s lust because it attests to the absolute rebuke of the Other’s corporeality and the mastery over one’s own body. There is no interest on the part of McMurtry to depict him as a bone-and-flesh character in *Lonesome Dove*. But he does so twelve years later in *Comanche Moon*, the prequel to *Lonesome Dove*. Here, Blue Duck appears as a half-breed born of the Comanche leader Buffalo Hump and of a Mexican mother. The story McMurtry weaves around Blue Duck has some points in common with that of Fast Horse in James Welch’s *Fools Crow*. Blue Duck wants to become a famous warrior like Fast Horse in order to gain his father’s and the band’s respect. Humiliation at having failed in a raid aggravates their sense of alienation from the tribe. Both characters place individual glory before communal interest and this is what ultimately turns them into outcasts.

In *Comanche Moon* the “Indian side of the story” carries far more weight than in *Lonesome Dove*, as if to make up for its omission there. The plot spins around the confrontation between Rangers and Comanches and it shows Call and Gus at the height of their adventure days. Historically, it is set right at the time of the Comanche’s retaliation against the Texans carried by Penateka chief Pohchanah-kwoheep or Buffalo Hump. If in *Crazy Horse* McMurtry was trying to figure out the real character from the mythological one, in *Comanche Moon* he is doing the exact reverse, turning the historical character into fiction. McMurtry’s literary licences include some radical changes. Buffalo Hump’s real son had little in common with the sadist character that McMurtry has created. His name is mostly

remembered because of his confrontation with the Comanche chief Quanah Parker, not because of his evil nature. One significant alteration is to have Buffalo Hump's son kill his father when the actual Comanche leader died with his people at the Fort Cobb reservation.

McMurtry's portrayal of Buffalo Hump in *Comanche Moon* highlights aspects like bravery, stoicism, resolution and virility but completely discards references to spirituality, religion or sensitivity. Although McMurtry shows Buffalo Hump's concern for the future of his people, what he emphasizes most is his thirst for battle and his constant desire to kill white people. McMurtry pays lip service to the real reason why Buffalo Hump organized the Great Raid against the Texans -the humiliation they suffered at the March 1840 meeting at the hands of the Texan government- and prefers to set the raid within the white discourse of the vengeful Indian. McMurtry does include references to Comanche and Native American traditions like the vision quest or ceremonial singing. However, they are superficially tackled and mostly highlight the warriorlike nature of the Comanche, such as the time when Buffalo Hump has a vision of burning houses and slain white settlers.

Still, McMurtry makes sure that Buffalo Hump is regarded in a benign light. He is McMurtry's Vanishing Indian, the brave, proud, traditional warrior who needs to die in order for civilization to advance. By contrast, his son Blue Duck is the evil Indian. In *Comanche Moon*, McMurtry goes to great pains to justify Blue Duck's evil nature. Disregard for the tribe rules and excessive ego appraisal are what initially set Blue Duck outside his community, similarly to Fast Horse in Welch's *Fools Crow*. Yet, there are two main differences distinguishing the two narratives: the nature of the relationship between father and son and the importance of community life.

In *Comanche Moon*, it is Blue Duck's father who decides to ban his son from camp after he behaves inappropriately. In contrast with Blue Duck, who does not show the least sign of remorse or repentance, Fast Horse does show some signs of guilt and shame even

when he is unable to deal with them in a positive way. The attitude of Boss Ribs, Fast Horse's father, towards his son is one of compassion, understanding and self-reproach for not having been aware of Fast Horse's problems earlier. But the relationship between Buffalo Hump and his son is one of constant competition, mistrust and disrespect. The first time Buffalo Hump and Blue Duck appear in *Comanche Moon*, the reader witnesses an already degraded relationship: "I will kill him, when he needs to be killed" (21) Buffalo Hump tells the elders of the tribe. To McMurtry, Buffalo Hump's individuality is much more important than any emotional link with his son. As in *Crazy Horse*, McMurtry mainly considers the Comanche community within the discourse of the white male. Consequently, he shapes both Buffalo Hump and Blue Duck in the light of the Self-Made Man. Buffalo Hump is the Vanishing Indian, the American Primitive that the white man needs to retrieve, while Blue Duck is that same American Primitive gone awry.

In *Lonesome Dove*, McMurtry clearly links the fate of the Vanishing Indian to that of the Vanishing Cowboy. This is most explicitly shown on two occasions. First, in the encounter with Indians that cause Josh Deets' death, and then in the fight that causes Gus to lose his leg. In the first case, the theme of the colonial Indian joins that of the colonial black man. When Deets' gesture to save an Indian baby is misinterpreted by the members of the Indian band, it is not only he who dies but also the only able Indian male left in the camp. McMurtry faces the problem of having to balance historical accuracy –the racial look on the black in the 19th century- with a twentieth century perspective that criticises racial prejudice. The way he does that is to have the cowboys in the Hat Creek outfit maintain a certain distance from Deets while portraying him as one of the most able cowboys in the bunch. Even when Deets' skin colour prevents him from occupying the top place in the cowboy hierarchy, it is not infrequent to see him as Captain Call's right hand, clearly replacing Gus in

that position. But this is as far as McMurtry goes, and what ultimately prevails in this portrayal is the figure of the colonial Anglicized Negro or the colonial mimic man.

Homi Bhabha has defined colonial mimicry as “the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite” (86). Because of narcissistic desire, the colonizing subject demands imitation from the colonized Other but makes sure this imitation is not the real thing. Bhabha thinks that within the ambivalence of mimicry -almost the same, but not quite- lies the possibility of challenging the mask that the white man has imposed on the colonized, for this “not quite” is always a reminder of the difference. In *Lonesome Dove*, McMurtry misses the chance provided by mimicry to challenge the validity of the colonial scheme. Deets is indeed portrayed “as almost the same but not quite” but this portrayal validates rather than rejects the image of the colonial Other. There is a colonized Anglicized Other, the Black man, and a primitive Other, the Indian. Deets even shares the same fears about the Native American as the white man. Like him, Deets does not see the Native American but the Indian.

At the same time that McMurtry identifies Deets with the Euramerican, he is disavowing that identification by pointing at certain “qualities” that clearly place Deets beside the Indian. Among Deets’ outstanding abilities figures tracking and scouting, skills at which the Native American excel. Deets attachment to location runs deeper than that of the white cowboy. He also appears to understand the landscape around him better and shows certain mysticism -like his frequent thoughts about the power of the moon- also shared by Indian characters like the Indian Kickapoo in *Comanche Moon*. McMurtry emphasizes the connection between Deets and the Indian in the scene of the former’s death. Shortly before dying, Deets regrets having trespassed into Indian territory and feels sorry that the young Indian misunderstood his intentions. He recalls his thoughts about the moon and his desire to be there, just like the Indians who master it. In his last breath, he pictures the moon above

him while he is below water. The implications are clear, once he is dead Deets will be riding the moon alongside the young Indian who has just killed him.

The immediacy of Deets' death contrasts with Gus' slower end. The fight between Gus and the Blackfeet follows the convention of the Western genre where the hero is outrageously outnumbered and ambushed into a deadly trap from which he manages to get out. Having been wounded in the leg, Gus still manages to trick twenty Indians, kill seven, and find convenient shelter. He even makes it to the next city with his rotting leg. It is because the Blackfeet are in bad need of food that they have to give up chasing Gus thus making possible his miraculous escape. The inference is that the end of the Blackfeet, like the end of Gus, is imminent.

The Blackfeet do not hurt Gus badly enough for him to die but they provoke something more alarming within cowboy masculinity. Gus decides death is much more honourable than having to live without legs. Pride and love for freedom are stated as reasons for Gus' choice. It is because he has "walked the earth in pride all this years" (McMurtry, *Lonesome Dove* 875) that he cannot think of a future where he is not able to do it any more. "I like being free in the earth [...] I'll cross the hills where I please" (878) Gus tells Call when the latter admonishes him for not having taken sufficient care with the Indians. Gus' words reflect what the white Euramerican has been doing since the time he first settled in America: his desire to settle wherever he pleases and take whatever he wants takes the form of an inalienable right. This has the sought after effect of turning invaders into victims for it is the Native American who is in the way of the white man's right to freedom. In fact, Gus' decision has not as much to do with bravery as with his adherence to the male ideal of the whole, unfragmented and uncastrated male, and to the pastoral dream of the American garden. On the other hand, despite all his criticism of the destructive nature of the Euramerican, in his last moments Gus sticks to the fantasy that started it all, that of the virgin land and the pure

origin. When, seconds away from his death, the red mist forming in Gus's eyes turns into a mist "as silvery as the morning mists in the valleys of the Tennessee" (880), the reader rests assured that from now on Gus lives as the original American inhabiting the original garden of Eden.

The recreation of primal fears and primal fantasies through the use of the fetishistic Other reaches its zenith in the episode of Gus' ambush and ensuing death. Gus as hegemonic white male is castrated by the Indian Other. The episode does not only play out a dichotomy between presence and the lack of it but a dichotomy between purity and impurity. Gus is made to confront both the fear of sexual lack and the fear of lack of whiteness through the metaphoric/metonymic amputation of his legs. Significantly, the amputation of Gus' leg does not prevent gangrene from spreading to the other leg which eventually causes Gus' death. The missing leg both stands for sexual lack –where the leg metonymically replaces the penis– and for lack of whiteness –since gangrene has corrupted the original whiteness of the leg.¹³ Death offers the only way out for Gus to retrieve the scenario of his primal fantasy. In that fantasy, the threatening Other has been completely erased and it is the frozen image of the free, self-contained and racially pure cowboy that persists.

Westerns often exhibit violence about the desecration of the male body as an intermediate phase to regeneration and rebirth. In his study of masculinity in Clint Eastwood movies, Paul Smith contends that the pattern of eroticization, destruction and re-emergence of the male body is so pervasive in Westerns that it can be called its "orthodox structuring" ("Eastwood" 81). Smith interprets this pattern under the light of Lacanian theory arguing that the masochistic phase of desecrating the body first appears as a strategy "to challenge his [the male's] desire for the father and subvert phallic law" ("Eastwood" 91) only to give immediate way to the reinforcement of that same law through the third phase of re-emergence. The pattern of desecration and re-emergence may go unnoticed in *Lonesome Dove*, where the first

stage of the “orthodox structure” –the eroticization of the body- is certainly missing and where the third stage is but covertly suggested. Obviously, McMurtry is not aiming at the erotization of the male body when describing Gus’ physical decay. But it is precisely because Gus is coming to the end of his life that regeneration is more necessary than ever. In Gus’ case, rebirth necessarily takes place at a different level altogether, that of the mythic dream that can only be fully accessed through death.

The mythical sphere is further reinforced in the last pages of the book when Call meets Blue Duck face to face for the first time. Call deliberately makes haste to Santa Rosa to be in time for Blue Duck’s hanging. Rather than resuming his trip back home when he learns that the hanging has been postponed, he waits for it to take place. His interest in meeting Blue Duck answers his need of verifying the existence of an elusive enemy, of making sure that he is indeed a visible enemy. It is meaningful that McMurtry opts out of the classical Western scene where the hero kills the foe in personal confrontation. By denying McCrae and Call the possibility of killing Blue Duck and by having Blue Duck stage his own death instead, McMurtry guarantees the permanence of the fetishized Indian in a mythical sphere. Blue Duck dies with “his eyes wide open” and a “cruel smile still on his lips” addressed to Call. Even in death, Blue Duck’s image is able to instil the fear necessary to renew the power of the Indian stereotype.

Not every Indian in *Lonesome Dove* stands for the dark savage, but all of them are a representation of the Vanishing Indian. The first Indians Newt ever sets eyes on have nothing in common with the terrifying Blue Duck or the bunch of wild Kiowas around him. A group of Wichitas, an old leader and four young men, approach the cowboy’s camp in search for food. They are a pitiful bunch of hungry Indians who raise compassion rather than fear. A bit later, Newt comes across a bigger group of Indians. He is so scared at seeing them that he does not realize they actually help him find his way back with the cowboys. They are

portrayed in a more humane way, making fun of Newt's confusion but also guiding him to his friends. Even so, what these episodes actually aim at is the depiction of the cowboy in a more benign way. In both cases, Captain Call appears as a more compassionate human being when giving the starving Indians some beef. It is clear that, like the Wichitas before, they belong to a breed that is about to disappear. The bad Indian's presence is used for the likes of Gus and Call to measure their manliness against, whilst the "good Indian's" presence serve as reminders of a noble but doomed race.

The Search for the Lost Self: the White Indian

Westerns are built on the construct of the free individual breaking away from a corrupted and corrupting society. The cowboy's movement away from society is in reality a journey backwards in time. Because his final destination is the moment of original purity that never was, his movement must proceed in circles. What he is looking for –youth, purity, virginal space- is not to be found in any future but only in his dream of an idealized and lost past. Quite often the position that the cowboy occupies outside the social group is labelled as marginal or liminal. Both terms tend to be used indistinctively and little attention is paid to what I think is a fundamental distinction.

Discussion of marginality and liminality necessarily traces back to Victor Turner's well known classification of anti-structure societies into outsidersness, liminality and marginality. What differentiates these groups from each other is their relation to social structure for outsiders are outside it, liminals in between and marginals on the edges. Turner cites monastic people or gypsies as examples of outsiders who willingly opt out of society. He mentions migrants, foreigners or second generation Americans as examples of marginals (*Dramas* 232, 233). Liminality is a transitory stage between two points, departure/ separation and re-aggregation thereby differing from marginality in that the latter does not guarantee a

third stage of reinsertion. The rites of passage within tribal societies are placed in this mid-position stage, Turner states. Turner does not always stick to this classification, as when he refers to novices occupying the space of liminality instead of belonging to outsidership (“Variations” 37). Contemporary theoretical trends such as border theory consider that Turner’s definition of marginality is highly prejudiced. They have replaced the term liminality by terms like border or borderlands where the space in between is a site of mixing and hybridity that challenges existing assumptions about insidership and outsidership.

Nevertheless, Turner’s classification offers an interesting perspective to discuss the cowboy’s relation to society since it allows us to consider him in a series of slightly different but very similar positions. Outsidership is the cowboy’s condition when considering that he has clearly opted out of society, like the monk or the gypsy. The narrative cowboy has turned nomadism into a cherished way of life and will not willingly go back to a society which he feels antagonized by. The cowboy uses physical separation from his peers as a political statement to denounce moral corruption and vindicate the individual’s purity and free will. From this point of view, he is not on the edges of society but clearly outside it. Yet, placing him so distinctly outside society poses a series of questions, amongst these figure why such an external and confrontational figure came to represent the very essence of Americanness or why the cowboy ends by reproducing the structuring system of the society which he has opted out of.

Another possibility is to consider the cowboy within marginality. According to Turner, marginality is defined by a relation of inferiority to the structured group. Marginality often implies that there is an element of force, and not choice, in the constitution of the anti-group. It is not by choice that migrants from villages to cities or second generation Americans find themselves in a disadvantaged position with respect to the structured community. Job insecurity, meagre pay and social rejection set the real cowhand in a marginal position. But

this wasn't precisely the position of the narrative cowboy. He was not pushed into marginality but chose willingly to be on the edge and therefore was often glorified rather than vilified by the community. Let us now consider the cowboy within the threshold or the limen. According to the previous definition, liminality leads towards a final state of reaggregation. Within liminality, the cowboy distances himself from community in the present but knows he will eventually return to it in a future. Unlike the other two states, transitoriness is what most clearly defines liminality. The Westerner takes up the saddle with the hope to recover a time of lost freedom. Nonetheless, he senses that time is working against him and that either death or reaggregation will reach him sooner or later.

After having explained all three positions, I would like to consider now which ones appear in McMurtry's novel. *Lonesome Dove* clearly reproduces the Western's classical dual discourse of the Indian as evil and as *noble savage*. This duality forces the cowboy to also occupy a shifting position. When the Indian is regarded as an evil presence, the cowboy acts as a representative of civilization. He acts as the chosen figure to protect the community from evil, so exertion of violence is justified in order to secure peace. The relationship between the Indian and the cowboy is oppositional. But when the Indian is seen as *noble savage*, the terms of the relationship change. Then the Indian and cowboy are perceived in terms of brotherhood. In this case, the cowboy does not act in the name of society at all but distances himself from it. It is not he who has caused the *noble savage* to disappear but the inexorable advance of civilization which considers is corrupting the free man. When Augustus McCrae meets Aus Frank, the buffalo bone collector, he is shocked at "the sight of the road of bones stretching over the prairie" that make him aware of a profound loss: "Maybe roads of bones were all that was left. The thought gave the very emptiness of the plains a different feel. "With those millions of animals gone, and the Indians mostly gone in their wake, the great plains were truly empty, unpeopled and ungrazed" (McMurtry, *Lonesome Dove* 473-474). At

this point, Gus clearly sides with the Indian. “Soon the whites would come, of course” Gus continues immediately afterwards, managing to exclude himself from his community with a simple syntactic trick: the replacement of the pronoun “we” by a determinate article “the” that sounds like an oppositional “they”. Gus is not the white man here but the white Indian. The myth of the Vanishing Cowboy arises alongside that of the Vanishing Indian: “what he was seeing was a moment between, not the plains as they had been, or as they would be, but a moment of true emptiness, with thousand of miles of grass resting unused, occupied only by remnants –of the buffalo, the Indians, the hunters” (474). What is most interesting about Gus’ reflection is that it takes place just at the height of his chase for Blue Duck, the evil Indian.

My contention is that liminality defines the cowboy’s position in both cases. In the first case, the cowboy momentarily separates himself from society to carry out his duty as “Sacred Executioner”,¹⁴ that is, Gus and Call enter liminality to kill the likes of Blue Duck. The community will be waiting for them once their assignment is over. In the second case, the cowboy opts out of a community which he regards as corrupted but never completely forfeits it totally. He may distance himself from his own white community but he most clearly defines himself as white man. The cowboy enters a liminal state in which he tries to inhabit as long as possible. In their pursuit of the primeval American Garden of Eden, Gus and Call are deferring their reintegration into the community. This is why the cowboy’s journey proceeds in circles. The Western genre actually freezes the cowboy in his transitional state of liminality. Because merging with society would mean to disappear as a cowboy, the most common alternative is death. It is the process of never reaching a third stage that projects the cowboy’s journey into a mythical dimension where another kind of reintegration may be possible. As in the case of the Christian monk, the third stage of reintegration transcends the scope of real life. Inside liminality, the cowboy has stepped out of the inner circle of civilization and has approached an outer ring of wilderness. His desire is to reach a

final third stage in that outer ring where he meets his original Self. Reunification here is not understood as reinsertion into society but as reunification of mind and body into a purer state of being. Access to that non-corrupted Self is only possible through the Other, the Native American, for he is the one inhabiting the outer circle and retaining the primitive soul which the cowboy claims as his own. The journey back to innocence is an impossible one for the cowboy as American male because reunification inevitably takes him back to the time when his first crime was committed: fratricide against the Native American. There is no state of innocence prior to that moment either, for the male existing before that meeting was not the American but the European. The cowboy is doomed to replay the moment of encounter over and over again in the futile hope of erasing his sin.

In the previous section, I analysed Gus' reassertion of a cowboy image that praises an uncorrupted, whole and autonomous male as opposed to an image of deterioration, fragmentation and dependence. His death provided the only way for him to reach a purer state of being since it projected him back to a longed for but unreal origin. Reverting back to the origin means dealing with the Native American and answering for the crime committed against him. Indeed, Gus' death works as a sacrifice to expiate the biblical sin against the favoured brother and hence to alleviate the white man's guilt. As Gus approaches his end, Call asks him whether he would like him to avenge his death. But Augustus "forgives" his attackers replying that "We won more than our share with the natives. They didn't invite us here, you know. We got no call to be vengeful" (879). McMurtry offers Gus' death to the reader as sacrificial token to redeem him from the burden of fratricide.

Professor Ricardo J. Quinones has examined the presence of the Cain and Abel myth in American literature in *The Changes of Cain: Violence and the Lost Brother in Cain and Abel Literature*. Quinones gives Jack Schaefer's well-known Western character Shane as an example of Cain figure who assumes the burden of violence and sacrifices himself in order to

preserve civilization. He points to other Cain figures in the Western genre such as Jimmy Ringo in the film *The Gunfighter* and Will Kane in *High Noon*. Quinones argues that after the Second World War the theme of fratricidal violence in literature was explored beyond pure ethical considerations. The death of Abel at the hands of his brother was seen as a necessary, however tragic, step to preserve civilization. Gus' death can certainly be read in this same light. In *Lonesome Dove*, the sacrifice of the cowboy and his way of life is the price to pay in order for white man's civilization to advance, as Gus himself can clearly see. Quinones' argument –violence as a necessary step towards rebirth-¹⁵ deals with the confrontation between racially equal brothers but it does not consider the fight between allegorical brothers: the white man and the red man.

Back in 1968, Leslie Fiedler had already pointed out how deep the myth of ritual communion between the white man and the Native American run in American literature. Fiedler referred to Natty Bumppo as the archetypal Westerner, the first reborn American conceived “out of a union between men... [with] no taint of miscegenation in his begetting” (*Love and Death* 118). While the myth does indeed avoid the taint of miscegenation, it cannot hide the taint of blood, for Natty Bumppo's identity only comes after a first killing. The Huron Indian Natty first kills is also the one conferring him a new Indian name by which he will be recognized henceforth, Hawkeye. This is the moment when the Euramerican is born as new American. The Native American becomes Abel, the favoured brother, but also the one who has to die in order for civilization to succeed and for Cain to be reborn. In the Western genre, the Cain/cowboy is the *Sacred Executioner* –as Quinones calls him- who necessarily kills his red brother and whose act consequently turns him into a fugitive and a wanderer until sacrificial death redeems him from original sin.

Lonesome Dove conforms to the narrative Great Story that offers the death of the cowboy as a sacrificial token for the death of the Indian. The white male presents the Native

American twofold: as fearful enemy shaped in masculinist terms but also as last representative of an uncorrupted but dying human being. Blue Duck is an example of the fearful enemy. The Indians Newt encounters, the ones causing Deets' death, the Blackfeet that ambush Gus and the Blackfeet with whom Call trades at the end of the book are examples of the second. Cowboys such as Gus and Call replace the Native American when adopting the "Indian" ways. Their return to a more "primitive" way of life implies a closer contact with nature. Their survival skills, their dexterity at horse riding, their knowledge of the environment around them make them look Native in comparison with the growingly industrialized community around them. Desire to be the Other, or rather to appropriate the Other's identity, is clearly expressed by Call in *Comanche Moon*:

"Sometimes Call wished that he could be an Indian for a few days [...] He wanted to know how they could creep into a horse herd without disturbing it. He wanted to know how they could take the horses out without being seen, or heard. (236)

What Call desires is to be able to master his surroundings as well as the Indian, to merge with the environment to such an extent that one reaches invisibility, precisely what Blue Duck achieves in *Lonesome Dove*. Some pages later, "Watching them [Comanches] move across the face of the canyon, on a trail so narrow that he couldn't see it" he realizes that "the Comanches were the masters of their country to a degree no Ranger could ever be" (*Comanche Moon* 242).

Again, Call envies the Indian's ability to be one with the land around him. The Indian belongs to the land, the Ranger does not. But once the Indian has vanished, there is no reason why he can't take up his place. In *Lonesome Dove*, Call and Gus have learnt the "Indian way" and they come to be as good as the Indians. Frantz Fanon's "almost the same but not quite" works then both ways for it refers not only the black/Native American who mimics the white

man but also the white man mimicing the Native American. In the case of the black mimic man, being the same but not quite means that his blackness will always prevent him from being like the white man. In the case of the white cowboy, whiteness reads positively. It is precisely what allows the cowboy to excel the Native American. Moreover, the white man's guilt is displaced from the historical terrain to the mythical terrain. The cowboy is the figure who assumes the stain of blood caused by the killing of the Native American. As noted earlier, the fact that the Blackfeet manage to ambush Gus does not necessarily mean that they have outsmarted him but that time has come for Gus to redeem the white man's guilt. His death is the sacrificial token for having committed the biblical crime of killing one's own brother. The death of the cowboy enables the rebirth of the community.

At the time McMurtry's *Lonesome Dove* was published in 1985, it was no longer possible to restore the theme of the Vanishing Indian or the myth of Cain-Abel without seriously examining the implications such myths had on the construction of national identity. McMurtry's inclusion of the Vanishing Indian theme runs parallel to a counter theme that sees the Western as a construct to create a fake identity. Gus' death recalls the Great Story of Cain's crime against Abel in its sense of rebirth through (sacrificial) death. However, Call's decline acts as the counter theme, since his return to *Lonesome Dove* exposes the vacuity of an internal journey that has mainly brought forth deception. The problem is that the first story has a stronger hold on the audience, and on the author himself, than the second one.

Audiences taken by the mythical overtones of *Lonesome Dove* are put off by the description of Call's decline in the final pages of the book and even taken further in the novel's sequel, *Streets of Laredo*. This is probably the reason why McMurtry decided to publish two prequels to *Lonesome Dove*, *Comanche Moon* and *Dead Man's Walk*, where Gus and Call appear in their glorious days as young and well-known Rangers.

As proto-cowboys, Gus and Call incorporate all the traits that the white man perceives as positive in the Native American: bravery, stoicism, stamina, toughness, independence, freedom and a life more in tune with their immediate surroundings. What the Native American has, the white man desires. But what the Native American really is, the white man often ignores or misinterprets. The colonizing scheme disguises the white man's desire under the label of civilization and covers the Native American's identity with layers of stereotyped images. While the qualities that enhance the vision of the male as Self-Made Man or even as American Primitive are commonly borrowed from the Native American, those relating him to the community or to the more ample universe are simply not considered. Western writers do not let their cowboy heroes share the profound spirituality and the holistic perception of the universe of the Native American. Rather, antagonism defines the cowboy: he is set against the community, against the landscape and against himself. In *Lonesome Dove*, Call summarizes this triple antagonism better than any other character in the novel. He actively flees from the community, basically regards the environment as a continuous source of danger and is utterly unable to confront his inner self. Call is driven by fear rather than by bravery for under his façade of iron will and strength lies his fear of confronting internal and external Otherness. Call's urge to keep on moving is as much a search for the hidden, darker self as an attempt to get away from it.

McMurtry's novel shares the narrative pattern of countless other Westerns. The cowboy hero enters the harsh and unforgiving landscape in order to meet the former self who once felt in synchrony with nature. Inevitably, that search leads to the confrontation with an inner ghost and with an external real presence: the Native who does indeed feel one with the world around him. This encounter does not result in the communion that Leslie Fiedler suggested but in further antagonism since the very existence of the Native American poses a threat to the claim of the white hero. Fearful of losing control and suspicious that the Native

American possesses a deeper understanding of the environment and the inner self, the white hero responds by accepting the stereotype of the Indian. The white hero dismisses Native American religious beliefs, spirituality and communal organization as primitive, but curiously enough he builds a kind of social structuring that borrows many traits from the same tribal organization he is sneering at.

In *Lonesome Dove*, the group of cowboys in the Hat Creek outfit constitutes a male society not very far from the male warrior societies found in Native American tribes. In both cases, masculinity appears as the result of dexterity, bravery, toughness, cunning but also self-control and concern for others. Separation from the female sphere is the first step introducing the neophyte into the male world. As seen in chapter 1, the young Blackfoot boy was encouraged to find a male partner with whom to share games and go hunting. The myth of Scarface and Morning Scar exemplified the kind of friendship to be imitated by other males in the tribe. The notion of male friendship in the Western is influenced by a similarly powerful myth: the Sumerian epic of Enkidu and Gilgamesh, to which I will refer further on in this chapter. In both cases, the male dyad occupies a self-sufficient space clearly differentiated from and inaccessible to the female. This separation continues in the warrior societies where the young boy is expected to turn into a man. Most important, in both cowboy *communitas* and Blackfoot male societies, masculinity needs to be validated by the rest of the males first. In *Lonesome Dove*, Newt is under the close scrutiny of his father and his male peers who constantly monitor his process of becoming an adult male. This scrutiny does not finish once the boy accesses adulthood but continues all through life. Newt finds the acceptance of the male's group while Jake Spoon's end shows what happens when the male does not abide by the rules in the group. Something similar occurs in Blackfoot societies where the males gather to evaluate, validate or condemn the actions of other males in the

society. Before any credit to the male can be given, it is first necessary to share his deed with the other males in the society.

Last but not least, both male structures cherish the figure of the mounted warrior as paramount of masculinity. In *Fools Crow*, White Man's Dog is still a boy when he joins his first raid while his second raid, where he counts coup for the very first time, marks his entrance into adulthood. As mentioned earlier, the arrival of the horse introduced huge changes in Blackfoot culture since it made the hunting and warfare much more effective. Horses brought about an unprecedented time of prosperity. It was logical that the tribe valued most those males who continued guaranteeing that prosperity. In McMurtry's novel, there is ample evidence of the glorification of the mounted cowboy. The males in the Hat Creek outfit loathe to undertake chores which imply dismounting and those tasks are left for younger or more inexperienced hands. After being shot by Blackfeet, Gus cannot bear the thought of having his leg cut for that would incapacitate him as an able mount. By the end of the novel, Call gives Newt his own mount, the Hell Bitch, when he appoints him as Captain of the outfit in his absence. Being unable to tell Newt he is his father, Call gives him what the cowboy prizes first and foremost, his own horse.

What most definitively marks the difference between cowboy *communitas* and Blackfoot warrior societies is the notion of the individual in relationship to the community and, by extension, to the world around him. Cowboy *communitas* attempts or desires to achieve complete independence from the community they belong to. They do not regard themselves as a community within a community but, in Turner's definition, as liminal or even as outsiders. Something very different happens within the Native American warrior society which, far from classified as liminal, is clearly inserted in community. Males are not only bound to their warrior society but first and foremost to their community. Since Blackfeet do not share the strict division between the "I" and the "you", they do not perceive the larger

community as restrictive or antagonistic in the way the white cowboy does. Male rites of passage in Blackfoot culture only make sense when viewed within their spiritual beliefs and cosmogony. Vision quests among the Blackfeet cannot be described as simple tests of manly prowess or physical endurance. The same applies to the traditional Sioux Sundance which the Western genre has consistently misinterpreted as prove of manly sturdiness.¹⁶ By contrast, the white cowboy's extreme belief in the value of individualism antagonizes him from his own community and makes him misunderstand other communities that do not function with the same principles. It also causes him anxiety for it keeps him in a state of permanent exclusion where he always needs to assert his individuality before others. Following the masculinist code, the cowboy often considers the need for emotional solace as weakness and subjugation. It is only in the company of other cowboys that he lets himself loosen up a bit once his manhood has been tested. In that company of males, he tries to find a spiritual brotherhood making up for the emotional bondage he lost when choosing the "wilderness". The paradox the white hero faces is that his wish to reach a mystical state of wholeness and communion is not compatible with his profound anti-spiritualism and individualism.

Together We Ride towards the Sunset: the Idealised Buddy and the Dream of Fraternity

In *Lonesome Dove*, Larry McMurtry has joined three foundational Western Great Stories: the narrative of the wandering loner, the story of the friendship dyad and the narrative of the extended male brotherhood. The first of these stories follows the narrative tradition of the American hero as Self-Made Man, the second recalls the old folk stories that present the archetype of the male double while the third reconstructs the epic of the pioneer community. It is not infrequent to find Westerns combining these three structuring patterns in order to present the cowboy both as highly independent individual and as human being

capable of solidarity and sharing. Finding such a balance proves problematic since the cowboy has been constructed on a model where the “I” totally commands the “We”. Confrontation between the cowboy and his peers eventually appears and frequently leaves as only options death or self-exile.

In *Lonesome Dove*, the tension arising from the opposition between the “I” and the “We” finds no positive resolution. By the end of the novel the original male brotherhood has dissolved and the main character is left an emotional cripple. In order to question the validity of the radically self-sufficient male, McMurtry sets Woodrow Call against several other contesting masculinity models. As a result, the paradoxes within the construct of hegemonic masculinity rise up to the surface although McMurtry’s critique never goes as far as to demolish the whole construct. If, on the one hand, he is reproofing it, he also praises it for its amazing narrative force. There exists ample evidence in *Lonesome Dove* to dispute the idea that the novel only reads as an elegy to the glorious American past and the glorious American male. It is no surprise either that the nostalgic tone running through the story leads some readers to that kind of conclusion. Because the construct of American hegemonic masculinity is set within an intricate web of other national constructs involving subjects of race, identity and gender, there is no pulling one thread without also pulling the others.

Woodrow Call combines several of the distinctive traits found in the three 19th century male ideals discussed in chapter 1: the restraint and self-control of the Christian Gentleman/Genteel Patriarch, the independence and ambition of the Self-Made Man and the endurance, stamina and rugged manliness of the Masculine Primitive/Heroic Artisan. The emulation of these idealized models brings about the appearance of the repressed or emotionally unbalanced male in the first case, the insecure, discontent and highly unfruitful male in the second and the insensitive male in the third. McMurtry manifests Call’s shortcomings through Augustus McCrae, contrasting the eloquence, affability and

licentiousness of the latter with the silence, unsociability and inhibition of the former. As the novel proceeds, McMurtry reveals Woodrow Call's vulnerability and is increasingly critical towards his emotional coldness by stressing Newt's need for a father and Call's inability to live up to his demand. But this censure does not challenge the semi-God aura conferred to him. McMurtry is at the same time paying homage to real, semi-legendary and fictional characters like his admired Uncle Johnny,¹⁷ the cattle baron Charles Goodnight or the iconic filmic cowboy interpreted by John Wayne¹⁸ whose charisma, iron like will and strength have in legend transcended any possible feebleness of character.

The literary tradition of the male dyad typically portrays opposed but complementary characters. Augustus McCrae highlights those aspects of the Masculine Primitive which Call represses, namely a keen inclination for all kinds of sensual pleasure such as women, drinking or gambling. To the eyes of the cowboys in the outfit as well as to the reader, Gus' more sordid preferences turn him into a more likeable character even if his immature behaviour is at times questionable. As Mark Busby argues "Call becomes the one whose values McMurtry hangs up for approbation" since "his macho, taciturn and [...] perverted system of values will not allow him to acknowledge his own humanity or to embrace his son and give him his name" (191). Out of the three 19th century role models, Gus exhibits less of the Self-Made Man and more of the American Primitive while the Christian Gentleman/Genteel Patriarch is almost absent in him except for one very significant aspect. Anthony Rotundo has described this aspect as "an ethic of compassion that directed a man's attention to the needs and concerns of others" (41). For Rotundo, the Christian Gentleman is a defender of family values like loving, kindness and compassion in a time when "communal values had lost their force and individualism threatened to run unchecked" (38). It is this ethic of compassion that McMurtry often stresses in Gus when setting him apart from Call. Gus' concern for Newt, his bond with the men in the outfit or even his feelings for Clara offer clear

proof of that. The opposition between the two characters is best understood when analyzing the inner tensions within the Christian Gentleman gender ideal.

The 19th century Christian Gentlemen gender model is shaped in accordance with a Christian tradition that has split the human body into two: transient rotting matter and eternal soul. Within this duality, the body is always perceived as inferior entity which the human mind through force of will is required to master in order for the soul to transcend matter and reach salvation. This separation is further polarized in the Cartesian ego where the mind/soul forms the *res cogitans* and the body the *res extensa*:

From this I knew that I was a substance whose entire essence or nature consists in thinking, and which, to exist need have no location, nor depend on anything material. So that this *me* –that is, the soul by which I am what I am– is completely distinct from the body; and is even easier to know than is the body; even if the body were not, the soul would not cease to be all that it is.

(Descartes 28)

As already discussed, the vitality of the Masculine Primitive ideal during much of the 19th century needs to be read as a reaction against the repressive vision of masculinity embodied in the Christian Gentleman. The Masculine Primitive subverted the Cartesian mind/body hierarchy thereby making it possible for the male to come to terms with his bodily instincts. The third gender ideal, the Masculine Achiever/Self-Made Man, in principle resolved the body/mind duality better since, like the Masculine Primitive, it coveted the idea of the natural man while giving equal merit to will power. Eventually, strong will and inner control prevailed over the idea of the natural man, for those were the qualities that sustained the underlying economic scheme of continuous growth and expansion in America. As a pioneering cattleman, Woodrow Call embodies the traits of a Self-Made Man who has embraced the ethics of the Christian Gentleman/Genteel Patriarch as a defence against his

contradictory inner anxieties. When Larry McMurtry censures Call's emotional stiffness and lack of sensitivity by contrasting it with the naturalness of the Masculine Primitive in Gus, I believe he is exposing the repressive masculinity of the Christian Gentleman rather than questioning the whole construction of Call's masculinity.

The theme of the body as *res extensa* runs deep in *Lonesome Dove* as does in the Western genre in general. One of the paradoxes within the masculinity of the iconic cowboy is that the male's closeness with nature has not produced a better acceptance of his own body. The body is regarded as container, physical sustainer or weapon but there is no real sense of attachment to it. As Suzanne E. Hatty notes, male's estrangement from their own bodies often leads them to "speak of the foreign character of their own bodies, as if they are referring to a physical entity that is not integral to their identity as male subjects" (120). Except for Gus McCrae and to a lesser extent Jake Spoon, all cowboys in *Lonesome Dove* feel awkward towards their own corporality. The distress that nakedness causes in the cowboys is shown when they visit prostitutes and they find it difficult to come to grips with their nakedness or that of the women. Call summarizes better than any other character the fear towards the otherness within the self that leads to the erection of a rigid separation between reason/mind and desire/body. According to Susan E. Hatty, the male is seized by the fear that his identity will disappear at the moment when reason succumbs to desire (122). Call's attempts to avoid physical proximity with women are meant to block the possibilities of his ever giving in to bodily desire. McMurtry makes it clear that Call's tormenting anguish is caused by such a brutal split between mind and body.

But McMurtry's exposure of the Cartesian division present in the Westerner does not reach far enough. Lacking in his criticism is the exploitation of the body as racial signifier. Also, the disclosure of a most significant difference between the way in which the cowboy and the Indian identify with the model of the Masculine Primitive. In the Western, the clothed

cowboy and the naked Indian turn into visual signs that distinguish the brand-new Americanness of the civilized white man from the obsolete Americaness of the savage Other. As stated in chapter 1, the red man's masculinity becomes visibly physical while the white man's masculinity becomes mystical. An example would be the distinct contrast between Blue Duck and Gus when they first meet: bare torso against loose shirt, tight leggings against shapeless trousers, head bandana against brim hat. The Indian's masculinity is located in his physicality as Blue Duck's size and imposing presence makes clear. Gus's masculinity lies beyond physicality. The construction of the Westerner has seen to it that his masculinity is perceived more like an essence than like a presence.

In the Western, the perception of the Indian by the white man takes place within the historical-racial schema. Lorena and Newt's first recognition of Indians in *Lonesome Dove* occurs through a process of negative identification that associates hats with cowboys and lack of hats with Indians. First in this process is the register of lack, second the recognition of Otherness and third the rise of fear. Newt registers that "[The Indians] didn't have hats. A second later he realized why: they were Indians, all of them. Newt felt so scared he went weak" (568). Within the construct of the cowboy myth, the sign "hat" attaches the signified white/ civilized at a second level of signification. The register of lack of whiteness –lack of hat- gives rise to the "racial epidermal schema" that activates Newt's fears, no matter how groundless his fear later proves to be. Whiteness or lack of it is also determined through other properties related to corporeality, such as smell. Lorena's identification of Ermoke's group of Indians comes through a "rank, sweaty smell" that "was almost enough to make her sick" (424). The same perception strikes Newt when bumping into a friendly group of Indians who "smelled like the lard Bolivar had used on his hair" (568). Voracity is sometimes added to smell, as when Gus, Deets and Call reach the Indian camp where the hungry Indians are devouring the guts from a horse. McMurtry mentions Indian's eating domestic animals like

cows, dogs or horses in several occasions. These are either intended to stress the Indian's ferocity or to show their desperation at lack of food. But because dirtiness and smell are also present in this last case, the reader sees the hungry Indian only one step away from bestiality.

By contrast, the cowboy's dirtiness relates to dust but not to grease, as Martin Pumphrey has observed in "Why do cowboys wear hats in the Bath?", Pumphrey notes that the Western genre dictates a very strict code of cowboy's neatness according to which too much cleanliness belongs to the feminine sphere while not enough belongs to the villain. Certainly, this conforms to the American Primitive gender ideal condemning both feminised and uncivilized manhood. In *Lonesome Dove*, Jake Spoon is example of the former and Monkey John of the latter. Jake Spoon's external habits collide with the ideal of the rough, basic cowboy. Not only is his taste for personal hygiene read as feminine but also his incapacity to take manly decisions when the moment so requires. Within the code of Western manliness, Jake's cowardice and passivity endangers Lorena's life and ultimately brings about his own downfall. In other words, his unmanly attitude justifies his death. Jake Spoon is punished for having too bluntly inverted the Cartesian hierarchy present in the Christian Gentleman gender ideal.

When Gus and Call apprehend Jake for cattle rustling and manslaughter, they run into an ethical dilemma: loyalty to their former friend or loyalty to the code of the West. As Robert Warshow observed of Owen Wister's *The Virginian* in his influential essay on the filmic Western, "one moral absolute conflicts with another and the choice of either must leave a moral stain" (40). In *Lonesome Dove*, Larry McMurtry replicates *The Virginian*'s conflict when hanging his former friend Steve. Even when Call and Gus extremely regret having to kill their friend, they never question that course of action. As Warshow noted for the *Virginian*, if Call and Gus had chosen to save their friend, they would have violated the image of themselves that was essential to their existences. On the other hand, the code of the

West requires the male not to flinch on the exertion of a duty that ranks much higher than personal misgivings. The cowboy is set within a hierarchical system of allegiances and regulations as firm as the one he is supposed to escape from. The audience may perceive him as example of unlimited freedom but he is subjected to a very strict code of conduct that sets fences around him. At first sight, male friendship appears at the top of the hierarchy of allegiances but in reality it is loyalty to the father, or loyalty to the law of the father, that prevails.

McMurtry distinctly sets Gus and Call as Jake's seniors. Besides being portrayed as more feminized than his former partners, Jake also appears more childish. When apprehending and later punishing Jake, Gus and Call behave like strict fathers punishing a misbehaving son. They particularly recall the figure of the Christian Gentleman who, in spite of his benevolence, thinks it his duty as a Christian father to punish his son severely when misbehaving or failing to obey. Jake's hanging shows that despite their simulated independence, both Gus and Call adhere to the Victorian conception of masculinity according to which "public hangings were a ritual test of manhood" (Ball 98). McMurtry first reproofs this course of action through Newt, an episode that recalls the confrontation between Molly and the Virginian in Owen Wister's novel. Molly's conscience is troubled at the thought of his lover approving the hanging of his best friend Steve. But her pang of conscience is soon replaced by the notion that his lover did what he had to do.¹⁹ In *Lonesome Dove*, McMurtry's position is not so blunt but it is certainly ambiguous. Later in the novel, a father and a son are hanged for horse thieving. Call first gives the boy a chance, but the boy is caught stealing once more and this time he is killed. The reader inevitably thinks that Jake would have behaved in the same way if Call and Gus had spared him, so the cowboy's decision proved to be in the best of (masculinist) interests.

Ernestine Sewell has argued that in the friendship trilogy formed by Gus, Call and Jake, the former stands for the Freudian *Ego*, the second for the *Super Ego* and the latter for the *Id*. She further contends that once the *Id* disappears, downfall is imminent for the other two characters. Sewell's reading correctly draws attention to the close bond between the three characters but fails to account for the overlapping manifestations of masculinity among the three characters or for the close dyad formed by Gus and Call. An example of the former is the similitude between Jake's desire for sensual pleasure and Gus' own inclinations. Their interest in Lorena is mainly sexual but McMurtry reproofs Jake's behaviour and praises that of Gus. Jake turns into the figure of the cheating lover while Gus becomes the protective father figure. Why should Jake Spoon be punished and Gus exonerated when both seem to subvert the same hierarchy? The answer is not to be found in the Freudian division of the self but in the narrative of male friendship, especially the myth of the male dyad tracing back as far as the Sumerian epic of Enkidu and Gilgamesh.

The male bond between Call and Gus rests on an ancient construct of masculinity that places male loyalty above all other feelings. In their study "Gilgamesh and the Sundance Kid", Dorothy Hammond and Ala Jablow identify the Sumerian epic as the seed for the literary construct of the male dyad. Hammond and Jablow sustain that the myth has successfully adapted to different times, its basic story reaching modern times intact. Western stories such as *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*, they contend, reinterpret the old myth in an American Frontier setting. Indeed, a close examination of the Sumerian epic shows striking parallelisms with the male friendship story written by Larry McMurtry.²⁰ Call shares with the ancient king Gilgamesh undisputed leadership, exceptional strength, rationality and permanent restlessness. By contrast, Gus retrieves the soul of the primitive, wild man as represented by Enkidu. The narrative of the male dyad allows for the recognition of the split subject while sustaining the illusion of wholeness originating in the myth of the pure origin.

This is achieved by working with a series of binaries -civilized/primitive, city/wilderness, male/female, nature/culture, masculine/domestic, self/other – whose integrating terms are seen as antagonistic by the constant allusion to Otherness. Yet, these terms can also work as complementaries, rather than contraries, when contrasting them to another pair of binaries to which they oppose themselves. For example, in the Enkidu and Gilgamesh dyad, Gilgamesh represents the civilized self while Enkidu stands for the more primitive self; together, they are seen as complementaries. But when faced with an enemy, the dyad is seen as a unit and defines itself by opposition to an external Other: it stands for the term primitive when the enemy is feminized and it stands for civilized when the enemy is hypermasculinized.

Gus and Call's friendship needs to be tested and strengthened through action. Hammond and Jablow claim that "warfare is the prime setting for the drama of male friendship" (246) and this applies to Gus and Call in *Lonesome Dove*, where warfare is their confrontation with the hostile Indian or the equally hostile environment. The narrative tradition that has developed from the Enkidu/Gilgamesh dyad most commonly propagates the idea that male fraternity exists as defence against an external threat of violence when actually the reverse should be considered: violence is needed to justify male fraternity. The Sumerian epic places male companionship above any other personal bond and male solidarity above any other feeling. Because solidarity is best expressed in the face of danger, an external threat must appear in order for mates to reinstate their bond. In the Western genre, the racial other and the female are commonly presented as materialization of this external threat. Set against the Indian, the cowboy stands for civilization but set against the woman, he stands for primitivism. Any multiplicity present in the self is neutralized by the appearance of the Other.

McMurtry criticises the use of antagonistic binaries in the Western in several occasions during the novel, however his criticism of hegemonic masculinity is not consistent since it ultimately relies on the same constructs that he has set himself to debunk. Roland

Barthes explains why it is so difficult to invalidate myth from within myth “for the very effort one makes in order to escape its strangle hold becomes in its turn the prey of myth: myth can always, as a last resort, signify the resistance which is brought to bear against it” (135).

Barthes suggests that the only way to annihilate the myth is to form a third semiological system that takes the sign in the second level as signifier of the third order, hence creating a supra meta-linguistic system that collapses the myth by over-signification. In *Lonesome Dove*, McMurtry clearly understands the paradoxes underlying the representation of the cowboy male ideal, which derive mostly from the fact that the hero is grounded in violence. He discloses the connection between male fraternity and the perpetuation of violence and suggests other manifestations of manhood that conflict with 19th century gender ideals. At the same time, his fascination with the evocative power of myth leads him to praise its worth as creative engine. Because of this ambivalence towards the sign in the second level system, he cannot create a third system chain that effectively challenges the second. That is, the same sign he wants to collapse is the sign that generates his novel. An example of this is McMurtry’s treatment of Clara at the end of the novel. When Call reaches Clara’s farm, she has some words of reproach for him:

And I’ll tell you another thing: I’m sorry you and Gus McCrae ever met. All you two done was ruin one another, not to mention those close to you.

Another reason I didn’t marry him was because I didn’t want to fight you for him every day of my life. You men and your promises: they’re just excuses to do what you plan to do anyway, which is leave. You think you’ve always done right –that’s your ugly pride, Mr Call. [...] You’re a vain coward, for all your fighting. (932)

Clara’s words, which I take also to be the author’s, refer to the potential destructiveness inherent to the myth of male fraternity. She clearly sees that Gus and Call are using external

violence as an excuse to flee from responsibility. Clara confronts Call and tells him that he is a coward to his own face, something no other character in the novel has ever dreamt of doing. Because within the cowboy code of conduct questioning the bravery of a fellow cowboy amounts to questioning one's own manhood, the most likely answer to the affront is violence. But Clara is not a male so she can challenge Call without fearing serious reprisal. Furthermore, her own battles with life have gained her the right to face up to Call. For Clara, bravery is not exhibited through bodily fight but through personal commitment to others and to the self. And that is what Call is missing given his rejection to own up to fatherhood and his obstinacy to lead his men through unnecessary danger.

McMurtry targets the stereotypical use of the binary male/female in the Western by having female bravery challenge male bravery: Clara's bravery deflates Call's bravery as conceived in hegemonic masculinity. McMurtry seems to favour Clara's exceptional ability to pull her family through rather than Call and Gus's prowess during the cattle drive, as her fight guarantees continuity while that of the males announces death. But the passage also leads to a different kind of reading. McMurtry's female characters are pretty much defined in masculine terms. That is, characters like Lorena, Clara and even Elmira are distinguished by traits that the Western prominently assigns to males such as independence, resolution, courage and emotional detachment. In Clara, this goes as far as portraying her more masculine than her male partners Bob and July Johnson. She is the one attending to the horse business, the one dealing with money and the only character able to provide economic and emotional support to a family. She is the only woman in the novel ready to sacrifice romanticism and physical desire for prosperity; women who take the opposite course of action either die or have to suffer terrible emotional consequences.²¹ Emotional detachment from the opposite sex is what keeps Clara alive. The fact is that Clara is a corrected version of Call: her down-to-earth character, her vision of future and her stamina come from the Self-

Made Man model, while her devotion to her family may well come from the Christian Gentleman model. All negative aspects in both models have been removed: restlessness and insecurity on the one side and repressive anxiety on the other.

Nonetheless, Clara most definitely belongs in the domestic sphere that the Western genre opposes to the masculine wilderness. It is not just benevolence that leads her to take in incoming guests in her household but an intention to grow and prosper. Within the Western myth, the existence of the male wilderness is threatened by the advance of settlement conceived as female. McMurtry himself rephrased the myth when saying:

The frontier was not feminine, it was masculine. The Metropolis which has now engulfed it is feminine, though perhaps it is an error to sexualize the process even that much. The Metropolis swallowed the Frontier like a small snake swallows a large frog: slowly, not without strain but inexorably. And if something of the frontier remains alive in the inners of the Metropolis it is because the process of digestion has only just begun. (*In a Narrow Grave* 66)

McMurtry briefly concedes that it is “an error” to identify the frontier with the masculine and the city with the feminine, only to invalidate his own argument straightaway by referring to the threatening snake/woman. The pre-Oedipical male fantasy of the devouring mother is quite explicit here. The Metropolis appears as phallic woman eating up her own children. In *Lonesome Dove*, Clara’s household signals the advance of the Metropolis and her fertility is an omen of death for the cowboy. By turning Clara into a masculinized character, McMurtry has empowered her in front of the male but he has also turned her into the phallic woman in the male unconscious. McMurtry’s attempt to escape the construct of the domestic female only further confirms the antagonism female/male within the Western myth.

The myth of masculine friendship is so powerful in the Western that it often replaces filial bonds, both with the mother and with the father. Certainly, this is what happens in

Call's case. His choice may seem unnatural, but it is precisely what hegemonic masculinity has been instructing males to do. This is why it is so hard for the audience to be too harsh on him. Newt sustains the same dream of mythical fraternity as his father. In his most treasured fantasy, Newt rides with the Captain –as he calls Call- in actual brotherhood:

Once in a great while Newt dreamed that the Captain not only left, but took him with him, to the high plains that he had heard about but never seen. There was never anyone else in the dreams: just him and the Captain, horseback in a beautiful grassy country. Those were sweet dreams, but just dreams.

(McMurtry, *Lonesome Dove* 27-28)

Almost this same scene is described by the writer in *In a Narrow Grave* when reflecting on the power of the cowboy myth:

Certainly the myth of the cowboy is a very efficacious myth, one based first of all upon a deep response to nature. Riding out at sunup with a group of cowboys, I have often felt the power of that myth myself. The horses pick their way delicately through the dewy country, the brightness of sunrise has not yet fallen from the air, the sky is blue and all-covering, and the cowboys are full of jokes and morning ribaldries. It is a fine action, compelling in itself and suggestive beyond itself of other centuries and other horsemen who have ridden the earth. (173)

In this passage, McMurtry overtly acknowledges his fascination with the pastoral dream of the Edenic Garden while covertly pointing to the power another myth has on him, that of male brotherhood. It is intimacy with men as well as intimacy with nature that McMurtry rejoices in. The “jokes and morning ribaldries” of the cowboys imply a respite from a more restrictive environment where such carefree attitude is not welcome. The feeling of communion is so powerful that it makes him feel one with all the males who in the past

shared a similar experience. Eve is nowhere to be found in the Edenic Garden of America for the male partner has taken her place instead.

Newt's separation from his mother -the female sphere- is abrupt and absolute. No other female presence ever makes up for the absence of the mother and Newt grows up exclusively surrounded by males. The emotional turmoil of his teenage years is complicated by Newt's status as orphan. In her unpublished dissertation *Homeless in the Ranch, Masculinity and the Orphan Myth in the Western, 1950-1990*, scholar Ann Barrow contends that the orphan myth "offers a haven to men who experience isolation and disenfranchisement from mainstream society" (5). Barrow focuses her examination on anti-heroic Western characters who struggle to become independent males without the guidance of a father. Her final contention is that the regular American male turns to the orphan myth in the Western as a way to "engage in a world where sons are bereft of fathers" (252). I find Barrow's identification between the narrative orphan hero and the contemporary American male problematic since the very belief in the myth contributes to the further maintenance of hegemonic masculinity.²² Still, I think her examination of McMurtry's *Horseman, Pass By* offers quite a suitable framework to understand McMurtry's portrayal of Newt in *Lonesome Dove*.

Barrow lists eight stages in the orphan myth, four of which can be traced in Newt: abandonment, complex,²³ defence mechanisms, and survival. Within the structure of cowboy hegemonic masculinity, Newt is expected to become an independent grown-up even if he lacks the example of a role-model father. Newt's sense of abandonment causes feelings of worthlessness but it also arises the desire to become what he thinks his father wants of him. Seeking for the approval of a missing father, Newt looks for the recognition from other males since "the son's desire for his father becomes sublimated within the son's relationship with other males" (Barrow 14). The survival instinct enables Newt to overcome the trauma of not

being able to attain the love/recognition of his father. Right at this point, McMurtry slightly twists the pattern of the orphan myth as explained by Barrow. Newt learns through Gus that he is not a real orphan and that his father has been there all along. The trauma is replayed all over again: Call's inability to admit his fatherhood to Newt reinitiates the cycle of loss just when Newt has managed to pull through. McMurtry explicitly refers to this sense of repetition when noting that "The boy looked so lonesome that he [Call] was reminded of his own father, who had never been comfortable with people" (922). Call is no more capable to stop the cycle of repetition than his father was before him, McMurtry says, for both males are trapped within the construct of hegemonic masculinity.

One of the problems in Barrow's thesis is that the pattern of the orphan myth regards the orphan son as a victim of an abandoning father, who in turn was also abandoned by his father, thus always shifting guilt to a previous generation in a never ending chain of succession. Furthermore, by focusing exclusively on the orphan myth, Barrow's thesis skips an essential point in the construct of cowboy masculinity: the intricate connection between the orphan myth and the myth of male fraternity. Barrow implies that the lack of the father compels the son to look for a father substitute in his choice of partners. But the reverse is also the case in the Western: the pursuit of the cowboy myth leads the son to break away from home or from a father whom he perceives to be weaker. His search may take him nowhere but he usually finds male fraternity on the way. In George Steven's movie *Shane*, young Joey wishes his father resembled the valiant Shane, who represents wild masculinity as opposed to the domestic masculinity of his father. Although Joey is too young to leave home, his desire is to follow the cowboy who has shown him what a "real man" is like. In Cormac McCarthy's *The Crossing*, Billy Parham suddenly leaves home to have a taste of the wild, only to find on his return that his brother is the only survivor of a massacre where both his parents were

killed. Gus McCrae does something similar when he decides to head West just for the fun of it rather than following his father's steps in a well-paid and respectable job.

Newt's search for a father is inseparable from his search for a buddy. At the beginning of the novel, Newt's admiration concentrates more on Dish than on Captain Call since Dish "wasn't someone totally out of reach, like the Captain" (McMurtry, *Lonesome Dove* 52). Newt studies Dish's every move in order to emulate him and likes to think that "Someday, if he was lucky, maybe he and Dish would be cowboys together" (52). Newt's fascination with Dish disappears as soon as Jake enters the scene. The boy bases his idea that Jake may be his father on the sympathy Jake showed to him while his mother was still alive. Newt is looking for affection, be it in the form of a father or a male friend. Affection is what Call denies him and what Jake no longer gives him once he has grown older. Instead, he is granted access to hegemonic masculinity. The possession of a firearm marks his first rite of passage into manhood:

[...] holding one and actually having one of your own were two different things. He turned the cylinder of the Colt and listened to the small, clear clicks it made. The grip was wood, the barrel cool and blue; the holster had kept a faint smell of saddlesoap. He slipped the gun back in its holster, put the gun belt around his waist and felt the gun's solid weight against his hip. When he walked out into the lots to catch his horse, he felt grown and complete for the first time in his life. (112)

Newt's feeling of wholeness is easy to account for: by handing him the gun, Call has acknowledged Newt as one of "us". Next in his initiation into adulthood is the crossing of the border into Mexico to steal the horses and the cattle that the outfit will later take to Montana. For Newt, "Life was finally starting [...]. Here he was below the border, about to run off a

huge horse herd and in a few days or weeks he would be going up the trail to a place he had barely even heard of” (130).

As in Welch’s *Fools Crow*, the rite of passage consists in stealing horses or cattle from the enemy. Both young males experience the same mixture of fear and joy, doubt and resolution. Exposure to danger is what measures their male worth. But most important to them is the time after encountering danger, when the older males around them will recognise their manhood and consider them as one of their own: “Every one who saw them ride in would realize that he was now a man [...]. Deets would be proud of him, and even Bolivar would take notice” (McMurtry, *Lonesome Dove* 132). Incorporation into adult manhood, into the allegedly equalitarian fraternity of males, means being subjected to the constant supervision of other males, that is, entering the arena of permanent male competition. In Blackfoot Native American tradition, there are clear limits to how far male competition can extend to. The fight for male recognition should never damage social cohesion and if it does, it should be immediately mended. In the Western genre as representation of Euramerican culture, these limits are never too clear. Because there is a dislocation between the society the cowboy lives in -his liminal space of *communitas*- and the society from which they have disengaged -civilization at large-, the very term social cohesion gets blurred.

The Hat Creek outfit embodies the reader’s and the character’s desire for *communitas*, that collective dimension inhabited by persons in the liminal state. As defined by Victor Turner, *communitas* “transgresses or dissolves the norms that govern structured and institutionalized relationships and is accompanied by experiences of unprecedented potency” (*The Ritual* 128). Turner believes that the ideal of *communitas* “is a transformative experience that goes to the root of each person's being and finds in that root something profoundly communal and shared” (*The Ritual* 138). Once Newt has proved himself able in the horse raid, Captain Call declares him ready to join the trail party. Newt’s desire is

obviously to leave behind his state as initiate in order to join the fraternity of males with full rights. In its capacity to level out the diversity of races, ages, conditions and nationalities, the Hat Creek outfit is seen as forming an ideal kind of *communitas*. The black man Deets, the Mexican Bol, the Irish O'Brien boys, the piano player Lippy, the young Spettle boys, the aged Augustus or the runaway Jake all form part of this male fraternity.

The relationships between the males in the outfit are seen as unstructured and homogenous when compared to the structured social group from which the cowboy detached himself. But the truth is that they reproduce the same class hierarchy. In the American collective imaginary, the dream of the American *communitas* in the wilderness finds one of its roots in the narrative of the Lewis and Clark expedition, as Dana D. Nelson brilliantly exposes in *National Manhood*. Nelson observes that

The fraternal performance, the integration of two men's authority into a single, purposeful command over their party and the terrain it covered, was what fascinated the US public, the separate records of the two explorers crafted into a single, continuous narrative [...]” (73)

Nelson reinforces Jay Fliegeman's argument that the early republic replaced “the absolutist quality of power attached to men *qua* fathers” with new ideals of fraternal democracy (76). However, she reminds us that only a few could access the privileges of the new structure of fraternity. Nelson contends that this is clearly seen in the Lewis and Clark narrative, where “Fraternity in its actual practice was practically an ideologically most uneven while pretending otherwise” (77). From all the members in the expedition, only Lewis and Clark can access the status of command. Extending this hierarchy even further, historians and the public at large have clearly placed Lewis as the “‘real’ centre of authority” (75). R. W. Connell describes the sub-structure of internal subordination within a commanding structure in the following way:

If authority is defined as legitimate power, then we can say that the main axis of the power structure of gender is the general connection of authority with masculinity. But this is immediately complicated, and partly contradicted, by a second axis: the denial of authority to some groups of men, or more generally, the construction of hierarchies of authority and centrality within the major gender categories. (*Gender and Power* 109)

Nelson thinks that because hierarchy is kept in an imagined space of equality, tensions arise which need “constant rerouting” (77). It is not far-fetched to consider the Hat Creek outfit in a similar light, particularly when Larry McMurry himself considers that the Journals of the expedition constitute “our only really American epic” (*Sacagawea’s Nickname* 139).

I described McMurry’s fascination with the Journals of Lewis and Clark in chapter 2, particularly its portrayal of characters and the description of specific incidents that disclose a significant aspect about these characters. What interests me most is the way McMurry assigns each character a clear position in a group that he sees as an extended family: Charles Floyd is the joker in the group, Charbonneau the clumsy translator, Sacagawea the practical woman who introduces a bit of romance, Lewis the resolute leader and Clark the more gentle one. A similar pattern can be seen in *Lonesome Dove* where the males in the Hat Creek outfit also form an extended family whose members have very specific assigned roles. In his undisputed command, Captain Call almost resembles Captain Lewis while Gus would take after Clark as a more compassionate character. Clara and Lorena would fulfil a role similar to Sacagawea when introducing the triangulation that prevents the male dyad to be regarded as anything other than pure homosocial –as opposed to homoerotic- camaraderie.

In *Sacagawea’s Nickname*, McMurry makes several explicit references to the male dyad and the democratic spirit of the Lewis and Clark expedition. One appears in his essay “The American Epic”, where McMurry considers Lewis and Clark “the first and most

remarkable of a long string of American teams: Mutt and Jeff, Huck and Jim, Abbott and Costello, Butch and Sundance [...]” (141). McMurtry’s own creations, Gus and Call, may even be added to this list. In “Sacagawea’s Nickname”, McMurtry reflects on the passage in the Journals when all the members of the expedition took a vote to decide where to set the Indian camp. McMurtry writes that the “sudden granting of suffrage-in-the-wilderness strikes me as pretty amazing” (157), an observation which points to the sense of *communitas* created by the members of the expedition in their liminal state.

As Dana Nelson observed for the Lewis and Clark expedition, the tensions produced by the class hierarchy maintained within the idealized space of fraternity also need constant readdressing in McMurtry’s Hat Creek outfit. Captain Call is the undisputed leader who assigns every one of the cowboys an appointed place in the trail according to their experience, abilities and to their status in the “promotional ladder”. At the beginning of the novel, Dish and Augustus make it quite clear that menial work should not be assigned to top hand cowboys but to younger boys or to “an old idiot like Pea Eye” (McMurtry, *Lonesome Dove* 63). The choice of mounts reflects the strict hierarchy in the outfit. The top hands choose first and the young initiates come last. At the bottom of the hierarchical ladder are the positions “on the ground” or on the wagon, basically the one occupied by Bol as cook. Lippy, the piano player, is better off since he rides by the wagon. The young boys come next, including Newt, and a bit above more experienced hands like Pea Eye. Among the top hands are cowboys like Dish or Deets. As seen before, Deets’ race leaves him in an awkward position: he is the Captain’s most able hand, probably even better than Gus, but his blackness is an issue with some of the cowboys in the trail. Despite the close bond between Gus and Call, the men definitively see Augustus as second in command. Both he and Jake –who decides to have his own place away from the main camp- completely refuse to do any job which they consider unsuited, basically hard-menial work.

Slight disruptions of the hierarchy cause friction, like the time when Bert and Needle feel aggravated because the Captain has chosen Soupy as “point” over them, ignoring the fact that they “had been with the outfit longer” (238). By the end of the novel, Soupy himself feels aggravated by Newt’s promotion. Since the Captain stays firm on his decision, the only way for Soupy to vent out his anger is physical confrontation with Newt. The Captain sees the competition between the two males as a necessary step in Newt’s development of manhood. When he sees that Newt can stand for himself by confronting Soupy, Call knows Newt’s training for adult manhood is basically over.

Lonesome Dove certainly addresses the problems derived from the belief in an ideal of male fraternity that sustains itself on hierarchy and fierce competition. The gradual dismembering of the outfit and, particularly, the harsh consequences of Call’s denial of fatherhood seem to reflect McMurtry’s reprobation of a masculinist system that chokes the male in the consecution of an impossible task. Following Call to Montana has taken a very high toll among the men and those surviving can hardly be said to be any wiser. At the end of the novel, Newt’s feelings contrast with his emotions at the beginning of the trail. Newt receives Call’s own horse, gun and watch with a feeling of emptiness for, unlike the time he received his first gun from Call, the objects no longer represent manhood but emotional lack. Newt’s process of coming of age parallels a process of emotional loss: the price to pay for becoming the hegemonic cowboy is emotional drainage. At the beginning of the trail, Newt finds solace in friendship with an Irish boy, Sean O’Brian. Both are orphans but Sean drowns and Newt has to restart his search again. Jake’s death marks a turning point for Newt, who learns that friendship should never be sacrificed to duty. Gradually all the males who showed some kindness to him or with whom Newt could bond, disappear: Bol, Deets, Dish and finally Gus. When his own father leaves him, Newt declares himself “kin to nobody”, thus continuing the long line of orphaned sons and barren males in the Western genre.

Critic John Miller-Purrenhager has drawn attention to Newt's words in his essay "‘Kin to Nobody’: the Disruption of Genealogy in Larry McMurtry's *Lonesome Dove*". Miller-Purrenhager claims that McMurtry criticizes the American myth of homogenous national identity by purposefully disrupting genealogy in the novel. Miller-Purrenhager thinks Newt's refusal to accept fathers or forefathers is a break from the past since "His refusal obviates any genealogy, whether of one's own family or one's nation" (88). Miller-Purrenhager's thesis implies that Newt exerts agency to escape the deterministic pattern that has trapped his father. But if so, why does Newt stay in charge of the men as his father has asked him rather than going his own way? "He would have to try and do the work, even if he no longer cared" (923), McMurtry writes, letting us wonder whether Newt stays out of duty to a father he has forsaken or out of loyalty to the male friends with whom he has shared so much suffering. In any case, keeping Newt in charge of the outfit means to bind him to a rigid masculinity code that will pull him towards the past rather than propelling him into the future, exactly like his father. Newt sharply contrasts with young Lonnie Bannon in McMurtry's first novel *Horseman, Pass By*. Unlike Newt, Lonnie manages to find his own way past the masculinist gender models set by both his grandfather and his uncle. McMurtry forfeits any such possibility in Newt, as he makes completely clear in *Streets of Laredo*, the sequel to *Lonesome Dove*, where Newt dies when falling from the mare his father had given him. McMurtry's critique of Call's rancid masculinism seems absolute here for it is the sin of the father –rejecting fatherhood- that has caused the death of the son. Yet, *Streets of Laredo* goes on for more than five hundred pages following Call's roamings as if suggesting it was destiny, not human choice, that had caused Newt's death.

With the exception of Pea Eye, the destinies of the cowboys in the Hat Creek outfit are rather grim. Gus, Jake and Deets all die in *Lonesome Dove*. Newt dies in *Streets of Laredo* and his father is left a physical and an emotional cripple. The reader wonders whether

McMurtry intended all the male deaths, failures and disappointments to expose the construct of national identity or whether he considered them as mementos of a harsh but necessary time in history. After carefully examining the main characters in *Lonesome Dove* as composites of masculine ideals, my contention is that McMurtry intentionally allowed both interpretations. What he has to say about the American male is only secondary to what he has encountered along the way in tackling one of the most iconic representations of American manhood.

McMurtry's Western heroes in *Lonesome Dove* exemplify the paradoxes inherent in the construction of the American hegemonic white male. The Westerner's desire to rescue a long lost masculinity and a sense of *Gemeinheit* led him to covet the space occupied by the Native American. The search for this space took him away from family and community. He interiorized the Indian by adopting what he perceived were his positive traits of manhood. These traits had been well defined through the Self-Made Man and the Masculine Primitive role models: physical strength, toughness, endurance, cold-blood, sharpness, bravery and independence. Meanwhile, he disregarded other essential aspects of the Native American's identity rooted in religion by comparing them to the more "civilized" ideal of the Christian Gentleman. This allowed him to maintain a differentiated identity as white man. The myth of the Vanishing Indian made it possible for the cowboy to appear as rightful heir of the original inhabitant, as the essence of Americanness. The romantic story of the Vanishing Indian hid a grimmer political reality: the attempt to eradicate and supplant the Native American.

For all its triumphalist view of history and its reverence for the masculinist code, the Western never comes to terms with the figure it glorified, the alienated cowboy. What the genre never resolved and what Call and Gus in McMurtry's novel are reminders of is the inevitable tension produced by the estrangement from one's own community. Through *communitas*, the cowboy males try to retrieve a lost *Gemeinheit* that has been replaced by a modern *Gesellschaft*. Blood relations are replaced by mythical fraternity. What holds the

males together, an ideal of American manhood, is cherished above any blood bond for it is what provides the cowboy male with his national identity. Because that national identity is only negatively defined -by opposition to the Other, by estrangement from community and even from the self-, it needs to constantly be reasserted lest the reality of its fake construction be revealed. *Communitas* functions only so long as there is an external threat, be it Indians, Mexicans, bandits or a hostile environment but it collapses as soon as that threat disappears. When that happens, an internal Other emerges that reveals a troubled and inconsistent male identity. Larry McMurtry's *Lonesome Dove* continues building upon the nation's creational myths instead of facing the thorny subject of the troubled internal Other underlying the construct of American hegemonic masculinity. More than two hundred years after the Euramerican started the debate on national identity, Crèvecoeur's question *What is an American?* is still haunting the mind of the American male.

NOTES

¹ The sentence refers to Pea Eye's dreams of Indians in which he pictures them as big shadows threatening him with a sharp object. See McMurtry, *Lonesome Dove* 25-26.

² Carr acknowledges that both guilt and desire coexist in the creation of the Indian stereotype. Yet, she does not explore the psychoanalytical connections implied in this construction in the way Bhabha's theory does.

³ Homi Bhabha also refers to fear and desire as aggressiveness and narcissism. See "The Other Question" in *The Location of Culture*.

⁴ New Western History was officially inaugurated with Patricia Limerick's publication of *The Legacy of Conquest* in 1987, and started having major audiences by the mid 1990s. New Western historians question the predominance of Turner's and Walter Prescott Webb's vision of the West.

⁵ For more information about the southwards expansion of Comanches, see Wallace & Hoebel, *The Comanches. Lords of the South Plains*.

⁶ Las Cuevas killing is one of such episodes. In November 1875, the Texas Rangers killed a dozen harmless men in Las Corchas when they mistook their ranch for Las Cuevas ranch, the place they were heading for in pursuit of some stolen cattle.

⁷ For more detailed information, see Webb 238-318.

⁸ "The Negro is a phobogenetic object, a stimulus to anxiety". See *Black Skin* 151.

⁹ In *Mixedblood Messages*, Louis Owens points out that Blue Duck is a halfbreed and places him alongside other halfbreed characters in American literature who have "served as matrix for the conflicted terrors of Euramerica" (25). Owens believes that "the mixedblood is a mirror that gives back a self-image with disturbing implications". His observation on Blue

Duck's blood quantum does not invalidate the fact that for the white characters in the novel, he is the representation of the "evil Indian".

¹⁰ Some critics have observed that Blue Duck's suicide mirrors that of Kiowa Chief Satanta, who in 1878 committed suicide in Hunstville prison, Texas. Being taken to the hospital floor in prison after he slashed his wrist, Satanta jumped from the second floor balcony headfirst onto the ground although he did not drag anybody along.

¹¹ Scholar Diana Fuss notes that Fanon's colonial encounter is "staged within exclusively masculine parameters; the colonial other remains an undifferentiated, homogenized male, and subjectivity is ultimately claimed for men alone". Mary Ann Doanne criticises Fanon's failure to consider black female subjectivity when assaulted by white masculine violence, an effect of the discourse of white masculinity within which it is inscribed. See Fuss 36; Doanne 230-232.

¹² Although Monkey John is a white man, he fits the mould of the white man whose contact with the bestial Other has turned him into a beast.

¹³ I agree with Fanon's arguments here when stating that blackness –darkness, Indiannes- is understood negatively in opposition to whiteness –being black is being non-white- whereas whiteness is never defined as non-black.

¹⁴ The use of the term here follows Ricardo J. Quinones' interpretation of fraternal homicide in the Cain-Abel story and, in particular, a body of stories which recall that first murder. In the literary cowboy tradition, Cain would stand for the Sacred Executioner, while Abel would be shaped as the Indian "brother" whom he needs to kill.

¹⁵ Note the similarity between Quinones' interpretation of the Abel-Cain myth after the Second World War and Richard Slotkin's concept of regeneration through violence.

¹⁶ In one of the most blatant misinterpretations of the Sioux ritual, 1970s *A Man called Horse*, the Sundance appears as a shockingly primitive and rather morbid test of manly

stamina rather than as a response to a granted favour by the spirits. Richard Harris, a white Indian, has to endure the ritual in order to demonstrate he is as valid as any of the other Native American males in the tribe. The ritual is completely taken out of its complex ceremonial context and displayed as voyeuristic spectacle.

¹⁷ In his essay “Take my Saddle from the Wall: a Valediction” from *In a Narrow Grave*, McMurtry offers a description of Uncle Johnny that is quite consistent with Woodrow Call’s character.

¹⁸ The original idea for *Lonesome Dove* is to be found in a screenplay called *Streets of Laredo* which McMurtry wrote in 1972. McMurtry had thought of John Wayne as Call, James Stewart as Gus and Henry Fonda as Jake. The screen play is part of the McMurtry Papers in the Southwestern Writers Collection at Texas State University-San Marcos.

¹⁹ See Wister, *The Virginian* 314.

²⁰ Gilgamesh, the most powerful king on Earth, is described as two thirds god and one third human, while Enkidu is first seen as almost sub-human in his state of wilderness. Before Enkidu meets Gilgamesh, he has to learn how to live among men, that is, he needs to be somehow civilized. The process of “humanization” starts when Enkidu succumbs to the sexual favours of a prostitute therefore losing part of his strength but gaining human knowledge in return. Enkidu meets Gilgamesh when Gilgamesh is about to exert the right of first night with a recently wed bride. Enkidu tries to prevent the king from doing so and they start a fight. Enkidu acknowledges Gilgamesh’s super human force and this is the start of their friendship. Their adventures begin when Gilgamesh decides to leave the city no longer offering him worthy distractions and both enter the Cedar Forest. The tale of their adventures continues until Gilgamesh dares to reject the favours of a goddess whose previous licentiousness he considers unworthy of him. Enkidu suffers the consequences of her

vengeance and dies. Gilgamesh is devastated by his friend's death. Eventually, this leads him to fear his own death and seek for immortality. For the full legend, see Kovacs.

²¹ Both Elmira and Maggie die, the first because of her fixation with an old time lover, the second heart-broken because of her impossible love for Call. Lorena does not die but her delusion with Jake leads her to take the journey during which she is kidnapped and raped.

²² Barrow claims that the postwar American male engages in compulsive repetition of the orphan myth as a way to deal with the absence of the father. This interpretation suggests that reality exists prior to the myth, completely ignoring that myth very often creates that same reality.

²³ Barrow describes the complex stage as the time when "the boy internalises the father abandonment as a consequence of the boy's flaws or inappropriate actions" (20).

CHAPTER 4

NATIVE AMERICAN IDENTITY, MASCULINITY AND MIMICRY IN *FOOLS*

CROW AND THE HEARTSONG OF CHARGING ELK

“Our struggle at the moment is continue to survive and work toward a time when we can replace the need for being preoccupied with survival with a more responsible and peaceful way of living within communities and with the ever-changing landscape that will ever be our only home.” (Warrior, *Tribal Secrets* 126)

Readers of *Fools Crow* have widely praised James Welch for creating a reassuring Native American male figure that restores a sense of identity to contemporary Native American males. After having examined the devastating consequences that conforming to a constructed masculinity has had for the white American male, it may seem inconsistent to accept a constructed role model for the Native American. If the Westerner is a social construct devised to provide white Americans with a sense of national identity, isn't the figure of the Native American warrior also a cultural construct providing the Native American a sense of differentiated identity?

One of the main problems Native American writers have to deal with is the scarcity of Native American narrative male role models and the over presence of the stereotyped Indian in Euramerican white narrative. As I have argued in the previous chapter, white narrative genres like the Western turned the Native American into the Indian and the Western hero into the new Native American. Along with the stereotype of the Indian came the myth of the Vanishing Indian. Not only did the white man stereotype the Native American according

to hegemonic masculinity prototypes, but he also used the myth of the disappearing native to appropriate the identity and the space he was occupying. The real Native American was falling into invisibility. Taking this historical frame into account, the examination of constructed masculinity models in Native American narrative needs to proceed in a different way from that in American white narrative. Since Native American masculinity models were and still are misconstrued by white narratives, the subject of appropriation and its consequences on the Native American construction of identity is a pending matter.

James Welch's *Fools Crow* and *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* are set at a point in time when traditional Native American cultures were forced to an abrupt halt and when tribal Native American masculinity was disconnected from its referents. The protagonist of *Fools Crow* emerges as a link between that past and a future where the Native American male is in danger of becoming the "absolute fake". By contrast, in Welch's last novel, *Charging Elk* manages to retain his identity as Oglala Sioux despite being completely disconnected from his origins. In the present chapter, I first examine Welch's portrayal of traditional Blackfoot masculinity models and I assess his redefinition of the construct of the indigenous warrior. I then consider the Blackfoot myths in *Fools Crow* that stress familial or communal relationships in clear contrast to the glorification of the independent hero in the Western genre. This leads me to suggest that Welch's reshaped Native American warrior is set in direct opposition to the figure of the classical cowboy type. I then expose the difficulty of dealing with a most extreme case of Native American alienation in *The Heartsong of Charging Elk*. Contrary to readings claiming that *Charging Elk*'s alienation inevitably leads to acculturation, I suggest that *Charging Elk*'s mimicry can be read as an strategy for survival that carries the seed of contestation. This suggestion is based on Homi Bhabha's theory of mimicry which postulates that the colonial hybrid produced by the colonial power subverts the narrative of colonial power, for its very presence shows the difference which colonial

discourse is trying to disavow. However feeble Charging Elk's resistance to colonial power may seem, his journey towards survival actually contests the journey of the classical Western hero towards the sunset.

Warrior Masculinity, Community-Focused Manhood and the Reconstruction of Native American Male Identity

James Welch's portrayal of masculinities in *Fools Crow* clearly distinguishes between community-oriented manhood and individualistic manhood. As seen in chapter 1, the Blackfoot male strived to be a highly skilled, able, fit and courageous man. In order to survive, he needed to succeed in competition; be it against animals when hunting or against other males in war. Consequently, the band cherished those qualities that best guaranteed survival. Excess of zeal in the consecution of those qualities could however lead to the opposite of what was intended. Competition had to be kept within strict margins so that it did not turn into a battle amongst individuals that jeopardised the common interest of the group. That is, the survival of the community demanded that the individual kept his desires for personal glory within reasonable limits.

In Welch's novel, clear examples of community-oriented manhood are the medicine man Mik-api and Fools Crow's father Rides-at-the-door, whereas Owl Child's conception of masculinity stands at the other end, towards radical individualism. At the beginning of the novel, White Man's Dog –later Fools Crow- and Fast Horse find themselves at the verge of entering adult malehood. Welch places them exactly at the same starting point but their journeys soon diverge and each one ends up by representing one of the two opposed notions of masculinity. In *Fools Crow*, the true man is the one who shows himself worthy of his community, not the one who simply excels himself in battle. Fast Horse is too concerned about the second, whereas White Man's Dog strives for the first. Still, there is no simplistic

duality between good and bad, generous and selfish, conformist and rebellious, insider or outsider. Both aspects form part of each individual and every character needs to confront his inner self in order to find a proper balance. Because Fast Horse and Owl Child elude this process of introspection, theirs will always be a troubled male identity.

The first chapter of the novel presents the young Blackfoot White Man's Dog, as a confused eighteen-year-old boy lacking in confidence but full of dreams of glory. Like any other young Blackfoot male, White Man's Dog dreams of a not too distant day when he will achieve social recognition and access material gains –his own guns, his own horses and his own lodge. White Man's Dog thinks that owning the *many-shots gun* will surely bring about all that he has been dreaming of. As was the case in *Lonesome Dove*, the possession of a gun clearly signifies the transition from boyhood to manhood in the mind of the young male.

White Man's Dog and Newt's conception of manhood is very similar. Both rely on socially constructed models of masculinity that share very strict defining parameters. Their male ideal is that of a courageous, confident, strong and able man who does not flinch in the face of danger, who is loyal to his friends and to himself. White Man Dog and Newt impatiently wait for the time when they can show the males around them what they are worth. This takes place as soon as they succeed in their first horse raiding expedition.

White Man's Dog's and Newt's tests of manhood require them to trespass into other male's territory. White Man's Dog joins Yellow Kidney's raid into the Crow's camp while Newt joins the Hat Creek outfit into Mexico. Both trespasses are justified similarly: the Pikuni are only responding to previous attacks from the Crows and the cowboys are responding to Mexican thieves. In other words, previous aggression demands retaliation. Part one of the novel makes several references to the crimes and humiliations inflicted by the Crows, which call for Blackfoot retaliation. Before the appearance of the white man, the Crows are the Pikuni's main enemy. The historical source of their enmity is the fight for

hunting grounds. Crows accessed horses before the Blackfeet and their newly conferred superiority enabled them to push the Blackfeet out of the South Saskatchewan around the 1730s. Soon after the Blackfeet got hold of horses and European weaponry, the positions were reversed (Binnema, *Common and Contested* 93-94).¹ At the time *Fools Crow* is set, the Blackfeet are at the height of their power and warfare against the Crows has more to do with male prestige than with material gain. The Blackfeet and the Crow engage in raiding and warfare against each other for exactly the same reasons. In Bruce Lincoln's words, "accomplishment in battle provides a common means [...] whereby individuals can seek to elevate not only their own individual prestige above that of their peers but also that of their group above others" (*Death* 138). All the young boys in the Pikuni party know that their future as Blackfoot warriors will be shaped by their success or failure in the raid. Even when the expedition is mainly targeted at stealing horses, there exists the possibility of confronting the enemy. More than a danger to be avoided, the anticipated outcome of confrontation serves as an excuse for the Blackfoot boys to show their manly worth to others.²

In his study on war and warriors, Bruce Lincoln examines the process that leads the warrior to commit homicide in battle:

[...] warriors must be persuaded not only to risk their own lives but also to take the lives of others, and not merely random others but those whose otherness is most radically marked. Involving organized and relatively large scale lethal violence as it does, warfare always poses serious ethical problems within the already thorny set of issues surrounding homicide. (141)

Lincoln notes that during war the Otherness of the enemy is reinforced to the point of making him look inhuman:

[...] all warfare involves sociopolitical suspensions of the ethical, whereby the otherness of the enemy is radically accentuated, a situation that permits and

legitimizes their victimization. War is, in truth, that situation in which the killing of other people on a grand (or even total) scale is rendered not only licit but requisite, even glorious, by virtue of the fact that those others belong to a rival group to whom ethical norms do not extend, they having been effectively defined as subhuman or even nonhuman. (143)

In *Fools Crow*, Yellow Kidney debases the Crows by calling them fat, lazy and womanly. During the preparations for the raid, they are referred to as “insects” and “dogs”. White Man’s Dog describes the leader of the Crow’s band, Bull Shield, as a “treacherous enemy” and thinks of “bring[ing] his head back for Yellow Kidney to sit upon” (130). The Lone Eater’s metonymic references to the Crows have the effect of making them appear less human than the Blackfeet, for then revenge and attack is justified. Actually, Bull Shield is acting according to the same principles as the Pikuni, since he is only defending his own camp against external attack. Bull Shield keeps Yellow Kidney hostage as punishment for his intrusion. What the Blackfeet acknowledge as fair practice when administered by the own group becomes inadmissible when practiced by the Other.³ The need to get even sets in motion an escalating chain of violence that serves as test ground to validate warrior masculinity. The leader of the revenge party against the Crows, Fox Eyes, is a fierce warrior who once brought back the head of a fearful enemy on his lance. Welch describes that Pikuni women “had kicked it around before roasting it on a fire” (138), leaving the reader to wonder whether the same fate awaits Bull Shield’s head once White Man’s Dog seizes him.

When White Man’s Dog reaches Crow’s camp in his first raid, he experiences a “combination of fear and almost hysterical glee” that makes him “feel weak, light-headed” (29). He overcomes his fear by thinking that other males will laugh at his emotional weakness and realizing that three other boys depend on his *sang froid*. White Man’s Dog’s success in the raid marks the beginning of his new identity as Blackfoot warrior. His first brave act is to

have killed a Crow night watcher that could have warned the other Crows in camp. Manhood is validated through an act of violence on another male. His first killing gains him the respect of the more experienced males and allows him access to adulthood as worthy Blackfoot male. Aggression and competition are essential components of masculinity here, as was the case for the cowboy prototype evolving from the Self-Made Man and the American Primitive role models.

Before venturing any premature identification between the hegemonic Native American masculinity model portrayed by the warrior and the hegemonic masculinity of the Western hero defined through the cowboy, it is necessary to consider the Euramerican misinterpretation of the Native American warrior. To Euramerican audiences, the Native American warrior figure recalls the pastoral myth of man-the-hunter where masculinity is “measured by a man’s capacity to win” (Brittan, *Masculinity* 79). The Native American warrior figure also summons another ancient prototype of Western masculinity, the Indo-European warrior of Nordic/Germanic origin. In *The Cultural Myth of Masculinity*, Chris Blazina has noted that many of the traits found in this prototype have shaped modern Western masculinity (6). The Teutonic warrior lived in search of honour and glory through bellicose action. According to the well-known tripartite classification established by Georges Dumézil,⁴ the warrior fulfilled the second social function, which was based on force and physical prowess. Hegemonic masculinity cherishes the same values that Indo-Europeans identified with manhood: competence, physical fitness, endurance, action and emotional restraint.⁵ These are also the attributes that the Euramerican singled out in the Native American.

Because the Euramerican revived the ideal of the Indo-European warrior through the figure of the Plains warrior, he overlooked a basic difference between the two, namely the definition of the individual. Although the Indo-European’s identity “was created and

maintained in the context of the community” (Blazina 5), his deep sense of individualism led him to keep little bonds with the community further than those strictly necessary. Later on, the Judeo-Christian chivalric ideal justified the Teutonic warrior’s thirst for honour and glory through Christian duty but it did not alter the conception of the male knight/warrior as an individual quite distinct from his peers and surrounding. By contrast, the cosmogony of the Plains Native American dilutes individualism into communal interest and it integrates the human being in a wider order of existence where he is not an outstanding part but simply another participant. As Vine Jr. Deloria explains:

Tribal societies are knit together by a large network of relatives, each of whom has a particular duty toward every other relative. The individual is not an isolated entity that must stand alone. We experience everything together as a unity and both grief and sadness are communal experiences; the intensity of human emotions is not borne completely by one or even a few people. [...] All persons are subject to certain cosmic rhythms and strive to complete their duties within this context. The range of human experience, particularly human learning experience, is therefore very broad and of great significance.

(Christianity 151)

The masculinity ideal that has derived from the pastoral myths of man-the-hunter and the Indo/European warrior exalts the figure of the autonomous male who frees himself from duty. Society imposes chains on the individual and the only way to exert true free will is to cut these chains loose. Welch’s novel follows the opposite process, for it is heir to Native American oral narratives where restoration rather than separation is the ultimate goal.

White Man’s Dog’s evolution towards male adulthood is seen as a gradual process of commitment to the community and acquisition of personal ethics in accordance with communal interest. This process already starts during White Man’s Dog first raid, when the

killing of the young Crow grants him access to warrior masculinity but also provokes a feeling of uneasiness in him. He does not see the Crow as oppositional Other but almost as a reflection of himself, a boy of the same age who shares the same courage and the same spirit. White Man's Dog does not kill him either for vengeance or for personal glory but to prevent the expedition from being discovered. The idea that he has killed a boy who is not yet a man lingers in his mind as does the "feeling in his arm as his scalping knife struck bone in the youth's back" (Welch, *Fools Crow* 62). White Man's Dog's emerging awareness of "the thorny set of issues surrounding homicide" (Lincoln, *Death* 140), counter balances the need to assert manhood through aggression. Welch has not placed himself in an easy position here. As chronicler of Blackfoot history, he needs to reconstruct events as closely as possible to what actually happened -or to how the Blackfeet perceived them to have happened- as possible. On the other hand, if he is to provide a positive role model for 21st century Blackfoot masculinity, he needs to denounce violence as means to validate manhood. Welch's reconstruction of the second raid into Crow's camp strikes that difficult balance.

Welch portrays the battle as a test ground for the Blackfeet to prove their courage although he spares no crudity and grimness in depicting the bloodshed. In the midst of the killing, White Man's Dog spots a young girl crying with her bloody fingers close to her mouth and this scene momentarily knocks him off balance. Later, looking at the trophy of his first scalp, he leans over his horse and vomits. White Man's Dog's concern about the ethical implications of killing deny the identification of the boy with the iconic fierce Indian warrior. Secondly, they allow the reader to distance himself from White Man's Dog focalization and see the whole scene more objectively, not as test ground to assert masculinity but as a battle ground where human life is terminated.

Fast Horse, on the other hand, is so intent on reaching glory that he fails to consider the ethical implications of his actions. He dreams of a near future when he "would be

powerful and, like him or not, the people would come to respect his power” (Welch, *Fools Crow* 7). When the reader meets him in the second chapter, he irradiates energy and confidence, for he is certain of his success in the future horse raid. He is the one teasing White Man’s Dog’s for his sullenness and the one to cheer him up when telling him Yellow Kidney has decided to take him along in the raid. Fast Horse’s confidence diminishes when he is unable to find the spring that Cold Maker asked him to locate in a dream. When he reaches the Crow’s camp, his macho bravado gives Yellow Kidney away, he does not think of helping him at any time and is unable to tell the others what happened. When the expedition returns to camp, he avoids contact with his friend White Man’s Dog and becomes completely isolated from the other members of the band.

Fast Horse’s growing distance from his community takes place while Fools Crow strengthens filial and communal bonds with his father, with the medicine man Mik-api and with Yellow Kidney’s family. Whereas in Western tradition cutting lose from parental guidance is seen as a necessary step to reach male adulthood successfully, isolation for the Native American male equals the loss of the self. As Paula Gunn Allen has observed, “The whole thrust of traditional narratives is towards wholeness because relationship is a major tribal value” (P.G. Allen 127). This is why the bond between father and son features so prominently in Welch’s novel and why male brotherhood can never replace family or communal relationship. The presence of the father during the process of coming of age for a young male is distinctly stressed in three major works by or about Native American prominent tribal figures: John G. Neihardt’s *Black Elk Speaks*, Black Hawk’s *The Life of Black Hawk* and Luther Standing Bear’s *My People the Sioux*. In the following passage from *My People the Sioux*, Luther Standing Bear’s father tells his son what he expects from him as a warrior:

‘Son, I want you to come with me, because I wanted you to do something of great bravery or get killed on the battlefield. [...] Touch this man with the stick then ride through the camp as fast as your horse can run. I will be behind you and if you pass through with any harm, you will be the youngest man that has ever done a thing, and I will be proud of you. But if the enemy is ready to shoot you (as they nearly always are) and you fall in their midst, keep your courage. That is the way I want you to die. I will be with you, my son.’

This made my heart beat so loud I could hear it and the tears came into my eyes; but I was willing to do my father’s bidding, as I wanted so much to please him. (75-76)

Luther Standing Bear’s father expects his son to keep courage even in the face of death. But more important than this is the reassurance that he will stand by him through life and in his journey to death. In *Fools Crow*, Rides-at-the-door expects similar behaviour from White Man’s Dog during the vengeance raid against Bull Shield’s camp. He also offers him the same kind of guidance when taking him out of his momentary dazzlement, right after White Man’s Dog has killed the Crow’s chief:

He whirled about and saw that it was his father leaning down from his horse.

“Take his hair, son,” he said.

White Man’s Dog dropped to his knees over the fallen Bull Shield. He took the hair in his left hand and made a slice across the top of the forehead

[...]“Get up, get up, you brave!” shouted Rides-at-the-door. “Take this fine horse, this prize Crow horse!” [...] “My fine son, this day you are a brave!”

(147)

The close link between father and son should not be read through the lens of western patriarchal thought in which the teachings of the father to the son preserve a male-centered

order. It is true that Blackfoot society, as did all Native American societies, assigned different roles to men and women in their division of labour. Women stayed in camp while men were in charge of hunting and warfare. Blackfoot society may also have been organized patrilocally and patrilineally⁶ but none of this implies that women were subordinated to men or that theirs was a patriarchal society. As seen in chapter 1, women owned property, produced goods which they could keep, they could divorce and also inherit property. More importantly, women were highly revered for their creative power and had a prominent spiritual role in the transfer of rituals.⁷ Analysed through western parameters, the Blackfoot father-and-son bond exemplifies the separation from the mother through the incorporation into the symbolic order, that is, into the name of the father. However, Native American holistic thought does not fit into a scheme that so profoundly disrupts the concept of unity. Confrontation does not define filial and family relationship among the Blackfeet, reciprocity and restoration do, as beautifully exemplified in the Blackfoot myth of Scarface/Poia.

During the preparations for the Sun Dance ceremony in Welch's novel, the carrier of the Medicine Woman bundle retells the myths of Feather Woman and Scarface/Poia as he removes the objects in the bundle. These two myths account for the origin of the objects in the bundle; the ceremony is the re-enactment of the act of transfer of those objects. In her insightful essay "A Myth to Be Alive", critic Nora Barry has observed that the character of Scarface/Poia bears a striking resemblance with *Fools Crow's* protagonist. She traces the common pattern of their respective quest journeys in the separation and initiation stages, highlights the existence of common symbolism and points to the presence of comparable characters and the fulfilment of similar functions. She also draws attention to some differences between both journeys, concluding that *Fools Crow* is a "a new kind of culture hero whose major battles will not be fought in war, nor against mythological monsters, but on the battlefields of the human spirit" (17). Whilst I mostly agree with Barry's analysis, I also

think that she has missed a relevant aspect of that myth: the relationship between father and son. The Blackfoot Scarface-Poia myth accounts for a filial relationship that I consider essential for a correct understanding of traditional Blackfoot masculinity and identity, particularly because of its diversion from the classic monomyth pattern which has so largely influenced Western narratives.

Welch's retelling of the myth of Scarface/Poia by Ambush Chief mostly coincides with Brings-down-the Sun's version in McClintock's book *The Old North Trail*. A proper assessment of the father and son bond within the myth also demands first considering two other well-known accounts: Wissler and Duvall's version in *Mythology of the Blackfoot Indians* and George Bird Grinnell's one in *Blackfoot Lodge Tales*. In Wissler's first account of Scar Face's myth,⁸ the poor and scar-faced Poia goes in search of the Sun to heal the scar on his face. He wants to gain the favour of the chief's daughter, who will only marry him when his scar disappears. Right before he enters the Sun's lodge, he meets Morning Star, who in Feather Woman's myth is described as Star Boy's (Scarface/Poia) father.

The Pikuni version of the myth does not call attention to the filial relationship between Morning Star and Scarface/Poia. Neither does it mention whether Morning Star recognizes Scarface as his son. Morning Star befriends Scarface and warns him against his bad-tempered father, Sun. He takes him to his house where he asks his mother –Moon– to help him appease his father. Both Moon and Morning Star purify Scarface and when Sun enters, he takes pity on him. Morning Star wants Scarface to become his companion, so Sun-Chief asks him to prepare the sweat lodge for Scarface. Sun asks both to go in and when they come out the two boys look identical. They look so much alike that his own mother mistakes Scarface for Morning Star and Sun decides to call Scarface “The-one-you-took-for-Morning-Star” (63). Sun warns Scarface, now Poia, against going west or venturing south but Poia eventually persuades Morning Star to go west. Seven geese appear and attack Morning Star

and Poia kills them all. When they go back to Sun's lodge and tell Moon what happened, she asks for the heads of the geese. Some time later, Poia decides to go west again, and Morning Star is reluctant once more. These time seven cranes attack Morning Star and Poia once more defends him by killing all seven. When they go back to Sun's lodge and tell what has happened, Sun asks for proof and they bring the heads back. Pleased at seeing Poia's courage, Sun gives him a sacred bundle containing sacred clothes. Sun tells Poia it is time for him to return to the Earth. Poia goes back and shows the people the teachings imparted by Sun. Some time later, he returns to the sky.

In George Bird Grinnell's account, the reason why Scarface searches for the sun is a bit different. The girl Scarface loves has been visited by Sun, who has told her she belongs to him and should not marry anybody else. When Scarface confesses his love to her, she accepts to marry him but makes a condition that he must ensure Sun will not be angry. The sign for his acquiescence will be the removal of the scar. The structure of the departure trip is similar although he meets different helpers on his way to the Sun lodge. In Grinnell's account, it is Moon who warns Scarface about a possible danger, the big water. Morning Star, not Scarface, is the one who does not pay any heed to the warnings against danger. Sun rewards Scarface for helping Morning Star. Sun offers him the teachings that he will later impart to his people in Earth and also removes the scar from his face. Brings-Down-the-Sun's retelling of the myth in McClintock's book starts as continuation of the Star Husband/Feather Woman tale. From the beginning, it is clear that Scarface is Morning Star's son. In this account, Scarface is not said to have opposed his grandparent's advice. Nor is Morning Star. Scarface kills the seven geese that appear to attack Morning Star. In reward, and through the intercession of Morning Star, Sun heals Scarface's scar. The end of the myth is also slightly different. Here, Scarface goes back to the sky after visiting the Earth and takes his wife with him. Once in the sky, "the Sun God made him bright and beautiful, just like his father, Morning Star" (499).

By presenting the three accounts of the myth I do not intent to focus on the differences amongst them but to show that despite the variations, the main elements of the story are there in all three. As Karl Kroeber contends

[...] myths in a preliterate society are told in order to be retold, retellings being what keep a particular culture alive. Oral myths are structured as transmissive enactments that foster reinterpretations. [...] Myths permit cultures to adapt to changing circumstances, physical or historical, external or internal, by sustaining continuity even while undergoing modification. (180-181)

The three versions of the Scarface/Poia myth differ in who it is that disobeys or heeds the warning. Yet, it does not make much difference whether it is Moon or Sun who warns Scarface about danger or whether anybody warns him at all. What matters is that in the face of danger, Scarface defends Morning Star. In the Scarface myth, transgression does not carry with it the terrible consequences that feature in the Feather Woman myth, where So-at-sa-ki is exiled from the sky and separated from her husband. On the contrary, the act of disobedience actually highlights the close relationship between father and son.

The Blackfoot myth follows the tripartite structure of separation, initiation and return that Joseph Campbell traced for the monomyth. It tells of the basic transformation of the hero through trials, of confrontation with danger, the meeting with the father, the attainment of the prize and the return to the point of departure, which are all present in Campbell's analysis. But it differs radically from Campbell's pattern in several aspects. Central to the monomyth is the idea that the hero's identity is reached through separation from the immediate environment, and the myth often culminates with the confrontation with the father, or the *at-one-ment*. The encounter between father and son is modelled after the Freudian Oedipus complex, since the son feels threatened by the father through the fear of castration. In the

resolution of the Oedipus complex, the father as vengeful foe is defeated by the son.

Alternatively, the father may come to understand that the time of succession has arrived. In both cases, the father must (symbolically) die for the son to succeed him and reinstate the cycle again.

Scarface's meeting with his father does not follow these lines. To start with, his journey is a trip back to his original birthplace, not a separation but a reunion. Consequently, the myth does not conclude with Scarface's return to Earth but with his return to the sky where he permanently joins his father, grandfather and grandmother. Furthermore, Scarface does not reach adulthood by cutting loose from family but by strengthening his bonds with them. In all three versions of the myth, Sun rewards Poia with wisdom after he has shown his commitment to his family, that is, after having protected his father from attack. This is actually a reversal of the *at-one-ment* stage in the monomyth where son and father were seen as antagonists. In the Poia myth there is no need for the son to fight or confront the father for he poses no threat to him. The relationship between father and son is in all three myths very intimate. While Brings-down-the-Sun's retelling of the myth states the filial relationship from the beginning, Wissler and Duvall's versions do it in a more subtle, albeit profound way. In both myths Poia comes to look almost like his father after his scar is removed. So much so, that Moon herself mistakes his identity.

The reason why Poia and Morning Star are perceived more like brothers, close best friends or even twins rather than as father and son is linked to the Blackfoot holistic perception of the world. Cyclical movement, not linearity, defines Native American cosmogony. The son does not replace the father in linear fashion as is often the case in western narrative but son, father, grandfather -and grandmother- give way to each other cyclically. The Scarface myth accounts for orbital movement between the planets where Poia is Venus and Morning Star is Jupiter. Poia appears first, then Morning Star rises and finally

the grandfather Sun Chief makes his appearance (McClintock 499). Moon comes up next. Most importantly, the myth stands for the inclusivity of human life within the greater circle of existence, what Native American tribes call the Sacred Hoop⁹ or the Circle of Life.

The father-son relationship stands out prominently in tribal societies where it is males who secure the most immediate needs of food and shelter. In traditional Blackfoot society, the bond between father and son fulfils a most significant role: guaranteeing that the young male becomes a successful provider and protector. The relationship symbolizes band survival, and tribal mythology reflects that accordingly, as seen in the Scarface myth. But when the relationship is pulled out of this tribal communal context, the father-son bond can become a construct that glorifies masculinists values. James Welch's reconstruction of 19th century traditional masculinity provides a warning against the danger of adopting the construct of masculinism in present-day Native American communities. The bond between father and son works towards the renewal of the Sacred Hood but not in an exclusive way. All other family bonds equally contribute to keeping the balance right, like the bond between son and mother -which Welch introduces through the reinterpretation of the Feather Woman myth- or the bond between brothers.

Fools Crow's close bond with his real father Rides-at-the-door, his father-in-law Yellow Kidney and his spiritual father Mik-api indicate Fools Crow's attunement to the Sacred Hoop. Similarly to Scarface, Fools Crow's quest does not take him away from his family but towards it. On the other hand, Fast Horse's and Running Fisher's deteriorating relationship with their respective fathers read much graver than simple deception. Their haste to become adult males makes them forget that Blackfoot masculinity is holistic, that is, it includes physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual maturity. Both characters feel the pressure to become worthy males, to prove their manhood in a way that leaves no doubt to

other males. When White Man's Dog achieves the recognition that Running Fisher expected should have come to him first, he grows impatient to emulate his brother's luck:

He would have to do something to gain much honor, but what? He could join a horse-taking party; there would be many parties going out now that winter was over. Or he could wait for the war party against the Crows. But that would not occur until after the Sun Dance. (Welch, *Fools Crow* 90)

Running Fisher's mistake is very similar to that of Fast Horse: at the sight of a bad omen he loses courage. Rather than follow a process of introspection, he falls into despair and self-pity. As a result, he increases the gap between his father and himself. When Running Fisher sleeps with Kills-close-to-the-lake, Rides-at-the-door's youngest wife, he is automatically placing his father in a confrontational position. His reproduction of the western Oedipus complex introduces a profound scar in the Sacred Hoop that corrupts family and communal relationship.

Fast Horse's boastful behaviour brings about even more serious consequences. It causes Yellow Kidney to be captured by the Crows. His absence endangers the survival of his family, who depend on Yellow Kidney for food. Fast Horse eludes responsibility for his wrongdoing by building up an image of the Blackfoot warrior that lies much closer to Western hegemonic models of masculinity than to Blackfoot notions of manhood. He breaks away from community, severs the parental bond and stresses the physical dimension of masculinity. As Fools Crow observes, "If one cut the ties, he had the freedom to roam, to think only of himself and not worry about the consequences of his actions. So it was of Owl Child and Fast Horse to roam" (211). Fast Horse forsakes his identity and becomes a fake red cowboy. He represses emotion, sneers at transcendental thought and rejects spirituality. He later tries to replace community with *communitas* -joining Owl Child and his band of men- but soon realizes they cannot provide that which they are lacking. Fast Horse emulates the

journey of the solitary white hero. Yet, as Louis Owens contends, “To be on the road indefinitely, free of roots and responsibilities to family, community, or the earth itself, is the oldest and most destructive of all American metanarratives [...]” (*Mixedblood* 162).

Reaching Blackfoot male adulthood requires the gradual acquisition of knowledge about the self, the world and one own’s people, as well as building up one’s physical skills to become a successful hunter or warrior. When Fast Horse avoids Yellow Kidney and rejects any help from Mik-api and his father, he is despising that essential dimension of manhood. Boss Ribs -Fast Horse’s father- is the owner of the Beaver Medicine bundle, one of the most sacred and complex of the Blackfoot bundles. He patiently waits for the moment his son will be ready to learn the ceremonies, the meaning and the power of the bundle, since “it is his destiny as well as his duty” (Welch, *Fools Crow* 202). But for Fast Horse, religious belief has turned into mere superstition: “the more he stared at the Beaver Medicine, the more it lost meaning for him. That would not be the way of his power. His power would be more tangible and more immediate” (70-71). Fast Horse’s disdain towards the Sacred Medicine bundle reflects a growing alienation from his people and from a way of life that has defined him as Blackfeet. His refusal to succeed his father as the holder of the Bundle is not an act of freedom against parental will but of self-denial.

Interestingly enough, the story of the origin of the Beaver Bundle is told by Fast Horse’s father to Fools Crow soon after Fast Horse’s second disappearance from camp. The story as told by Boss Ribs coincides with McClintock’s account of the Nopatsis and Akayan myth.¹⁰ The parallelism between Nopatsis’ deception and Fast Horse’s deception can hardly be ignored. James Welch intends the reader to understand that fissures need to be repaired and that cooperation is a way to overcome deception. In the myth, Nopatsis has broken the sacred tie with his brother Akayan and healing is necessary. Little Beaver occupies the place that Nopatsis left empty through his deception. The time spend in the beaver’s lodge is the

time of restoration. Little Beaver turns into Akayan's brother, and as the ritual is taught to him, Little Beaver's family becomes Akayan's new family. The Sacred Bundle is the source and the result of their intimate bond. The story of the Bundle is actually the story of survival made possible through brotherhood and cooperation. In Welch's novel, Fast Horse's deception also causes a fracture that needs repair. Much worse than giving away Yellow Kidney through his own folly is his refusal to believe in the power of his father's Sacred Bundle. By denying the power of the Bundle, by refusing to be the one to succeed his father in transmitting the ritual further, Fast Horse is also denying his people the power to overcome disgrace.

White Man's Dog's coming of age is described as a gradual process of trial, introspection and discovery through which he develops the qualities that turn him into a committed individual, into a human being inextricably united to his people. He successfully proves his manly worth as a warrior in battle although this does not suffice, for it is also necessary to demonstrate his worth as a human being. By contrast, Fast Horse fails to accomplish the first and soon falls into despair. This is because he limits manhood to a reduced number of physical abilities -prowess, stamina, toughness, pain endurance- and sacrifices other parameters -responsibility, commitment, humility, honesty- to the achievement of those first. Because he cannot deny his identity as Blackfoot, his alienation from the community can only result in self-destruction. Fast Horse decides to join Owl Child's policy of indiscriminate attacks against the Napikwan in the hope that his people will eventually acclaim him as hero. In principle, Fast Horse is as entitled to that dream of success as any other Blackfoot young male. But his interest lies more in the hero reaching glory than in his reassurance of the Sacred Hoop. Unable to initiate a process of introspection to heal his own wounds, Fools Crow turns the cyclical story of Scarface into the linear narrative of the monomyth where the hero needs to cut the ties to his world and confront his father before he

can access male adulthood successfully. Fast Horse's heroic dream becomes the dream for absolute power.

Before the first raid into the Crow's camp, Fast Horse has a dream where Cold Maker asks him to release the rock that covers the ice-spring from which he usually drinks to regain strength. Fast Horse does not find the spring and soon after, his irresponsible behaviour causes Yellow Kidney's disgrace. In a second dream, Cold Maker asks Fast Horse to bring buffalo robes and coal rocks for his daughters but Fast Horse systematically fails to fulfil his vow. When later on Fools Crow asks Fast Horse for his first dream, we understand why he never found the ice-spring: "I was sure I would find the ice spring. In my dream I saw it as plain as I see this snow. I knew if I drank from it I would become a powerful many-faces man, perhaps the most powerful one of all –Fast Horse, who makes Cold Maker do his bidding. It was all there in my dream" (236). Indeed it was, Fast Horse does not think of finding the ice-spring for Cold Maker's sake but only for his own. Drinking the ice-spring water would grant him the power to defeat Cold Maker himself. Fast Horse equates masculinity with power. Aggression provides the means for him to reach it.

Fast Horse is evidently presented as a foil character to Fools Crow. What may not be so evident to the non-Native reader are the implications of the separation between the two former friends. As explained in chapter 1, Blackfoot young males usually had a companion of the same age with whom to share games and also the difficult times of puberty when they would undergo preparation to enter male adulthood. Brotherhood may very well define the nature of the bonding, which usually lasted a lifetime, even when blood kinship was absent. Fools Crow's companion is Fast Horse. Since their ages are so similar, Fools Crow is closer to Fast Horse than to his own brother, Running Fisher. Fools Crow's concern for Fast Horse throughout the novel is explained through this unique bond forged in infancy.

One of the Blackfoot myths that best reflects the nature of brother to brother relationships, as well as its meaning within the wider family circle, is that of the Twin Brothers. The Twin Brothers myth as recollected by Wissler and Duvall describes three separations and three reunions. First, the loss of the mother and her resurrection through the son's and the father's cooperation. Next, the father's separation from his sons and their later reunion. Lastly, the brothers separation from each other and how one of them will finally join the other in the sky. The myth presents Smart-Crow telling his wife about a dream predicting the birth of their two sons, one of which "would be an outlaw (?) [sic] and the other a good man" (Wissler and Duvall, *Mythology* 40). In the dream Smart-Crow was also warned about a strange man who will try to kill his wife, so Smart-Crow tells his wife to ward off strangers. One day Smart-Crow goes hunting and a strange man approaches his wife. After asking her for food, he cuts her stomach open, thus causing the twins to be born and the mother to die. The stranger names them Ashes-Chief and Stuck-Behind. When the father returns, he is angry at seeing that his wife did not pay heed of his warning and he goes in search of the stranger. The stranger promises that he will bring Smart-Crow's woman back and he offers him the Four-Tail lodge and the ritual associated with it. When Smart-Crow has learnt all the ritual, he returns to his lodge and offers Ashes-Chief to a rock where he is to live and Stuck-Behind to a beaver. The rock and the beaver bring the twins up.

When the twins are fifteen, their father goes in search of them. They initially don't recognize him but the father asks them to lick his hand to prove their blood relationship. The twins eventually recognize the father and his father renames them Rock and Beaver where "Rock was the evil (?) one, and Beaver the good one, as the Crow had told their father in the dream" (43). Soon after, Beaver asks his father to get him a bow and two arrows for hunting. He asks his father to go back to the lodge where the bones of his mother lie and to boil a pot of water. When the twins come back from the hunt, they bring back a buffalo with which to

restore her mother's life. Each one of the twins helps to restore a part of the mother by using specific parts of the buffalo. Then, they call her to life and it is on the fourth call that she is resurrected.

In his unpublished dissertation *The Last Days of the Suicide Kid: Native American Masculinities, and Neurotic Nation States*, scholar Kurtz Klotz rightly noted that "the twins, through their ceremony, resurrect a 'whole individual', while simultaneously reinstating social harmony through the reconstruction of the feminine icon, thereby emphasizing inter-relationship between individual integrity and external balance" (3). Up to this point in the myth, Rock has shown no evil inclination at all. Quite the contrary, he has been the one who first instructed his father on how to proceed to bring back his mother to life. As Klotz observes, "individual wholeness is illustrated in the quaternity" (37) which ultimately stems from the conception of the Sacred Hoop. Similar to the Scarface myth, there is a movement towards the family rather than away from it. The twins reach puberty on their own but it is precisely at the brink of adulthood when their father goes in their search and when the mother comes back to life. Reunion with the family rather than separation is the ideal. Later on in the myth, Rock disobeys his father three times. The two first times, Rock's disobedience has no harmful effects. It is different the third time when Rock shoots an arrow at the morning bird they are not supposed to hunt. Rock tries to fetch the bird that fell on a tree but every time he tries to reach it, the bird flies higher until Rock disappears from sight and Beaver cannot get him. Beaver starts crying over his lost brother and he turns into a child.

In the Scarface myth, disobedience was not completely negative since it led to Scarface's demonstration of filial devotion. Similarly, the first two times Rock disobeys his father, there are no harmful consequences. Whilst Beaver is a mere spectator, Rock's courage and skills allow him to trick the witch and the snake that had tried to deceive him. His disobedience answers the zeal of youth. But the third time, his disobedience is shown as

complete lack of judgment. By now, Rock should no longer be a reckless youth, he should have acquired some wisdom from his two previous trespasses. He pays no heed to warnings and the morning-bird outsmarts him. Beaver is left on his own but he lacks the courage to rescue his brother and turns into a child again. It will be necessary for Beaver to gain self-confidence and wisdom before he can be a man again and join his brother. Rock lacks what Beaver has and vice versa.

Although James Welch does not refer to this myth at any point in the novel, bringing the novel and the myth together helps to understand the relationship between Fast Horse and Fools Crow/White Man's Dog much better. At the beginning of *Fools Crow*, Fast Horse and White Man's Dog resemble Rock and Beaver in their qualities and failings. Fast Horse has self-confidence and determination, White Man's Dog is reserved but measured. Fast Horse's lack of wisdom and bravado leads him to act foolishly, in the same way as Rock when trying to kill the morning bird. Three times Fools Crow tries to help his friend and warns him against danger, as Beaver does in the myth. The first time he reminds Fast Horse of his vow to Cold Maker and offers to hunt with him. The second time he helps Fast Horse to heal the wound he got from a Napikwan. The third time he goes in search of Fast Horse to deliver the message from his father that he should reconsider and return definitively with his people. But Fast Horse never listens. In the myth, the harder Rock tries to fetch the bird in the tree, the greater the distance from his brother, until he finally disappears. Similarly, the harder Fast Horse tries to become a warrior, the greater the distance between him and Fools Crow/White Man's Dog. On the other hand, Fools Crow gradually acquires the courage and the determination that will turn him into a man. Their initial friendship is as close as that between two brothers, but as the myth states at the beginning, "one would be an outlaw (?) and the other a good man". When the Lone Eaters learn about Fast Horse's reckless behaviour at the Crow's camp, White Man's Dog feels truly disappointed and sad for his former friend since

“He had grown up with Fast Horse, and now his friend would be banished. A part of himself would go with Fast Horse, never to return” (Welch, *Fools Crow* 86).

Unlike the Twin Stars myth, White Man’s Dog/Fools Crow and Fast Horse never reunite. The separation between Fools Crow and Fast Horse is as dramatic as that between Rock and Beaver. While Fools Crow is following Fast Horse’s tracks in the vain hope of winning him over, the reader learns of Fast Horse’s increasing thirst for violence. It is not enough for him to kill the Napikwan, he wished for him “to die more, piece by piece” (217). Fast Horse’s firm resolution to remain with Owl Child and continue their reckless killing of Napikwans causes Fools Crow rage, who “would have fought his childhood friend to the death if Fast Horse had given him an excuse” (236). Fools Crow understands that Fast Horse’s isolation from and rejection of community -the double separation from father and brother- signals imminent dangers for the tribe: disintegration, loss of identity and lack of faith in future restoration.

Yet, James Welch does not portray Fast Horse as a heartless individual completely detached from the Pikuni’s world. Even when despising the Pikuni for their weakness against the Napikwans, Fast Horse is desperately trying to assert himself as one of them. Living away from his community is not the kind of life that Fast Horse had imagined for himself or the kind of life he really desires. He joins Owl Child in an attempt to show his people that he is fearless enough to face the white invader, but his ultimate desire is to show them that he is worthy. Fast Horse’s process of coming of age is actually truncated and he never experiences fully access to adult malehood. The tragedy about Fast Horse’s life is that he has taken a path in life which he does not really wish to follow. He decides to separate from the band to avoid public shame at a time in his life when he should be experiencing the success of his rite of passage. Fast Horse drives towards a state of permanent liminality which is quite foreign to the Blackfoot conception of the individual. Owl Child’s gang does not provide him with the

mentors to lead him successfully through his process of coming of age or with the witnesses who can acknowledge him as one of the community members. Owl Child's gang does not form a community but a group of lost individuals.

Fast Horse comes to understand the consequences of his acts after finding Yellow Kidney's corpse. Seeing the old man in the defencelessness of death forces him to finally confront himself and to realize "that it was he, and he alone, who created the disaster that led to Yellow Kidney's fall" (330). While watching the Lone Eater's camp from a distance, Fast Horse feels the "impulse to ride into camp, to the lodge of his father". Yet by now he is "a solitary figure in the isolation of a vast land". Consequently, parting from Owl Child's band and returning Yellow Kidney's corpse back to the Pikuni is as far as he can go in his reconciliation with his people. Fast Horse's isolation works as a warning against the perils of acculturation in contemporary America. Denying collective values, James Welch says, leads to the complete isolation of the individual and to the destruction of one's identity as (Blackfoot) Native American. Whereas in Western narrative liminality is a defining trait of the cowboy's identity, in Native American narrative it is not possible to inhabit that space without risking one's identity. When liminality verges outsidership, the danger is even more imminent.

Fast Horse's final acknowledgement of guilt is only possible because he inevitably feels committed to his people, a feeling which the lonesome cowboy finds hard to justify given his reverence for extreme individualism. A comparison between Jake Spoon in *Lonesome Dove* and Fast Horse in Welch's novel will clarify this point. Both characters show a childish desire to satisfy their needs as well as certain disregard for or disagreement with some of the principles in their respective communities. But their attachment to the community is not comparable. Fast Horse experiences acute shame and guilt because he is emotionally tied to the Pikuni people whereas Jake Spoon does not feel any sense of

belonging at all. What leads Fast Horse into isolation is the shame caused by having brought Yellow Kidney's disgrace as well as his guilt at not having fulfilled his vow to Cold Maker. On the other hand, Jake Spoon detaches himself from the Hat Creek outfit because he does not want to commit. Jake actually takes the tale of the uncommitted cowboy to a logical, although ethically questionable, conclusion. Shame and guilt reach him too late and only at the prospect of imminent death.

Philosopher and critic Peter French has argued that the Western hero is prone to personal-focused shame rather than to audience or noncommunity-focused shame. According to French, the Western hero experiences a kind of shame that is triggered by the thought that one has "fallen below one's standards" (100). This personal shame contrasts with the "audience-focused shame" that is produced "by the feeling or the belief or the knowledge that one has failed to achieve an expected goal, fallen short, been inferior or exposed a weakness one ought not have" (99). Audience-focused shame leads the subject "to try to hide one's failure or hide oneself from others" while personal-focused shame may develop into the fear of self-alienation of "being and outcast [...] of oneself" (99). French's definition of personal-focused shame fits Captain Call and Augustus McCrae's cowboy ethics in *Lonesome Dove* and helps explain why they hang their former friend Jake. Jake's lack of personal-focused shame blemishes the image of the Westerner and his friends punish him for that lack.

Interestingly enough, French's distinction between audience-focused and personal-focused shame seem to coincide with Native American philosopher Viola F. Cordova's distinction between internalized and externalized law. Cordova opposes Indigenous American internalized law to externalized law in the West. Cordova argues that the first, which was also to be found amongst the ancient Greeks, is based on the assimilation of a virtue into the individual's character, and that the second forces social behaviour on the individual by external threat of punishment. Cordova argues that breaking the first kind of law leads to

shame and guilt while externalized law “can be broken without any mental anguish” (176). But how can French’s and Cordova’s definitions coincide when they apply to diametrically opposed individuals; the fictionalized Westerner who is defined by individualism, and the real Native American whose self identity cannot be detached from collective identity? The answer is that internalized and externalized law coalesce in the constructed Western hero.

The Western genre has created an impossible figure, for the Western hero epitomizes the values forsaken in the very act of his creation. The opposition between the world of the “I” and the world of the “they” has produced the cowboy, but the cowboy emulates a code of ethics that can only be found prior to that separation. Internalized law, and here I agree completely with Cordova, only makes sense in the world of the “we” and the cowboy has by choice renounced that world. Personal-focused shame becomes sterile when not answering a sense of belonging or commitment to a wider society. In a setting that so joyously celebrates the autonomous “I”, Jake Spoon is what the Western hero is logically drawn to. On the other hand, Fast Horse inhabits the world of the “we”. When faced by the dilemma of suffering public-shame -and confessing what really happened at the Crow’s camp- or personal shame, Fast Horse chooses the second option. But his choice forsakes his future as respectable Pikuni warrior. Because Fast Horse is first and foremost a social being, shame and guilt immediately appear as a result of internalized law. Fast Horse isolates himself from family and from his own band driven by his bad conscience. But ostracism is itself a most severe form of (self)-punishment for any individual who defines himself as a social being. In *Fools Crow*, James Welch clearly states that values commonly associated with manhood like pride, boldness, fearlessness and strength are worthless when not linked to commitment and communal responsibility.

The Darkness in the White Other: the Napikwan

When dealing with the white man, none of the different courses of action pursued by the Native American tribes brought favourable results. Whether the tribe became friendly with the white man, tried to avoid him or turned openly hostile, the truth was that the Native American was a *persona non grata* who the Euramerican wanted to “remove” or acculturate. All three courses of action appear in *Fools Crow*. The first is followed by the Black Patched Moccasins and Heavy Runner’s band; the second by the Lone Eaters and the third by Owl Child and his gang. For the Black Patched moccasins, the consequences of following the advice of the white man are internal dispute and dismembering of the band. When White Man’ Dog visits the Black Patched Moccasins to bring them the news about Heavy Shield Woman’s vow, he is shocked at the pitiful condition of the band. Mad Plume explains that it has been brought about by their dealings with the white man. Little Dog, the band’s former chief, decides to listen to the white man when advising them to become farmers but the land is not suited and the Black Patched Moccasins become hungry. Hunger leads to internal fights causing Little Dog’s death and the dismembering of the band. Even more tragic is the fate of Heavy Runner’s band, which is practically wiped out by General Baker’s charge when peacefully camped at the Marias river. That historical massacre sealed the destiny of the Blackfeet at the hands of the Euramerican. The Lone Eaters on their part must permanently keep on the move to avoid the white man but eventually there is no place to run to and they end up in the reservation. Finally, Owl Child’s open hostility and random killing of white settlers is equally useless. It infuriates the white authorities further, providing them with the perfect excuse to take their revenge on Heavy Runner’s band.

Victimization of the Native American can easily lead to a stereotyped presentation of the relationship between the white man and the Native American. There is no such common place in James Welch’s novel. On the one hand, as critics like Elaine A. Jahner, Lori

Burlingame or Louis Owens have noted,¹¹ the Blackfeet are not depicted in an idyllic pure state of innocence. The seed for violence, greed and corruption can also be found within the Native American community. On the other hand, Welch presents a myriad of white characters that escape the easy stereotype of the ruthless invader. The first time the white man is mentioned in *Fools Crow*, he appears as owner of a much envied good. Fools Crow, who at eighteen has never seen a white man before, has heard that “they possessed the many-shots guns which could bring down five blackhorns with five shots, which could kill an enemy from far off” (5). The white man is not a menacing presence here but the means to acquire goods that can secure wealth or guarantee survival.

As seen in chapter 2, the Blackfeet thrived thanks to their access to and mastery of horses and guns, which the white man brought with him. The centre of these exchanges was the trading post where Native Americans traded their furs and robes for goods like kettles, pans, beads, tobacco, knives, ammunition and guns amongst others. Welch describes such an interchange in Chapter 10. Critic Darin Saul has observed that the interactions between Blackfeet and the white man “do not show cultural corruption but the inevitable adaptation to new circumstances and possibilities” (520). Indeed, there is much expectation among the Lone Eaters to trade their robes for the goods they so much need. The first white man in the novel appears at this point, the trader Riplinger, an affable man who seems to appreciate Rides-at-the-door and offers him a good deal on a rifle. Although civil, Rides-at-the-door “did not particularly like any Napikwans” and “answered Riplinger’s questions with short, curt answers” (99). After all, Riplinger is one of the Napikwans who is occupying land that previously belonged to the Blackfeet. The tensions between the Euramerican and the Native American are brilliantly exposed in the paragraph following the purchase of the rifle. Riplinger’s ease with the Blackfoot man contrasts with his wife’s attitude who, despite her smile, can’t conceal “a look of fear in her eyes” when looking at Rides-at-the-door (99). Up

to this point the interchange was seen as a profitable business for the two parts involved, but the succinct reference to the look of fear on the eyes of Riplinger's wife exposes the reality of the colonial scheme.

Welch carefully arranges the narrative sequence so that the reader can reflect on that look. Before leaving Riplinger's place, Rides-at-the-door has a glimpse of Riplinger's wife standing "in a doorway to another room". She is wearing a long dress down to her feet and only the very tips of her "shiny black shoes" are visible underneath the hem. It is through Rides-at-the-door's eyes that the reader sees her covered from head to toes. Through his eyes also, the reader discerns her fear. Rides-at-the-door has caught Riplinger's wife in the act of looking at him. But why has she been looking at that which causes her fears? Standing in the doorway to another room, hers is a vantage position from where to look without being seen.¹² The object of her gaze, Rides-at-the-door, is also the one to cause her fear later. Hers is the racial gaze inflicted on the Other. Both fear and desire mix in a gaze that objectifies Rides-at-the-door by fixing him in the image of the Indian. After that paragraph, Welch moves the scene to the Blackfoot camp, where Rides-at-the-door's wives are admiring the purchases. The rigidity of Riplinger's wife sharply contrasts with the gaiety of the Blackfoot women. The tension dissipates in the warmth of this familiar scene but the threat of the seizer has left an imprint which will resurface soon after.

Some pages further, a column of white soldiers who are looking for Owl Child and his gang irrupts in the Lone Eater's camp. The arrival is focalized through Fools Crow, Red Paint and Heavy Shield Woman. When seeing the soldiers, Red Paint remarks that "They are many and big like the tall stones of Snake Butte" (154). She worries that they come to kill them all and points at the "cruel look about them". Her fear is more than justified, the soldiers are not coming peacefully but to punish Owl Child and those who are protecting him for the killing of Malcolm Clark. The scene reverses the terms of the Western novel where the cruel grin is

always drawn on the Indian's face. The real threat here comes from the "seizers", who will make little distinction in the future between friendly or hostile Indians.

Communication between the soldier's Captain and the Lone Eater's chief is not direct but made through their respective translators, Joe Kipp and Rides-at-the-door. Actual conversation never takes place between Captain Snelling and Three Bears, only between Three Bears and Joe Kipp but since Joe Kipp is only translating Captain Snelling's words, theirs is not a real dialogue at all, at least not in the Bahktinian sense of the word. Any knowledge that Captain Snelling may have about the Blackfoot world comes mediated through Joe Kipp or through scouts like him. This knowledge is then made to fit his own preconceptions. His disdain for all Native American is made quite clear through the whole meeting. High up on his horse, with his rifle beside him and his uniform buttoned up, Captain Snelling undoubtedly occupies the place of the master.

When Joe Kipp translates Captain Snelling's words, he adopts a milder tone than that used by the Captain. He refers to the Pikuni as "friends", "red brothers" and calls Three Bears "a good man". Captain Snelling's gestures contradict Joe Kipp's friendlier tone. Rides-at-the-door, on his part, adopts a "blank expression" that makes Fools Crow doubt whether he is understanding Captain Snelling's words at all. Rides-at-the-door's blank face is a mask that even deceives his own son. But in fact, his translation of Snelling's speech conveys the nuances lost through Kipp's translation. The Blackfeet understand what is said, what is hinted at and what is hidden beneath the Napikwan's words. Yet, that knowledge will not spare them their fate. By the end of the scene, Captain Snelling is not listening to Joe Kipp's translation of Three Bear's words any longer. His mind has been set much long the meeting and no words from Three Bears will alter his thoughts. As Captain Sully says further on in the novel, "the Blackfeet were to be eliminated by any means possible, or at least forced into a position they would never peacefully accept" (277).

The second meeting between the Blackfeet and the soldiers takes place at the Four Horns agency. The episode is modelled after the 1870 historical meeting between General Sully and several Pikuni band members. The impression that the mounted Native American warriors make on the young white soldier at the gate is similar to that caused on Red Paint by the white soldiers: “They seemed larger than white men, and their impassive faces were filled with hate. There was no telling how much damage even a small party could do” (272). Fear makes the Other seem bigger, more powerful and more threatening. When Rides-at-the-door speaks to the soldier to tell him the reason for their presence at the agency, the “young man looked up at the broad, fierce Indian face. He was surprised to hear his own tongue coming from such a man” (272). This portrayal comes as a bit of a shock to the reader who has had an opportunity to access Rides-at-the-door’s most intimate thoughts and has seen him as devoted family member. But the white soldier, who sees an Indian for the first time in his life, fixes Rides-at-the-door in the image of the stereotyped savage, just as Riplinger’s wife did before. In Robert F. Berkhofer’s words, “preconception seemed to have created the image, and image in turn became fact “(*The White Man’s* 17).¹³

The white characters in the novel have not been constructed from a preconceived image of the Other arising from the conflicted inner self. Although in *Fools Crow* the white man is undoubtedly the trespasser, he is not always presented as a confrontational figure. Mik-api recalls the first Napikwans in Blackfoot land, the solitary trappers who “remained in the mountains and didn’t bother us” (Welch, *Fools Crow* 65-66). They did not covet the land but mainly searched for the fur-animals for which the Blackfeet had no much use, so coexistence was possible. In a couple of occasions, Rides-at-the-door recalls the Napikwan Long Teeth who “wanted nothing from the Pikuni but a knowledge of their ways and the opportunity to paint their faces on thin white skins he kept in his parfleche” (274). Rides-at-the-door is referring to Father De Smet, who in 1845 set off in search of the Blackfeet on a pacifying

mission, and who spent some time living with the tribe in 1846. The Blackfeet took a sincere liking for Father De Smet, as Mad Plume's account in McClintock's *The Old North Trail* indicates (154-156). Actually, Rides-at-the-door's recollection of Father De Smet describes the missionary too benignly for, even when showing a real concern for the welfare of the Blackfeet,¹⁴ his objective was not to learn their ways but to have them learn his, that is, to spread Christianity amongst them. What the real Father De Smet thought of the Blackfeet did not lie so far from the young soldier's idea of Rides-at-the-door:

The difference of physiognomy existing between the Indians inhabiting the plains east of the mountains and those near the upper waters of the Columbia, is as great as the stupendous rocks that separate them. The latter are remarkable for their mildness, serenity and affability, while cruelty, craft - the word BLOOD, in fine, may be read in every feature of the Black-Foot Indian.

(De Smet, Letter XII par. 15)

For Father De Smet, the land occupied by the Native American was an immense vacuum waiting to be occupied, just as it had been for Thomas Jefferson, Captain Lewis and Clark and for most Euramericans moving west in the 18th and 19th century:

Are these vast and innumerable fields of hay forever destined to be consumed by fire, or perish in the autumnal snows? How long shall these superb forests be the haunts of wild beasts? And these inexhaustible quarries, these abundant mines of coal, lead, sulphur, iron, copper, and saltpetre - can it be that they are doomed to remain for ever inactive? Not so - the day will come when some labouring hand will give them value: a strong, active, and enterprising people are destined to fill this spacious void. (Letter XIII par. 13)

At the meeting in the Four Horns Agency, General Sully knows that the day has indeed come, for the "strong, active, and enterprising people" are about to occupy Blackfoot land. No

matter what course of action the Blackfeet take, their fate has been decided for them. Welch's portrayal of Captain Sully is quite faithful to the description that John C. Ewer makes of him in *The Blackfeet. Raiders of the Northwestern Plains* (246-249). Compared to Captain Snelling, General Sully appears to have a more understanding attitude towards the Blackfeet given his attempt to avoid armed conflict as far as possible. To stress the difference, Welch delivers Sully's words without the translation of his interpreter and gives the reader access to his thoughts.

Welch's reconstruction of the Four Horns historical meeting is a highly crafted piece of writing which transcends the mere description of facts or the simple telling of a novelized story. Whereas the Western genre originates from the mythical encounter between the red man and the white man, Welch exposes the collision between both. Objectivity is gained by focalizing the episode from the Euramerican's perspective as well as from the Blackfoot perspective. On the surface lie the facts, General Sully's exposition of the conditions in which armed action can be prevented and the Blackfeet's reticent agreement to that. At that level, the confrontation is between the US army / Euramerican who wants to open up the land to settlement and the Blackfeet / Native American who inhabit that land. But these facts intermingle with the life stories of several individuals, among which there is a fictional character -Rides-at-the-door- and two historical ones -Heavy Runner and Captain Sully. Heavy Runner thinks the best way to save his people is by being friendly to the white man. Rides-at-the-door realizes that no matter what choice they take, the traditional way of life for the Blackfeet has come to an end. General Sully's conscience is troubled by the Montana settlers fierce determination "to run these red Indians right off the face of the map, push them into Canada or, failing that, kill them like wild animals" (Welch, *Fools Crow* 277) but he nonetheless needs to keep his own head above water. Judgment is contained at this level, since each character's actions come justified by their personal circumstances.

The reader with some knowledge of Blackfoot history or Indian-US conflict will identify the underlying text that exposes the internal disputes within the US army and the struggle for power at the expense of bloodshed. If General Sully intended not to spill any blood in the arrest of Owl Child and Mountain Chief, why did the soldiers charge against Heavy Runner's band at the Marias River? Why didn't they stop the charge when Heavy Runner waived the paper that certified he was a friendly Indian? In *Fools Crow* the massacre is first hinted at the attentive reader first through Captain Sully's thoughts. Later on, Fools Crow has a prophetic vision where he sees the column of soldiers that will later commit the massacre. Finally, the massacre is described by some of its few survivors. Welch does not recount the episode in real time, neither does he explain all the previous incidents leading to the massacre.¹⁵ By having the survivors tell about the massacre rather than describe it in real time, Welch manages to convey Fools Crow's feelings of powerlessness. Most importantly, he addresses the question that still troubles the Native American community to this day: how can the Native American keep his identity amongst such an overwhelming white presence?

The Pikuni seem to have little choice at this point. Open confrontation has been futile, as Owl Child and Fast Horse's fates indicate. Escaping to Canada means renouncing Pikuni land forever. Is acculturation the only way out? Is it possible to adapt to the new conditions imposed by the white man without losing Blackfoot identity? Welch exposes the thin line separating adaptation from acculturation from the start. The Pikuni desire the goods the Euramerican possessed for these make their lives much easier. But the acquisition of these goods noticeably change their way of life. Critic Alan M. Klein has observed that relationships of power between men and women were altered by the introduction of the horse and the gun. Role-assignment changed and the imbalance of power shifted towards the male, since hunting became now exclusively a male's task (Klein 144). Blackfoot masculinity was newly defined around the horse and the gun. This caused the cult of the mounted male to rise

from the mid 18th century onto the next century. Yet, reservation life would end Blackfeet nomadism not much later, which meant there was no place for the mounted warrior any longer. Survival was achieved through constant struggle and even harder struggle was necessary to avoid acculturation.

In opposition to the colonial stereotype that associates darkness with pollution and corruption, *Fools Crow* presents several examples of whiteness working as omen of death. The two most evident are the reference to smallpox and to rabies. In both cases, Welch uses the translation of the Native term, the white-scabs and the white-mouth. The names refer to quite visible effects of the diseases. In the first case, to the white fluid inside the pustules that have erupted in the body, as well as to the white spots that may be left on the skin. In the second, to the white foam around the animal's mouth. The first indication of smallpox is the white-faced girl whom Fools Crow sees in his dream on the way to his first horse raid. In the dream, the white-face girl extends her arms towards him, attracting him with her desire. It is her whiteness that is calling him. Fools Crow knows that he should ignore the call, for somehow he senses something is wrong but nonetheless he walks towards the girl. At this moment, he wakes up. Some chapters further, we learn that his was a premonitory dream announcing Yellow Kidney's fate. The white-faced girl is the Crow girl consumed by the white-scabs whom Yellow Kidney rapes when trying to get away from the Crows. Yellow Kidney gives in to his desire for the girl and this leads him to his downfall. He is captured by the Crows who amputate the fingers on his two hands. Without them, Yellow Kidney loses the "ability to draw a bow, to fire a musket, to skin the blackhorns" (79). For Yellow Kidney, the hands are as important as the legs were for Gus in *Lonesome Dove*. The amputated limbs signify loss of masculinity as well as loss of wholeness. Welch's linguistic and visual use of "whiteness" here is intended as counter discourse to subvert the terms of the racial stereotype.

In *Desiring Whiteness: a Lacanian Analysis of Race*, professor and critic Kalpana Seshadri-Crooks states that:

Race is a regime of visibility that secures our investment in racial identity. We make such an investment because the unconscious signifier Whiteness, which founds the logic of racial difference, promises wholeness... what guarantees Whiteness its place as master signifier is visual difference. (21)

The racial construct identifies whiteness with wholeness. Seshadri-Crooks reads this desire in Lacanian terms, concluding that in the master's discourse, the desire for whiteness answers the need to regain a wholeness that is absent in the Other. I suggest a similar reading in the episodes concerning the white-faced girl. Fools Crow can read desire in her eyes, a desire that in turn raises his. Because Welch defines the girl through her whiteness, Fools Crow's object of desire is that girl's whiteness. Fools Crow is only anticipating Yellow Kidney's desire. But accessing whiteness is not accessing wholeness, as Yellow Kidney discovers too late.

Whiteness is the signifier for the sickness that infects the girl and which will very likely infect Yellow Kidney. Welch has radically subverted the terms of the racial construct that identified whiteness with purity and blackness with corruption. A similar subversion takes place some time after, when One Spot is attacked by a wolf with rabies. When one of the young girls accompanying One Spot sees the "whiteness around his mouth", she thinks the animal has been eating snow (258). When they realize the danger, it is far too late. One Spot is severely wounded and contracts rabies himself. Neither the girl with the white-scabs nor the wolf with the white-mouth are accountable for what they cause; rather their "whiteness" is.

For the Blackfeet in *Fools Crow*, the white man's whiteness couldn't be further from cleanness or purity.¹⁶ Whereas in *Lonesome Dove* the Indians can smell like lard and often are associated with dirtiness or even animality, in *Fools Crow* the terms are reversed. When

Mik-api talks about the first trappers in Blackfoot land, he recalls that they “were as furry as the animals they trapped” and that they “always stunk like mink” (66). Since they lived in complete isolation from other fellow beings, the Blackfeet even thought that “these Napikwan were animals and incapable of reproducing with human beings” (66). In Chapter 14, Welch goes a step further and confronts the whole pastoral construct of the white hunter/explorer venturing into the wilderness. Here, the Napikwan’s incursion into the wilderness seriously alters the balance of the trophic network. His indiscriminate killing needs to be stopped before it causes more serious disruption to the environment.

Fools Crow’s confrontation with the Napikwan takes place whilst he is enjoying some leisure time with his wife up in the mountains. Red Paint and himself are looking forward to this trip which will give Fools Crow opportunity “to clean his mind, to renew his spirit” (160). On their way back to camp, Fools Crow has a dream where Raven, his animal advisor, tells him about the Napikwan who is indiscriminately killing all kind of animals in the forest, therefore depriving Raven’s wives from food. Raven asks Fools Crow to kill him, to which Fools Crow shows much initial reluctance. To the natural and open space in the forest, Welch opposes the artificial and stuffy interior of the Napikwan’s hut which “smelled of smoke and rancid grease and the Napikwan’s sour body” (166). The first glimpse of the Napikwan’s body occurs whilst he is sleeping. Welch has the reader see his body from Raven’s focalization, for he has entered his hut to lure him in his sleep. The Napikwan turns into an object to be looked at when Raven examines his body lying in bed. What the reader first sees through Raven’s eyes is the man’s “white feet pointing up at the bottom of the sleeping robe” (166). Once again whiteness implies some sense of lack for the Napikwan’s left foot is missing three toes (166). Raven flies to the Napikwan’s ears and instils dreams of desire in him for the exotic female Other.

In *Lonesome Dove* McMurtry presented the Indian Blue Duck as the evil presence menacing civilization. In *Fools Crow*, the corrupting presence is the unnamed Napikwan who destroys the Blackfoot habitat and covets the sexual Other. Fools Crow considers the Napikwan “the biggest man” he has ever seen. He first compares him with “the big-nose who lived in the swamps” and later with “a molting blackhorn bull” (169). The white man’s face is mostly covered by “curly hair, a shade darker than the straight sandy hair on the head” (166). The association between hairiness and the white man reverses the colonial stereotype of the hairy *savage Other*.

Robert F. Berkhofer suggest that the origin of the wild man’s stereotype could be traced back to medieval times, for in its legends and art “the wild man was a hairy, naked, club-wielding child of nature who existed halfway between humanity and animality” (*The White Man’s* 13). The myth contradicted simple evidence, for the Native American had very little bodily hair indeed. Still, the stereotype of the “ape man” was fixed in the Euramerican’s mind. *Fools Crow* unveils the racial stereotype simply by stating the obvious, that the Euramerican was hairier than the Blackfeet.¹⁷ As was the case with Blue Duck in *Lonesome Duck*, the Napikwan is perceived almost as superhuman: “The big Napikwan is more than animal, he thought. He is a spirit who sees without seeing” (Welch, *Fools Crow* 170). Both Blue Duck and the unnamed Napikwan share traits like an imposing physical presence, an ability to move around without being seen and the desire to inflict gratuitous pain. The unnamed Napikwan actually coincides with the image of the evil Other, only that this time he resides within a white body.

In the culminating pages of the chapter, Welch twists the racial and sexual discourse of the colonial white master by equating whiteness with darkness. The whole episode has a very definite cinematic taste. Welch organizes the narrative of the Napikwan’s intrusion into Fools Crow and Red Paint’s camp into several shots with a highly visual content. Fools Crow

is the focalizer through which the reader follows the action. The Napikwan can only be seen from Fools Crow's position up the hill. We see a huge man all dressed in furs with a very bushy beard. Next, Fools Crow lowers on the ground and only the Napikwan's legs are visible. All about the Napikwan is dark: his appearance, the way he hides in the forest and his intentions towards Red Paint. Fools Crow perceives how the Napikwan has spotted Red Paint. While Fools Crow and the Napikwan's position are semi-hidden, Red Paint is in the openness of the meadow. From his voyeuristic position as holder of the gaze, the Napikwan objectifies her as object of desire. The reader/audience however is not identifying with the holder of that gaze but with Fools Crow, who in turn objectifies the Napikwan through his gaze. What Fools Crow's gaze unveils is the colonial schema which, through the Napikwan's eyes, has transformed the Native American into the exotic Other. The last lines of the chapter describe the shootout between the two characters in a narrative style very similar to that used in the cinematic Western. We see Fools Crow run for cover while hearing the noise of the threatening guns. The enemy can't be seen but he is so close that he manages to hit Fools Crow. Traditionally, this is the place reserved for the white hero. In the classical narrative, it is he who finally gets hold of the gun and manages to pin the Indian down.

The effectivity of this passage lies in keeping a very precise narrative within an almost onirical context. The unnamed Napikwan materializes out of nowhere and his motives are never explained. On the other hand, Raven's presence is assumed matter-of-factly. The bird warns Fools Crow about the white man and instils in him the desire for Red Paint. At its basic level, the story line describes Fools Crow as the protective husband defending his wife from sexual threat. But far beyond that, Fools Crow acts as culture hero preventing the white threat to harm the community. Welch's reconstruction of the confrontation between white man and red man combines elements from the Blackfoot mythical hero tale with elements from the Western narrative. As the novel unfolds and the destiny of the Blackfeet gets more

sombre, the passage gains its true meaning. After the Maria's river massacre, the destiny of the Pikuni is sealed. Their victory over the seizer is only possible at a mythical narrative level, exactly the level where Fools Crow defeats the unnamed Napikwan.

The first time the Blackfeet meets the white man, there is not much he desires from him except for his technology. But the situation changes as pressure from the white man increases. Through the influence of the colonial discourse, a new kind of desire emerges. Undoubtedly, there is the desire to access what the Napikwan has but more disturbing is the desire to emulate his whiteness, for that is ultimately what grants the Napikwan his status. At the moment of the encounter between white man and red man, "a specifically self-constituted group, called 'white people'" who "is characterized by its subjection to the law of racial difference" racializes the Native American (Seshradi-Crooks 49). Within that law of racial difference, "Whiteness offers a totality, a fullness, that masquerades as being" (45). At the end of the 19th century, when the Blackfoot traditional world is at the verge of disappearance, accessing whiteness appears as one of the few choices for survival. Joe Kipp, the half-breed scout, sees this quite clearly:

These people have not changed [...], but the world they live in has. You could look at it one of two ways: either their world is shrinking or that other world, the one the white man brought with him, is expanding. Either way, the Pikuni loses. (Welch, *Fools Crow* 252)

Welch's Kipp is modelled after Joseph Kipp, son of the white trader Captain James Kipp and Earth Woman, of the Mandan Chief Four Bears. Joseph Kipp worked as a fur and whiskey trader. He befriended adventurer and writer James Willard Shultz and was actually one of Colonel's Baker's scout when he charged against Heavy Runner's camp.¹⁸ Welch remains true to this historical background. Yet, what interests him most is to single-out a character born in between cultures who, when seen from Three Bears' viewpoint, decides to

ally himself with the “rude long-knife” (157). When Fools Crow looks at the drawing that Feather Woman has painted on a hide, he sees Joe Kipp riding alongside Colonel Baker. As a result of his alliance with the long-knife, Colonel Baker’s men wipe out Heavy Runner’s friendly band of Pikuni. Kipp has forfeited his Blackfoot ancestry and brought about destruction by getting too close to the white man. Fast Horse’s distance from his people also approximates him to the white man, even when he utterly despises them. He dresses in their clothes, uses their weaponry, drinks the white-man’s liqueur and gradually comes to lead a life similar to some of them. Eventually, Fast Horse decides to join the whiskey trader’s up north where “he knew he would be welcome” for “There were many men alone up there” (31).

Despite the imminent threat of destruction heralded by the white man, *Fools Crow* concludes with an “affirmation of continuance and renewal of resources and energy promise of life renewal”(Weidman 93) that counterbalance sickness, starvation and defeat. It is not the Massacre that closes the novel but the ceremony of the opening of the Thunder Pipe Bundle, which is held annually when the first thunder in spring is heard. Besides the meaning associated with spring and the renewal of the cycle of life, the Thunder Pipe Bundle was believed to have powers to heal people from sickness and to decide over life and death.¹⁹ While Fools Crow joins his people in the re-enactment of the Ceremony, he envisions Feather Woman looking at him and at his people, and with this vision comes the conviction that the Blackfeet will indeed survive all hardships. To the non-Native reader, the vision may simply be a way for Fools Crow and his tribe to trick themselves into believing there is hope. But for the Native American reader, it comes as reaffirmation of the natural order of things, as mythical space cannot be separated from the sphere of the now and here. If Welch has invested Fools Crow with the mythical qualities of the culture hero Poia, then Fools Crow’s vision describes the reunion between (mythical) mother and (mythical) son, who now

commonly share the heavy burden of knowledge. Welch's statement is unequivocal: Blackfoot survival depends on personal commitment to one's community. To return home, the objective of the red hero's journey, is that from which the Euramerican hero permanently moves away.

I am François: Isolation, Acculturation and the Ambivalent Hybrid in the *Heartsong of Charging Elk*

In *The Heartsong of Charging Elk*, Welch scrutinizes the conflict of the racialized Other and the threat of acculturation. In 1889, twenty-three year old Oglala Sioux Charging Elk is left stranded in Marseille by the Buffalo Bill Wild West Show, with whom he was touring around Europe. As a result of a bad fall during a performance with the Show, Charging Elk is taken to hospital together with another sick Oglala, Featherman. Featherman dies and the doctor in charge signs his death certificate mistaking Featherman's identity for that of Charging Elk. Charging Elk is officially pronounced dead, which prevents him from returning home until his situation can be legally sorted out.

In "A World Away from His People': James Welch's *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* and the Indian Historical Novel", critic James J. Donahue claims that "by having Charging Elk work through his personal development outside of the United States and its current political climate, Welch can explore the individual construction and definition of cultural identity for Native Americans outside a specific cultural condition" (60). According to Donahue, by displacing Charging Elk from his immediate cultural context "Welch avoids any discussion of the historical trends or the historical patterns that are working themselves out in America at the time" (60). Suzanne Ferguson holds a similar view when contending that Welch's Europe provides a much freer space from the Euramerican preconceptions about Native Americans, a place where Charging Elk is able to build a new life with his white wife

(48). Critic Andrea Opitz thinks however that the “French official story sound[s] very much like the U.S. narrative“ (105). Opitz claims that the European tour of the Buffalo Bill Show “travelled through Europe promoting Cody’s version of the history of the American West”, which was non other than the myth of the Vanishing Indian (102). There is not much difference between the Euramerican and the French’s attitude towards the Native American, Opitz observes, for the French also expect the Native American to identify with the image of the Vanishing Indian or else transform into an assimilated Indian. All three critics agree that Charging Elk’s displacement allows Welch to seriously reflect on cultural and racialized identity. Curiously, all of them understate the implications of having chosen France as setting for this displacement.

Geographical distance from North America certainly keeps Charging Elk at bay from the Euramerican claim to “Indianness” but it neither prevents the racial look nor does it erode the image of the stereotyped Other. In fact, the myth of the Vanishing Indian is but a result of the *bon savage* construct which France developed to its fullest during the Illustrated era. This same observation is noted by scholar Ulla Halstenstein in her article “Double Translation”, where she describes France as the “heart of whiteness [...] where primitivist notions of the noble savage were developed as part of an Enlightenment cultural critique against the self-serving glorious images of civilization and where modernist artists were to construct but also reflect upon, a new version of primitivism otherness at the time of Charging Elk’s predicament” (236).²⁰

In light of this context, Welch is not exactly displacing Charging Elk but positioning him right where the construct of the romantic Savage has its most solid ideological foundations. Charging Elk, the “savage”, is taken to the civilized world which in fact looks as much a wilderness to him as Indian territory did for the Euramerican. The story of the Oglala Sioux describes a gradual descent into hell from a position of perceived -although restricted-

comfort. The nine years spent in the Stronghold mark the zenith of Charging Elk's liberty, a time of expansion where he and his soul friend Strikes Plenty freely ride the Sioux land away from the white man's influence. The ten years locked in the French prison *La Tombe* are the antithesis to that time of freedom.

Charging Elk's life story reminds of a similar downfall, that of Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* who sees how a future of envisioned prosperity is truncated by a "mistake". In both cases, the future has been devised for them by the white man. The beginning of Ralph Ellison's novel presents the Invisible Man readily accepting the "bright" future that the white has promised him, which is the life of the assimilated negro. The mimic man, Bhabha states, almost conceals difference but not quite. When the white man suspects that mimicry can become menace, the Invisible Man turns into an outcast. Something similar happens to Charging Elk. He willingly joins Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show in its tour around Europe. As stated in chapter 1, the show turns the Native American into the spectacle Indian that has stepped behind the mask. But even that mask proves elusive, for the show leaves Charging Elk behind. Left stranded in France, Charging Elk asks himself how to keep his Oglala Sioux identity in such a foreign and alienating environment. His attempts at assimilation and "invisibility" are dramatically truncated after his reaction to Breteuil's abuse. Sent to *Le Tombe*, Charging Elk becomes a reject. Yet, while exclusion leads the Invisible Man towards political militancy and overt defiance of the white man, Charging Elk initiates a less confrontational process of self-assertion.

As happened among the Blackfeet, the cult of individualism is alien to the Lakota world-view. Isolation is only understood as part of a process leading to reunion, not as a personal choice to opt out of one's community. Before reaching Marseilles, Charging Elk has already had an inkling of what separation feels like, first when having to attend the boarding school, second when being a runaway with Strikes Plenty in the Stronghold and third when

parting from his friend. Charging Elk's childhood is not that different from the childhood of hundreds of young Sioux boys before him, even when the presence of the white man has started to threaten their traditional way of life. He learns the ways of the hunter and the warrior from his father and from older boys and males in the tribe. As other young Oglalas, he idolizes Crazy Horse, whom they "vowed to follow [...] even to death if he wanted it that way" (Welch, *The Heartsong* 12).

This first stage in his life comes to a sudden halt when Crazy Horse is forced to lead his people to the white agency. The social, economical and political structure of the Oglala Sioux collapses. Pitiabile dependency replaces proud self-sufficiency. Charging Elk witnesses how the valiant hunters and warriors who provided the reference of masculinity have turned into beggars or else must keep on the run, risking death. During his childhood and his adolescent years, Charging Elk commits himself to the preservation of traditional Sioux identity. Even when the presence of the white man makes it increasingly difficult first to reach male Sioux adulthood in normal conditions and then to maintain the traits of Sioux malehood intact, Charging Elk devotes himself to "always live in the old way, to participate only in Lakota ceremonies, to avoid and ignore the holy ceremonies of the *wasichus*" (67).

Keeping this commitment though becomes increasingly difficult. More so when he is separated from his family and sent to a boarding school to learn the ways of the white people. Besides having to assimilate the teachings of the white man, the Native American is forced to incorporate the image that the white man has created about the Other, that is, to identify with *the white man's Indian*. When Charging Elk's white teacher shows the class an image of a man with "sharp toes, big thighs, and narrow shoulders [who] wore a crown of blue and green and yellow feathers and an animal skin with dark spots" (56), she points at the picture and then at Charging Elk using the generic title "Indian". Yet, Charging Elk does not recognize

the man in the picture. There is nothing familiar about him or about the way he is portrayed. As Andrea Opitz has observed,

The lesson of the Indian is not merely meant to teach the other children what creature the Indian is; by identifying Charging Elk with this picture, the teacher means to suggest that he is this-and nothing else-unless he assimilates and relinquishes the particularity of his experience and cultural identity. He would have to dis-identify himself from this sign, recognizing the creature as that which is him but from which he needs to “other” himself. (101-102)

Charging Elk refuses to take this first step of identification with the “Indian sign”. Shortly after, he draws a scene from the Battle of the Little Bighorn which the teacher tears in pieces since it questions the validity of the sign. In the picture, Charging Elk and some friends are trying to take the ring off the finger of a dead white soldier. Whereas the teacher’s picture is meant to validate a construct born out of the white man’s fantasy, Charging Elk’s picture depicts a real episode in his life which the teacher wants to erase from his memory. Not only that, she asks Charging Elk to burn the torn pieces of paper in the wood stove, that is, to take active part in the process of self-erasure.

Soon after this incident, Charging Elk and his friend Strike Plenty escape from the boarding school and join Strike Plenty’s people. The white man’s pressure later forces them to move in with the “bad” Indians in the Stronghold, the Indians who refuse to live in a reservation and assimilate. The years in the Stronghold frame Charging Elk’s coming of age, the time when he leaves dependence behind and has to face up the harshness life. Whereas Western hegemonic masculinity glorifies the process of cutting loose from the family, this is not an ideal step for the Sioux Native American who, like the Blackfeet, has close bonds to the family and community. Actually, separation from family does not mean Charging Elk cuts loose from community altogether. He establishes very close bonds with his friend Strikes

Plenty and extends community links to the people who, like them, refuse to live in Pine Ridge. Both friends replicate the way of life of their elders, assuming the role of hunters and food providers which is no longer possible within the agency. Both choose life in the Stronghold rather than submission to the white man through acculturation.

Still, separation from his family bears a heavy burden. For Charging Elk, his parent's decision to embrace some of the Christian rites constitutes a betrayal to Sioux identity, and this makes him keep his distance. He is dismayed to see his father, "sitting idly in his little shack, drinking the black medicine and sometimes telling the holy beads" (17). Even so, he keeps on visiting them regularly. One of the main themes running in the novel, the confrontation between a strictly traditional Sioux identity and a more adaptable Sioux identity, is already anticipated here. From the zeal of youth, Charging Elk cannot understand his father's attempt to try and accommodate to the future imposed by the white man. Rather than considering it as an act of survival, he labels it as defeat. His father's submissiveness -or rather what he perceives as submissiveness- reinforces his determination to keep faithful to his Oglala inheritance. In the Stronghold, Strikes Plenty's true friendship and the spiritual guidance of the *wicasa wakan* help Charging Elk through his coming of age.

Life in the Stronghold gets more and more difficult as food gets scarcer. When Buffalo Bill starts recruiting young males for his show in Europe, both friends see an opportunity to leave hardship behind and at the same time keep faithful to their Oglala upbringing. At 23, an age when young Sioux males are at the peak of their lives making a name for themselves and starting to build their family, Charging Elk faces the rather grim prospect of reservation life. Accepting the challenge of going to "unexplored" territory is a means of expressing their manhood, of showing the world that the Oglala Sioux is afraid of nothing and will defiantly face up to any danger. In *My People the Sioux*, Luther Standing Bear shows a similar attitude when accounting for his decision to go East:

I was thinking of my father, and how he had many times said to me, 'Son, be brave! Die on the battle-field if necessary away from home. It is better to die young than to get old and sick and then die.' When I thought of my father, and how he had smoked the pipe of peace, and wasn't fighting anymore, it occurred to me that this chance to go East would prove that I was brave if I were to accept it. (124)

As soon as Charging Elk learns that he has been chosen to join the Show, his life changes dramatically. To Charging Elk's surprise, his friend Strikes Plenty has been rejected, which means they will have to separate. Some time later, an experienced member of the Show tells him the reason. The white people "think they know what an Indian should look like. He should be tall and lean. He should have nice clothes. He should look only into the distance and act as though his head is in the clouds. Your friend did not fit these white men's vision" (Welch, *The Heartsong* 38). The constructed image of the Indian, "the white man's Indian", hits Charging Elk once again.

Critic Andrea Opitz observes that Charging Elk's narrative has adopted some traits from the well-known Bildungsroman pattern. Amongst these, a line story which describes "the maturing progress of a young individual who is to be reconciled with society" (page 100). While Opitz finds no fault in Welch's use of a traditionally western narrative structure, Native American critic Elizabeth Cook-Lynn claims that Welch's individual narrator cannot "have the same social and political function as tribal voice" (*New Indians* 92). Cook-Lynn offers a harsh judgment on Welch's novel which is worth citing extensively:

What concerns me as a political writer is that characters such as Charging Elk can never tell us anything about what it means to be an *Indian with a future as an Indian* in modern American, an Oglala on his homelands resisting a damaging history, surviving it and moving on toward a tribal inheritance [...]

Charging Elk is a man who is silenced through assimilation and cannot represent his people in the modern world; that is the tragedy of this characterization. What concerns me is that American Indian fiction in the new century is telling the same vanishing Indian story that was told in the 1800. Charging Elk is the vanishing Indian of that period and his character gives the reader no insight concerning what might be the consequences of his devastating history. Reading this story, today's reader has as little hope for oppositional movement as there was in Charging Elk's unfortunate time on his homelands, a time of massacres, the death of cultures, the oppressiveness of enforced assimilation, war, poverty, and disease. (*New Indians* 94)

Cook-Lynn's critique explains why, unlike the widely acclaimed *Fool's Crow*, *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* has drawn such little attention from a significant sector of Native American writers and critics. One of the main problems in the novel is that the extreme displacement of the protagonist debilitates two of what countless writers, critics and activists consider defining concepts for "Indianness": connection to the homeland and connection to one's own community. Thus, Paula Gunn Allen claims that "Belonging is a basic assumption for traditional Indians, and estrangement is seen as so abnormal that narratives and rituals that restore the estranged to his or her place within the cultural matrix abound" (127). Charging Elk decides to remain in France rather than go back to his homeland and reconnect with his people which, in Cook-Lynn's view, turns him into an assimilated Indian. Opitz and Cook-Lynn's approaches to Welch's novel spring from two opposed perspectives within the debate on Native American identity, a debate that started soon after the arrival of the white man. In broad terms, this debate confronts the postulates of writers and critics such as Gerald Vizenor, Louis Owens or Arnold Krupat -who adopt a cosmopolitan, postcolonial or hybrid

perspective- with those of people like Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, Robert Warrior or Craig Womack, who defend a more nationalistic or tribalist position.²¹

A scrupulous examination of the arguments on both sides of the debate would certainly surpass the scope of this paper. The priority at this point is rather to determine whether Welch's use of western narrative conventions in *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* serves to assert indigenoussness or if, on the contrary, it shifts attention from it. Cook-Lynn invalidates Charging Elk's fight for survival because it takes place outside the tribal context and does not revert back to it. In other words, acculturation is the price the protagonist pays for survival. Yet, mimesis also has the potential for subversion, as Homi Bhabha has posited. I claim that, in the light of Bhabha's theory of mimicry, Charging Elk's adaptation to the French results in the creation of a mimic hybrid subject who inhabits the separate space of colonial discourse. The mimic subject, the hybrid, threatens to destabilize the colonial discourse by reverting back the image of that which the colonial discourse wants to erase: difference. A brief summary of Bhabha's postulates will clarify this point.

Bhabha defines mimicry as "the representation of a difference that is itself a process of disavowal" (86), that is, the colonizer constructs a colonial discourse that simulates the erasure of difference while evidencing its existence. The mimic man is "almost the same but not quite" (89) since "to be *Anglicized* is emphatically not to be English" (87). The ambivalence of mimicry resides in a double articulation that "also disrupts its authority" when expressing "those disturbances of cultural, racial and historical difference that menace the narcissistic demand of colonial authority" (88). Thus, the emergence of the *inappropriate colonial subject* inevitably produces anxiety in the colonizer who sees a double of himself, an attempt at sameness built through what he is trying to suppress: Otherness. Herein lies the potential disruptive power of mimicry: the colonial Other replicates the discourse of sameness through Otherness. Hybridity -the repetition of that which is *almost the same but*

not quite- is the effective result of colonial power, albeit a disquieting one for it forces the authority to acknowledge those productions of culture which are not quite the same as the original:

Deprived of their full presence, the knowledges of cultural authority may be articulated with forms of “native” knowledge or faced with those discriminated subjects that they must rule but can no longer represent. This may lead, [...] to questions of authority that the authorities [...] cannot answer.
(Bhabha 115)

The different productions of colonial Others introduce dialogism in a non-dialogic master discourse. In Welch’s novel, Charging Elk as a mimic man is the product of the French colonial discourse. While emulating the French way of life and its mannerisms, Charging Elk’s visible phenotype distinctly marks him as Other. The ambivalence of his position – to be *Frenchized* is emphatically not to be French- disturbs the master discourse for “the difference of cultures can no longer be identified or evaluated as objects of epistemological or moral contemplation: cultural differences are not simply *there* to be seen or appropriated” (Bhabha 114).

Few French characters in the novel are able to transcend the racial look when dealing with Charging Elk; most identify him with the noble or romantic savage that French Illustrated thought and romantic artists engraved in their minds. When looking at the Native American, they see the mask they have imposed on him. In *The Heartsong of Charging Elk*, the vice-consul Franklin Bell and the journalist St. Cyr regard the protagonist as the Vanishing Indian, a remnant of the *bon savage* about to disappear. His protector René also thinks of Charging Elk as *bon savage* although he is certain that the *Indien* will be able to assimilate and become a Frenchman. Breteuil and, to a lesser extent, Marie see Charging Elk as exotic, wild Other. Even Causeret, his closest friend in *La Tombe* and Marie, his future

wife, cannot get fully rid of the racial look. The visibility of Charging Elk's Otherness remains a reminder of his difference. The effects of the racial look on Charging Elk are profound and devastating although his struggle for survival prevents him from recognizing this immediately.

Charging Elk's growing sense of alienation is inextricably linked to a sense of loss of masculinity. In the Wild West Show, the performing Native Americans are required to single out their manliness from their indigenoussness. Their world view is completely irrelevant to the audience which marvels at the physical display of primitive manhood. Charging Elk, on his part, thinks that "French people wanted the Indians to be dignified" and is only too happy to form part of a show that shows young Indians as "*wichasa yatapika*, men whom all praise, men who quietly demonstrate courage, wisdom, and generosity -like the old time leaders" (Welch, *The Heartsong* 51). Because Charging Elk cannot validate his manhood through the traditional Sioux rituals and way of life, all that is left is the display of that manhood. The delusion of recreating a past time of glory becomes a way for Charging Elk to maintain his native identity.

As part of the Buffalo Bill spectacle, Charging Elk is looked at with awe and appraisal. Yet, as part of reality in the streets of Marseilles, people "looked at him with suspicion, even with hostility, just as the Americans did" (52). Charging Elk's process of coping with his new circumstances is set in different stages. His first reaction when realizing that he will have to stay in France indefinitely is to wait for death to come since he cannot conceive of himself as other than Oglala Sioux. A complete assertion of indigenoussness implies death in this case. Separated from friends and alienated from his community, Charging Elk is sure that Wakan Tanka, the Great Mystery, intends to take him back to join his ancestors. As the days go by and death does not come, Charging Elk thinks the Great Mystery is just sending him a test. Memories of the past and the dreams linking him back to his people help him get through the

first weeks. The reader who is familiar with Native American history recognizes in one of these dreams the Ghost Dance and the Wounded Knee Massacre. This knowledge, not available to Charging Elk at the time, makes the reader wonder whether “the Great Mystery” intends for Charging Elk to escape a very similar destiny, that is, the imminent death or the sombre prospect of gradual disappearance that awaits for him in America. At this point in time, Charging Elk’s decision to live does not imply assimilation to the French ways but commitment to his beliefs, for it is Wakan Tanka who asks him to continue living.

It is precisely at this point in time when Charging Elk’s physical image suffers a radical change. He is taken to the Soulas’ home where he is given a haircut and dressed in a French suit. When Charging Elk takes a look at himself in the mirror “he suddenly felt ashamed of himself” (133). All that had defined his look as Oglala Sioux -his long hair, his skin clothes, the brass around his armbands, the earrings, his father’s breastplate, his badger-claw necklace and the two eagle feathers in his hair- is now gone. Each part of the attire of a Sioux Native American is invested with symbolic significance. Charging Elk’s necklace is the object securing him with the medicine that his animal helper, the badger, conferred to him. Likewise, the hairpipe breastplate on his chest -which was a present from his father- transferred part of his father’s power on to him. The feathers in his hair are not simple decoration but reminders of a brave deed. Charging Elk is particularly shocked to see his long hair cut. The Sioux showed great pride in their long hair for hair growth was an indicator of personal growth. Hair was only cut to grieve for a death or to convey personal shame. Long hair in men became a symbol of manhood.²² When Charging Elk contemplates his image in the mirror, he sees a “weak, frightened coward” (133), an image so alien to his conception of himself that he is afraid Wakan Tanka will not be able to recognize him. In his autobiographical book, Luther Standing Bear recollects a similar reaction when his hair was cut at Carlisle white school for Native Americans:

[...] when my hair was cut short, it hurt my feelings to such an extent that the tears came into my eyes. I do not recall whether the barber noticed my agitation or not, nor did I care. All I was thinking about was that hair he had taken away from me. (141)

Standing Bear reminds his father's advice to "be brave and get killed" and his own determination to please his father by doing something very brave or else never return home. But when he sees his hair has been cut, he thinks his father should have given him a different kind of advice, like warning him of what was about to come. What suddenly strikes Standing Bear is that with his hair cut "I was no more Indian, but would be an imitation of a white man" (141). Similarly, the image in the mirror tells Charging Elk that the Indian has been replaced by the imitation of a white man, precisely what he had been trying to avoid when leaving the reservation and joining the Show.

The arrival at the Soulas' house actually marks the beginning of a new stage for Charging Elk: initiation into Frenchness. René is Charging Elk's mentor in his new rebirth. Yet, Charging Elk denies the moment of identification with the ideal ego -the *Frenchized* Indian- that the mirror offers back. In the resolution of the Lacanian mirror stage, the child identifies with the image in the mirror through misrecognition, by thinking the whole image he sees is his real self rather than an image. The Lacanian subject falls prey to the desire to access the ideal ego, as well as to the anxiety caused by the recognition of his Otherness. But narcissistic desire plays no role in Charging Elk's confrontation with this Otherness. At the Soulas' house, the image in the mirror offers no promise of wholeness but causes an irreparable alienation, for the subject is forced to incorporate an Otherness which he never identified with. Charging Elk the Oglala Sioux possesses an internal sense of wholeness that the image in the mirror fragments by reflecting an image that is completely alienating. This is

the exact reversal of the Lacanian stage, where the ideal of wholeness is indeed provided by the *Imago*.

Still, when Charging Elk starts working in the fish stall and sees all the French people around him, the *Imago* subtly crawls into his mind:

Charging Elk didn't like the feel of the stiff new clothes, but he was relieved to see that the other men were dressed similarly. If the coat and pants were a little longer, he would feel almost like one of them. At the very least, if he stood perfectly still he would feel almost invisible. (147)

Charging Elk feels he is an oddity and wishes that he were less conspicuous. His desire to go unnoticed sharply contrasts with his feelings just some weeks before, when he was only “proud of being a Lakota, proud of being in the show, proud of his appearance” (147). Now he can feel the gaze of the white people as it fixes him in the image of the fantasized Indian, as it replaces his basic corporeal schema with the historic-racial schema. Charging Elk starts realizing that if he is to live amongst the French people he needs access to a different kind of visibility, not the visibility of Otherness but the visibility of whiteness which, in fact, is a transparent visibility.

Charging's Elk plan to earn enough money to pay for his ticket back helps him keep the *Imago* in the mirror at bay. As weeks go by, his hair grows again and he feels prouder, almost “comfortable being himself among these people” (169). Charging Elk decides to move out of the Soulas' home to escape overbearing paternalism and dependency and settles in “a narrow street which buzzed with many tongues” in Le Panier. The proximity in skin colour as well as a similar sense of community makes him feel closer to the people in Le Panier than to the white French. Still, he clearly lives in the margins for he cannot participate in a community which remains alien. Actually, his attempt to escape dependency draws him nearer the Western hero figure who opts out of community. Because Charging Elk “had no

one to identify with, no group that he belonged to, [...] he thought of himself as one who had no color, was in fact almost a ghost [...]” (198).

During his frequent walks around Le Panier, Charging Elk acts like a kind of voyeur who wants to see but not to be seen. His pretence to invisibility is challenged by a commanding physical presence which “always attracted attention from both light and dark people” (198). This duality between visibility and invisibility is best exemplified when Charging Elk comes across some American sailors while enjoying his lunch at the Brasserie Cherbourg. What draws him there is “the constant hum of voices, the barely heard accordion of a roaming musician, the occasional clatter of dishes or the shouted toast” (197), in short, all that can trick him away from his profound solitude. Although oblivious at first to the fact that he is a rarity among the people at the restaurant, he comes to the realization that all the people around him are *wasichus* who “had turned the colour of walnuts from the days in the sun, but [who] were white men, like the ones in New York and Paris and the miners he had seen in Paha Sapa” (198). Reversing the terms of colonial discourse, Charging Elk defines the *wasichus* through negative identification: “Not one of them was dark like him or the Arabs or the nègres” (198). The identification raises his fears to be spotted in his Otherness, which is exactly what happens when the American sailors do spot him and try to tease him by calling him “bloody Indian”.

The passage wonderfully summarizes the contradictory and self-eroding feelings of shame, inadequacy and anger that the racial look causes on the dark Other. Furthermore, it introduces a significant difference between the French racial look and the Euramerican racial look on Charging Elk. While the first can be antagonizing and hostile, the second is overtly full of hate. More than simply reflecting the duality of the Indian as good or bad *savage*, the difference in perception has to do with the Euramerican claim to Americanness. Charging Elk asks himself “why would these sailors hate him in Marseilles?”, without suspecting that his

very presence serves as a reminder of the Euramerican's act of appropriation. Charging Elk's presence in Marseilles defies the Euramerican policy of erasure: as long as the Native American is either alive or recognizable, the Euramerican cannot hold his claim to (Native) Americanness. Sure that he is about to die, Charging Elk hums his death song which, paradoxically, has the effect to take the sailors aback. The growing conviction that he indeed possesses strong medicine leads him to discard invisibility and exploit the visibility of his Otherness.

Shortly after, Charging Elk adopts a flamboyant look half-way between the "hyperreal" Indian and the Frenchized Indian. He proudly displays his Indian long hair and dark skin as sign of manliness, while his attire imitates that of the French "slender young men who attracted admiring glances from the young women" (204). Indeed, young women are bound to respond to the fantasy of the exotic Other which Illustrated thought and romantic ideals had placed in their imaginations. Charging Elk's search for female company actually takes him further into isolation. The growing desire for Marie, the white prostitute in *Le Salon*, pushes him away from the Soulas' family, from the memories connecting him with his people and from his former self. It is desire for Whiteness more than sexual desire that drives him towards Marie. Whiteness here should be understood in the sense Kalpana Seshadri-Crooks has defined the term, as the promise of wholeness, as the master signifier that orders all other races.

In the brothel of *Le Salon*, Charging Elk looks at Marie's nakedness from the position of the voyeur, a position which the colonial scheme reserves for the colonizing master. For the first time, Charging Elk is granted his desire for invisibility, that is, the privilege of seeing without being seen. But *Le Salon* is a staged set where fantasy has replaced reality. Charging Elk is not the subject of the look but the object of Olivier and Breteuil's gaze. As the Antillean negro in Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*, the Indian becomes the repository of

Breteuille's and Olivier's (sexual) fantasies. Breteuille's sexual attack on Charging Elk constitutes the narrative climax of Welch's novel because it reads as culmination of the master's colonizing scheme. In other words, Breteuille's desire for Charging Elk has to be read in colonial rather than in homosexual terms.²³ The passage is analogous to the passage in *Fools Crow* where the unnamed white man tries to attack Fools Crow's wife. In both cases, the Other figures as sexual Other or racial fetish while the white man is the representation of the colonial master. The need to possess the exotic Other is in reality the need to claim otherness for the self. As Diana Fuss' reading of Fanon's work explains, "when subjectivity becomes the exclusive property of 'the master,' the colonizer can claim a sovereign right to personhood by purchasing interiority over and against the representation of the colonial other as pure exteriority" (Fuss 23).

In the Brule Sioux story "The coming of Wasichu" told by Leonard Crow Dog in 1972, the white man materializes out of black smog. The "strange creature" that emerges has pale skin, yellow hair and blue eyes (Erdoes 491). This description coincides with the way Breteuille appears to Charging Elk after the latter comes round from the stupor caused by the adulterated wine. Confirmation of this comes when Charging Elk lifts Breteuille's "sandy hair" and looks straight into his blue eyes right after having killed him (Welch, *The Heartsong* 277). For Charging Elk, Breteuil is the Sioux *siyoko* or evil presence that needs to be killed, and the *siyoko* is one with the *wasichu* as described in Leonard Crow's story. Killing him is as necessary to restore balance as it was for Fools Crow to kill the evil white man. For the white man, though, Charging Elk's act confirms the image of the Indian as primitive man. As St-Cyr asks himself, "Can one feel sympathy for a savage who murders a pervert? Can one be outraged over the death of a man who performs a sex act on a drugged, helpless savage? (294).

While awaiting trial, Charging Elk gives up all pretence of Frenchness. The confrontation with the white man allows him to reclaim his Sioux identity: he is Charging Elk, son of Scrub, the shirtwearer, and Doubles Back Woman, Grandson of Scabby Bull, the great band chief, and Goodkill (297). This same introduction he repeats to the jury during the trial. The passage magnificently depicts the gap separating the real Native American from the fantasized Indian in the white man's mind. Charging Elk continues his speech in Lakota language when he realizes that he lacks "the French words to explain about evil" (358). His act of reaffirmation reminds of a similar strategy followed by Sherman Alexie's character Thomas-Builds-the-Fire in the story "The Trial of Thomas Builds-the-Fire" (Alexie 93-103). When accused of his crime, the Spokane Indian Thomas-Builds-the-Fire decides to reverse the terms of the trial by retelling a chain of stories where he figures as culture-hero fighting against the white man. At every new question from the court, Thomas answers with a new story which evidences the absurdity of the whole trial to the reader. Yet, the prosecution is unable to understand Thomas-Builds-the-Fire's act of assertion.

Likewise, in Welch's novel, Charging Elk's speech does not reach the court. What Charging Elk takes at first as sign of understanding, the silence of the court when listening to his language, only signifies profound ignorance. Both for prosecution and defendant parts alike Charging Elk has finally revealed himself as what the truly is: the primitive savage. This recognition is finally confirmed when Charging Elk reverts to his Lakota language, a "gibberish [...] that passes for language among his people" (Welch, *The Heartsong* 341). In actuality, the trial is not judging Charging Elk's attack on Breteuil but his threatening hybridity. A Bhabha says, "The display of hybridity –its peculiar 'replication'- terrorizes authority with the *ruse* of recognition, its mimicry, its mockery" (115). By killing Breteuille, Charging Elk has moved from mimicry –"a difference that is almost nothing but not quite- to menace –"a difference that is almost total but not quite" (Bhabha 91).

Even without the certainty of a return narrative, *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* validates Charging Elk's indigenoussness. As I hope has been proved by now, Charging Elk's initial desire to become "invisible", that is, to possess whiteness, leads him to a pitfall from which he will only rise once he has discarded the mask. As was the case in *Fools Crow*, the destiny of the Native American was not entirely determined by the arrival of the white man. Excessive greed, jealousy, pride or selfishness brought about disastrous consequences for the whole community. It was necessary for the individual to face his own ghosts before any restoration was possible. Something similar happens in *The Heartsong of Charging Elk*. Undoubtly, Breteuil's sexual attack causes Charging Elk's disgrace but Charging Elk is not free of guilt himself. He has emulated the white man in his radical individualism and lack of concern for community, something completely alien to the Lakota people. His loneliness erroneously leads him to deny himself and to assume a fake identity. "I am François", Charging Elk tells the owner of *Le Salon*, and this is the name he keeps with his encounters with the prostitute Marie.

Charging Elk is able to survive confinement in *La Tombe* thanks to a commitment to life that arises from his identity as Native American. In the most despairing situation for a Native American –he is rooted out from the homeland and isolated from tribal connections- Charging Elk keeps on walking "because he had to" (359). What holds him up is a holistic view of the world, Native American in essence, that tells him he is part of a continuing life cycle. Thus, the snow that falls out from his cell is not only the reminder of a happier time back in the Stronghold but of the incessant life cycle. For the Lakotas, the first snow fall marked the beginning of the winter count, the calendar where they recorded history by drawing pictographs on buffalo skins. Right when "Charging Elk's despair was at its apex" the sight of snow flakes falling in the yard of the prison uplift him (359). Similarly, the work

out in the fields attune him to the seasonal life cycle of which he is not external but inherent part.

Charging Elk's commitment to survival contrasts with his friend Causeret's surrender to dejection and his subsequent death. In principle, this outcome seems less plausible than its reverse, which would place Charging Elk in Causeret's position. On the other hand, it is fully justified when considering the oppositional views that Christianity and Indigenous thought have on the individual, as Vine Deloria has rightfully noted. Deloria observes that in Indigenous religion "The individual is always a responsible representative of his or her species and each species is considered a family which has certain obligations to other families or peoples" while in Christian tradition "the individual is the primary point of reference. The individual is expected to stand alone in all his or her endeavours" (150). In Christian societies, radical individualism is but a consequence of the "emphasis on the individual's relationship with God" (151) whereas in tribal religion the individual never stands on his own. Causeret is an example of what this vision of mankind can do to the individual. He is probably guilty of a hideous crime -having killed his wife and his lover- but even then, his trial is final because society has already judged him and offers him no possibility of redemption. What matters most is punishment, restoration is of little concern. By contrast, in Charging Elk's case punishment leads to restoration of balance.

In Cook-Lynn's interpretation of the novel, Charging Elk's "return" to French life is a final surrender to the image of the Frenchized Indian. In my view, Charging Elk adapts to the new environment by reaching a kind of internal compromise: he acts like a Frenchman but does not think or feel like one. Charging Elk's world conception remains intact, he has not given up his beliefs as Oglala Sioux. As Bhabha contends "To the extent to which discourse is a form of defensive warfare, mimicry marks those moments of civil disobedience within the discipline of civility: signs of spectacular resistance (121)". Charging Elk's refusal to

participate in -and much less convert to- the Christian ritual of mass evidences one of these moments. Similarly, there is no further need to mask his Oglala traits. Quite on the contrary, his distinct long, black hair and his dark and angular face are now proud signifiers for his race. He also takes up drawing, a traditional art form he starts using as a way to keep the scenes of his past life alive in his memory.

Charging Elk's in-betweenness is not exempt of problems. When he finally has the possibility to rejoin his people, Charging Elk comes to the realization that "This [France] is my home now" (Welch, *The Heartsong* 437). This assertion seems to invalidate Charging Elk's claim to Indianness for it negates connection both to the Lakota geographical environment and to his Lakota family and community. Still, right after that Charging Elk tells Joseph -the Lakota young men working in the Wild West Show- that he will soon have a child whom he will call Moon of Frost in the Tipi, which proves Charging Elk's need to link to his cultural and historical background. The act of naming is in reality an act of "civil disobedience" that confirms Charging Elk's determination to fight for the perpetuation of the Lakota race. His decision not to rejoin his mother back in America may sound as a final sign of surrender and acculturation. Yet, this decision springs from a commitment to his wife, which needs to be understood within the framework of Lakota family commitment.

In her autobiography *Lakota Woman*, Mary Crow Dog blames the white man for intentionally having destroyed the basic Lakota kinship structure, the *tiyospaye*, which she defines as "the extended family group, the basic hunting band, which included grandparents, uncles, aunts, in-laws, and cousins" (13). The *tiyospaye*, she continues "was like a warm womb cradling all within it" and clearly differed from the white concept of nuclear family into which the white government forced the Sioux. Already during his youth in America, Charging Elk felt the impact of that policy when his band had to give up camp life and move into the agency. To this should be added the colonist's "dismissal of indigenous maleness"

(Cook-Lynn, *Why I Can't* 148), that took place as soon as the Sioux male was deprived of his referents of traditional masculinity and left with a model of white manhood highly incompatible with his conception of the world. In Welch's novel, Charging Elk's desperate look for a female partner goes much beyond the simple sexual drive; it answers the Lakota male's need to start a family. From the age that he was able to hunt and initiate himself in the warrior path, the Lakota male -as the Blackfoot- sought to access wealth that made him eligible to women. When in the novel Charging Elk buys the cameo for Marie, he is replicating the Lakota's way of looking for women. The cameo means he is able to provide for her, hence the source of his pride.

Critics agreeing with Elizabeth Cook-Lynn will read Charging Elk's marriage to Nathalie as sign of assimilation but they should consider a more daring interpretation. In her essay "End of the Failed Metaphor", Cook-Lynn unveils the masculinist bias of Euramerican constructs such as that of the glorified Sacajawea or the Mexican Malinche which disregard Native American maleness "in favour of the mother goddess as lone repository of history" (*Why I Can't* 147). The Euramerican constructs built on the figures of Sacajawea and Malinche rest on the tradition of the hegemonic white hero who claims (Native) Americannes by raping the mother land. Cook-Lynn argues the need to "resist the argument that the American Mother Earth, the native earth, would be legitimized as receptacle for the male colonist's seed, for it leads to a new and disastrous religion in which *anpetu wi* and *tunkashina* [Sioux creator grandfathers] cannot collaborate" (148).

When in Welch's novel Charging Elk marries Nathalie, the Euramerican pattern of the hegemonic white male is completely subverted: the authentic Native American male has claimed and accessed the authentic white European virgin. Consciously or unconsciously, Charging Elk is rendering true the menace of the *raping Negro*. "Charging Elk was a savage!", Nathalie's father exclaims to himself when learning of Charging Elk's intentions

and he continues “The idea of the two of them together was absurd. She was only a girl. And a devout Catholic. Her life would be ruined –and so would his” (Welch, *The Heartsong* 395). Charging Elk marries Nathalie and also gets her pregnant, which guarantees the survival of the Lakota race and dismisses Charging Elk’s father’s fears to die without descendance. Couldn’t Welch be agreeing here with Craig S. Womack’s radical rejection of “the supremacist notion that assimilation can only go in one direction, that white culture always overpowers Indian culture, that white is inherently more powerful than red, that Indian resistance has never occurred in such a fashion that things European have been radically subverted by Indians”? (12).

Be that as it may, by concentrating too hard on establishing Charging Elk’s exact grade of indigenusness we run the risk of overlooking what I think is the most significant point in Welch’s novel: *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* reads as a reversed Western which confronts the fallacies in the constructed story of the white hero with the harsh realities of Native American history. The Western pattern as I have analysed it in this paper presents the hero leaving home by free will to face the dangers of the West/wilderness. He longs for a state of primeval purity, innocence and plenitude that time erased and which he thinks he will recover in his constructed wilderness. Because it is the Native American who owns that soul, it is necessary to erase him first in order to recover the dream of purity. Yet, erasing the Native American does not bring the hero’s innocence back, it only pushes him farther into isolation. The Western hero walks towards nihilism and death despite the promise of reaching immortal youth.

The Heartsong of Charging Elk rewrites that story by retelling it in reverse. In Welch’s novel, need and despair rather than free will push Charging Elk to the exploration of the East which, despite being called civilization, appears to him as wilderness. There is no desire to recover a state of innocence, no longing to recover a lost soul, no need to shape any

new identity, just the need to continue being. In order to be recognized by the European, Charging Elk puts on the white Indian's mask that only sinks him deeper in his alienation. Only through recovering a sense of belonging does he manage to survive. Charging Elk's journey to the unknown tells of the Native American's enduring walk towards life and continuity.

NOTES

¹ In *My Life as an Indian*, J. W. Schultz makes an account of the history of warfare between the two tribes. Shultz 100-103

² In his autobiographical book, Sioux Luther Standing Bear recalls his frustration when his father called off a war party and he “had to go home without having taken a chance of getting killed”. Standing Bear was deprived of his first opportunity to show his manly courage. This is exactly what the young Blackfeet in Welch’s novel are expecting to accomplish in their first raid. See Standing Bear 77.

³ In *Lonesome Dove*, Newt reflects on this same question when crossing the border line into Mexico: “It was puzzling that such a muddy little river like the Rio Grande should make such a difference in terms of what was lawful and what not. On the Texas side, horse stealing was a hanging crime, and many of those hung for it were Mexican cowboys who came across the river to do pretty much what they themselves were doing. The Captain was known for his sternness where horse thieves were concerned, and yet, here they were, running off a whole herd. Evidently if you crossed the river to do it, it stopped being a crime and became a game.” See McMurtry, *Lonesome Dove* 131.

⁴ Priests/rulers belong to the first function, warriors to the second and producers to the third.

⁵ The identification of the warrior figure with the conqueror/invader in Euramerican mythology can be seen through Bruce Lincoln’s brilliant analysis of the Indo-European myth of Triton. In this myth, the heroic Triton fights the three headed serpent who, according to Lincoln, “is the aborigine, uncivilized and bound to his land, who opposes the I-E invader and meets defeat at his hands” (“The Indo-European” 62). Lincoln notes that Triton’s attack responds to the serpent’s first theft and concludes that the “myth is an imperialistic myth, it is

true, but even imperialists need their rationalization” (67). As many critics have observed, the Euramerican did not reach America as a tabula rasa but carried with him his old foundational myths and prejudices. It is not far fetched then to suggest that the Euramerican collective unconscious, the Native American replaced the three serpent monster/aboriginal that Triton first fought against.

⁶ Grinnell’s traditional description of Blackfoot society as patrilocal and patrilineal is being refuted in more recent studies that focus on Blackfoot women, like Kiera L. Ladner “Blackfoot women and nationalism” or Alice B. Kehoe’s “Blackfoot Persons”.

⁷ In *Mythology of the Blackfoot Indians*, Wissler and Duval mention the Elk-Woman, the Otter-Woman, the Woman-who-Married-the-Buffalo or the Woman-who brought-the-Pipe as examples of women with special attributes in the transfer of rituals.

⁸ Wissler includes two accounts of the myth. The first is told by a Pikuni man and is more detailed, whereas the second is told by a Pikuni woman and is much shorter. The basic facts remain the same in both accounts.

⁹ In *Black Elk Speaks*, the Sioux Black Elk described the Sacred Hoop he saw in this Great Vision in the following way “[...] I was standing on the highest mountain of them all, and round about beneath me was the whole hoop of the world. And while I stood there I saw more than I can tell and I understood more than I saw; for I was seeing in a sacred manner the shapes of all things in the spirit, and the shape of all shapes as they must live together like one being. And I saw that the sacred hoop of my people was one of many hoops that made one circle, wide as daylight and as starlight, and in the center grew one mighty flowering tree to shelter all the children of one mother and one father. And I saw that it was holy”. See Neihardt 33.

¹⁰ Wissler and Duvall include four versions of the myth in *Mythology of the Blackfoot Indians* but they are considerably different from the version used by James Welch, which

mostly coincides with McClintock's account. The myth reads as follows. Led by his jealous wife, Nopatsis leaves his brother Akayan stranded in an island to die. Winter approaches and Akayan thinks he most surely will die but little Beaver helps Nopatsis and takes him to his family's lodge so that he can survive the winter. There, Akayan learns all the complex dances, song and rituals connected to the Beaver Bundle. When Nopatsis returns to the island to recollect his brother's bones, Akayan takes his boat and leaves him stranded in the island. Akayan goes back to his people and teaches them the rituals of the Beaver Bundle which was the present from his friends in the island. But his new friend Little Beaver misses him and asks him to go back to the lake. Akayan goes back to the lake where he is taught the ritual further. Akayan and Little Beaver go together to the village to pass on the teachings. Finally, Little Beaver separates from Akayan to go live with his family but Akayan renews his friendship by annual visits to the lake. See McClintock, *The North Trail* 103-112.

¹¹ Jahner 123-137; Burglingame 5; Owens, *Other Destinies* 165.

¹² The gaze can also be identified with the voyeur's gaze through the keyhole. Following Lacanian theory, Riplinger's wife is the subject looking at the *objet petit a*.

¹³ Berkhofer's words refer to the preconceived image of the savage Indian found in Dionyse Settle's accounts of the Innuik Eskimos.

¹⁴ In a letter to Monsieur Monroe dated on the 12th of June 1850, Father De Smet writes that he "desire[s] ardently and with all the sincerity of my heart to see my friends the Blackfeet again, to find myself in the midst of their little children, whom I tenderly love". See Chittenden, vol. II, 528.

¹⁵ This he does extensively in *Killing Custer. The Battle of the Little Bighorn and the Fate of the Plains Indians*, 25-37.

¹⁶ This does not mean that Welch uses "whiteness" as signifier for corruption throughout the novel. Far from it, there is a clear distinction between the white man's

whiteness, which is often associated with pollution or destruction, and the Blackfoot “whiteness” which is associated with ceremonies of cleansing, life in nature or mythical symbolism. Examples of the latter are the several references to snow and snow-covered landscape and, most remarkably, the white doeskin dress worn by Feather Woman and the white lodge where she resides.

¹⁷ I am referring exclusively to hair growing on body parts other than the head, for long hair was indeed a distinctive mark of the Blackfoot male.

¹⁸ The other scout was Horace Clark, son of Malcolm Clarke, the white trader who had been killed by the Pikuni in the incident that triggered the Marias river massacre.

¹⁹ For a full description of the rituals, contents and functions of the Thunder Pipe Bundle see Wissler, “Ceremonial Bundles of the Blackfoot Indians” 136-165; Hungry-Wolf 393-457; Grinnell 113-116.

²⁰ In *The White Man’s Indian*, Robert F. Berkhofer explains at length how the philosophers of the Enlightenment used the idea of the Noble Savage inherited from Michel de Montaigne as “exemplars of the possibility of human freedom inherent in the state of nature” (77). He also observes that during the early 19th century, the image of the Noble Savage evolved into that of the romantic savage who “depended upon passion and impulse alone for a direct apprehension of nature in all its picturesqueness, sublimity, and fecundity” (79).

²¹ A sample of works that trace the two different positioning in this debate are: Arnold Krupat’s *The Voice in the Margin. Native American Literature and the Canon* and *Red Matters. Native American Studies*; Louis Owen’s *Mixedblood Messages. Literature, Film, Family, Place*; Gerald Vizenor’s *Narrative Chance* and *Manifest Manners. Narratives on Postindian Survivance*; Elizabeth Cook-Lynn’s *Why I Can’t read Wallace Stegner and Other Essays* and *New Indians, Old Wars*; Craig Womack’s *Red on Red. Native American Literary*

Separatism; Jace Weaver's *That the People Might Live. Native American Literatures and Native American Community*; and Robert Allen Warrior's *Tribal Secrets. Recovering American Indian Intellectual Traditions*. Recently, Elvira Pulitano's, *Toward a Native American Critical Theory* and Jace Weaver, Craig S. Womack and Robert Warrior's response to her book, *American Indian Literary Nationalism* have added new fuel to the debate.

²² In J.R. Walker recollection of Oglala myths, the trickster and wisdom-carrier *Iktomi* summarizes what hair means for the Sioux when telling *Tatanka*, "My mysterious power lies in my hair, and I fear more than anything else to have my hair broken, for that would kill me" (218).

²³ Frantz Fanon thought of homosexuality as culturally white. It is highly debatable however whether Welch shared Fanon's point of view. Although in the 2001 interview granted to Mary Jane Lupton he refers to prostitution as "Europeanized" sex (207), he does not make the same inference about homosexuality. On the other hand, Lakota culture specifically designated a third gender through the term *winkte*. The term included both men who were good at women's work, who took care of children or who had sexual preference for men. This is not exclusive of Sioux people, and many other Native American tribes had designation for "two-spirits" people. Incorporation of two-spirits people was the rule most often than not. The increasing influence of Christianity and the expansion of white hegemonic masculinity in more recent times brought about a reversal in that trend. In any case, the homosexual nature of the oral sex scene in the novel should not deviate the attention from the real issue here: the attack upon the subjectivity of the Other.

CONCLUSION

By examining the representation of masculinities in McMurtry's *Lonesome* and in Welch's *Fools Crow* and *The Heartsong of Charging Elk*, I have attempted to point at the devastating consequences that the myth of the West has had on American masculinity. This is not only restricted to a narrative level but transcends to the real life sphere where the collective imaginarium still regards the foundational myths of the West as constitutive part of American (male) identity.

In my examination of McMurtry's *Lonesome Dove*, I have claimed first that the journey of the protagonists emulates the Westerner's regressive journey towards an imaginary past of primeval purity which is still enjoyed by the Native American. Second, that the colonial schema turns the Native American into the Indian, at which point he becomes an object both of fear and desire. Third, that McMurtry's well-intended criticism of hegemonic masculinity in the Westerner is incomplete because it fails to address the subject of the interiorized Indian, that is, the appropriation of Native American (male) identity during the process of formation of Euramerican male identity. It is my belief that the demolition of hegemonic masculinity in American narrative will not be possible until this process is thoroughly revised.

In the Western genre, the cowboy hero's search for a lost masculinity and a sense of *Gemeinheit* leads him away from family and community and takes him directly to the Native American, who is perceived to embody all that the modern man has lost in the civilized world. More than the land occupied by the original inhabitant of American, the Westerner desires the essence of his being. The Westerner interiorizes the Indian by adopting what he perceives to be his positive traits of manhood. These traits had been well defined through the Self-Made Man and the Masculine Primitive role models: physical strength, toughness, endurance, cold-

blood, sharpness, bravery and independence. Meanwhile, the Westerner disregards other essential aspects of the Native American's identity rooted in religion by comparing them to the more "civilized" ideal of the Christian Gentleman. This allows him to maintain a differentiated identity as white man. The myth of the Vanishing Indian makes it possible for the cowboy to appear as rightful heir of the original inhabitant, as the essence of Americanness. The romantic story of the Vanishing Indian hides a grimmer political reality: the attempt to eradicate and supplant the Native American.

I have claimed in chapter 3 that *communitas* allows the cowboy to access a lost *Gemeinheit* opposed to a modern *Gesellschaft*. Consequently, blood relations are replaced by mythical fraternity. I have further contended that the concept of American manhood holding the males together provides the American male with an apparently solid but inherently weak national identity, for it is based on a construct defined by exclusion and opposition to external Otherness. Disappearance of this external threat immediately causes internal Otherness to appear, a much more dangerous menace which hegemonic masculinity needs to keep at bay at all costs.

McMurtry's male characters in *Lonesome Dove* exemplify the very paradoxes inherent to the construction of the American hegemonic white male. Augustus McCrae bears witness of the myth of the male dyad and the dream of the pure origin. Modelled after the three 19th century American male models, he shares the joy of life and the survival skills of the American Primitive, the compassion of the Christian Gentleman and the free will of the Self-Made Man. In the dyad partnership, he resembles the Sumerian Enkidu although, unlike him, he is not illiterate. Despite his age, McCrae appears as the carefree *puer aeternas* who is always delaying the moment to assume any responsibility in life. Gus's death comes as a blow to the reader who does not expect such a jovial character to meet such a grim end. But Gus' death is necessary to redeem him from any sins he may have committed and to retrieve

the American pastoral dream of the uncorrupted origin. Through Gus, McMurtry criticizes Call's extreme individualism and denounces the repressive armour built around the Self-Made Man model although on the other hand he uses him to indulge in the dream of eternal youth and pure origin.

Woodrow Call appears as a cherished figure in Western iconography but also as one of the most sombre, the taciturn Westerner. Woodrow Call is shaped as Self-Made Man who distrusts community, perceives Otherness as a threat and fears the otherness in his own self. His restlessness grows as he distances himself from society. Religion or spirituality can't relief his distress either since, as Peter A. French says in *Cowboy Metaphysics*, the cowboy is an annihilator who does not believe in the existence of a God or an afterlife. Unlike the Christian who believes that suffering and turmoil in earthly life will be compensated in the afterlife, "The world of the Western is a world of work and death without God" (French 53). Call prefers to rely on physical realities rather than on spiritual belief, hence his friendship with Gus. Bonding with Augustus McCrae is what has saved Call all these years from nihilism. After Gus's death, devoid of faith in the future, the past or even in himself, Call reaches the end of the book in tatters. He is the epitome of the Westerner: a Christian by birth who has adopted Christian ascetics but rejected Christian religion; an Indian by choice who unconsciously imitates the former's pose and character but rejects Native American pantheism and the belief in the individual as part of a wider totality. Lack of spiritual and emotional anchors inevitably lead the Westerner to his death. In the end though, legend replaces death, thus offering him the immortality he did not believe in to begin with.

McMurtry has summarized some of the most profound contradictions of hegemonic masculinity through Woodrow Call although he leaves undiscussed other aspects of his conflicting identity; namely, the appropriation of Native American manhood. In my view, the ultimate reason why the cowboy can never be like the Native American is his scepticism. A

return to the primitive origin means a return to a pantheistic view of the world where the barrier between the individual and what surrounds him does not exist. Imitating the Native American in his relationship with nature without adopting his creed creates an individual who is further alienated from his own world. The cowboy searches for faith, rather than for youth, but recovering it involves forfeiting the ideal of the self-containing white male.

Right in the 21st century, more than two decades after *Lonesome Dove* was written, the theme of the idealized return to the primitive origin has not lost its stronghold. A recent example of the persistence of the cowboy myth and its effects on the portrayal of American masculinity is Ang Lee's filmic adaptation of Annie Proulx's story *Brokeback Mountain*. When the film version was released in 2005, audiences who favourably received the movie curiously split between those calling the film a "gay story" and those who considered it a love story which happened to take place between two male protagonists.¹ Some of the critics in the first group even criticized those in the second for what they considered another veiled attempt to take gay love back into the closet.² What caught my attention in this debate though was the fact that, despite their differences, both perspectives mainly coincided in interpreting the movie as a critique of a masculinist America that impossibilitated the love story between the two males. Yet, Ennis and Jack's love story was only possible in the idyllic pastoral setting of a Garden of Eden that was set in clear opposition to the "civilized" world of their everyday lives. This setting exactly reproduced the pattern of the Western where the hero ran from corrupted civilization into the virgin land and where most often than not he met the company of others like him.

As I have extensively argued in my study, the pastoral dream and the myth of fraternal brotherhood have greatly contributed to sustain hegemonic masculinity within and outside the immediate scope of the Western genre. The problem with the love story between Ennis del Mar and Jack Twist is that it cannot be separated from the two foundational myths

which sustain it. Any intended critique of hegemonic masculinity on Proulx's and Lee's part faces the same problems as those encountered by Larry McMurtry when dealing with the rigid masculinism of the Western genre in *Lonesome Dove*. Put simply, it is not possible to deconstruct Western hegemonic masculinity without demolishing first the foundational myths on which it is sustained. This is why, right in the twenty first century, the myth of the West not only resists attack after attack but even continues regenerating itself. Narratives reconstructing the myths of the West will keep on re-emerging and reproducing the scheme of hegemonic masculinity for as long as these myths continue influencing the definition of American male identity.

Fighting against constructed hegemonic masculinity is even harder for Native American writers who first need to re-establish contact with the truncated past and then to deal with the imposition of models of manhood that are completely alien to one's own culture. Discussing Native American masculinities implies immersing oneself in a complex debate on race and identity which originated long before the first encounter between Native American and Euramerican, far back at the time of the first mythical encounter between dark man and white man. My study of Welch's *Fools Crow* and *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* has explored the consequences of that encounter for the Native American, suggesting that the journey of Welch's male protagonists reverses the journey of the Western hero: while that of the first leads to continuance, that of the second leads to disappearance. Welch's narrative becomes a powerful tool for contesting the long US policy of aggression towards the Native American.

At the turn of the 21st century, the effects of this destructive policy against the Native Americans were still too evident, as the following words by former US President Bill Clinton show:

When I was running for president in 1992, I didn't know much about the American Indian condition except that we had a significant but very small population of Indians in my home state and that my grandmother was one-quarter Cherokee.

That's all I knew. (*A Dialogue on Race*, screen 9)

Bill Clinton's words were uttered to Spokane Native American Sherman Alexie in a 1998 radio debate about race. They serve to summarize all that millions of Americans knew about the "Native American condition" at the time. More worryingly, his words may reflect what even now millions of Americans ignore or choose to forget about their own history. Clinton probably meant his bold confession as sincere act of contrition but, to all those familiar with the history of US Indian policy, his words are seriously preoccupying.

In 1992 there was indeed little trace of the original Caddo, Chickasaw, Osage, Quapaw or Tunica Native American presence in Arkansas, Clinton's home state. The arrival of the Spanish first, the French afterwards and the Euramericans later had had terrible consequences for all those original tribes and by the eighteenth century their presence had already been considerably diminished. The "significant but very small population of Indians"³ living in Arkansas in 1992 was the result of persistent attempts to turn the Native American into the Vanishing Indian. The policy which aimed at the physical erasure of the Native American had been so effective that at age 46 American President Bill Clinton blissfully ignored the serious and urgent problems assailing Native Americans all around the country. Amongst these problems were and still are poverty, joblessness, family and social disintegration, acculturation or marginalization. Alcohol dependence amongst Native American males has been the subject of countless studies given its particular high rate. Suicide and homicide rates, especially among males, is also higher than the average US national rate.⁴ Added to the problems derived from relocation, the Native American male in

particular is affected by the loss of traditional references for masculinity and the omnipresent ideals of hegemonic manhood that are in complete contradiction with his previous references.

Thanks to the constant struggle of Native American communities all around the US, the average American has grown increasingly aware of the reality facing these communities. However, this information is still overshadowed by the persistence of the imaginary Indian, a representation that springs from the same source that has also produced the Westerner. Welch's novels *Fools Crow* and *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* portray the Native American without the mask imposed by the white man, show the Western hero as a conflicted and conflicting male lost in his own self-contradictions and suggest a way out of the pervasive mythical narrative of the West.

In *Fools Crow*, Welch shapes the new Blackfoot cultural hero by combining positive traits of two basic Native American masculinity types: the warrior and the medicine man. From the warrior *Fools Crow* borrows endurance, stamina, physical skills, bravery and pride while from the second he takes wisdom, humility, altruism, self-knowledge and a deep sense of spirituality. To avoid falling into the auto-complacency that the nostalgic remembrance of the past commonly brings about, Welch locates the seeds of corruption both within the same Native American community and outside it. The new models for Native American masculinity need to get rid of the more masculinist principles rooted in the warrior type, amongst which validation of manhood through (male) aggression figures prominently. Welch's male protagonists face the same dangers as those confronted by McMurtry's heroes. Both are tempted by a desire of wholeness that is perceived to be possessed by the Other. If in the case of the Westerner this is the desire for a past wholeness, in the case of the Native American it is the desire for future wholeness. Self-aggrandizement and rejection of communal values easily lead to the futile and solitary journey of the Westerner hero towards nothingness, as Fast Horse's destiny exemplifies.

The battle against whiteness is easier to fight in the setting of *Fools Crow*, when the Native American is still attached to his immediate past, culture and surroundings, than in *The Heartsong of Charging Elk*, where he is completely alienated from his land and people. In his last novel, Welch plunges headfirst into the debate on race and identity that has strongly divided members of the Native American community. I am aware that my social location as European white critic may place me as outsider in the debate of Native American identity and I fully agree with scholar James Mackay when stating that “the European critic carries a special responsibility to listen, to avoid victimology, to think about what effect pronouns may have in including or excluding Native voices – above all, to be aware of our own marginality in Native discourse” (676). I am also aware that my objections to Cook-Lynn’s criticism of Welch’s last novel can well place me under the “hybridist” or “cosmopolitist” label. Yet, I do not aim to defend the figure of the hybrid Native American against that of the traditionalist but to demonstrate that Charging Elk’s controversial hybridity still poses a challenge to the colonial white schema and effectively carries the hope for racial and cultural survival.

My final examination of Welch’s last novel cannot be complete without referring to the author’s intention to write a sequel to his last novel. Welch’s intention seems to indicate that he was not completely satisfied with the pattern of “no return” that he had adopted. In a 2001 interview granted to Mary Jane Lupton, Welch explained that he had started thinking of the sequel to *The Heartsong of Charging Elk*. In the new book, Charging Elk would return to his homeland in America, thus reproducing the traditional return pattern characteristic of Native American narratives. In the introduction to the interview, written later in 2004, Lupton confirmed that Welch and his wife Louis had taken a trip to France to do some research for the sequel. Welch died in 2003 however and the sequel never materialized. Another interview held in 1995 with Williams Bevis reveals that the original plans for *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* did not coincide with the novel in its final form. Welch had thought of a

contemporary novel containing a historical novel. The narrator of this contemporary novel, Jackes Dawes, travelled from America to France and, by chance, met the great, great, granddaughter of the man who had left America with the Wild West Show, supposedly Charging Elk. In the 1995 interview, Welch says that the protagonist of the embedded historical novel “gets married and gets adopted into a family and becomes a total Frenchman. Then his son, who is the great grandfather in this contemporary story that I’m writing, is half French, half Oglala Sioux, but a total French person” (Bevis screen 9). Interestingly enough, the novel he came up with got rid of the contemporary narrator, concentrated exclusively on Charging Elk’s life and did not exactly turn Charging Elk into a “complete Frenchman”. Welch’s change of mind respect his initial ideas as well as his intention to write a sequel to the novel prove that he gave much thought to questions of identity and race and that he may have not had any final answers to these.

Welch’s death made it impossible for Charging Elk to return to his homeland. Once more, history seemed to deny the Native American the possibility of restoration. On the other hand, it offered an unexpected opportunity to confirm survival: now literally an orphan, Charging Elk was left with the heavy burden of defending indigenusness from his exile or else vanish forever. In her review of Welch’s novel, Cook-Lynn argues that *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* cannot comfort those Native American living within US borders. But I believe that for all of those Native Americans who have at one point or another shared Charging Elk’s feelings of alienation within their own country, Welch’s novel does convey a powerful message of resistance, fight and regeneration. Charging Elk and his still unborn child emerge as new kind of beacons for the 21st century Native American male whose identity as American has ceased to be interpreted along the lines of masculinism, origin, blood quantum or race.

James Welch's literary legacy stands in a place of honour within Native American letters but his work has not achieved all the recognition it deserves outside that circle. The American literary canon still shows reticence to include major works by Native American authors and it may be a while until *Fools Crow* figures undisputably alongside American major works of the 20th century, as I think it should. Outside the United States, James Welch's work is well-known to scholars and students dealing with American minority studies but hardly heard of outside that scope, with the notable exception of France where his last novel reached a very considerable success.⁵ Welch's death deprived the Native American community and America at large of a gifted and visionary writer who would still have had a lot to say about the destiny of his people.

Several contemporary Native American authors are writing in lines similar to James Welch. Amongst these, authors and critics Thomas King, Gerald Vizenor or Louis Owens,⁶ who have also chosen hybridity as common denominator. Because their works explore ways of understanding Native American masculinities and identity in urban or less traditionalist environments, they have met criticism from tribalist Native American academic circles who accuse them of lying too close to the Western tradition. In my view, their search for valid narrative models and for images of masculinity with which the new Native American male can identify requires serious consideration for it is pointing at the way Indianness can be integrated into Americanness.

New perspectives are also being introduced in the tradition of the Western and the narratives of the West. There is an increasing number of compilations that present the work from authors socially and thematically as diverse as Sherman Alexie and Elmer Kelton. Also an increasing number of Western writers have started to consider the West from various coetaneous and sometimes conflicting perspectives. I believe that academic work here needs to proceed twofold. First, it is necessary to detect those cases when the mythical West and the

mythical almighty Westerner are still influencing new production, as is the case of the filmic adaptation of Annie Proulx's *Brokeback Mountain*. On the other hand, studies of the masculinity models present in the new narratives of the West should focus on examples that leave behind all traces of the hegemonic male and provide a referent for a comprehensive definition of masculinity and American identity embracing the Native and non-Native male alike.

As I write these lines, President elect Barack Obama -a most definite example of American hybridity- proclaims his message of hope, faith and unity reminding the world that "we have never been a collection of Red States and Blue States: we are, and always will be, the United States of America".⁷ It is true that his election holds immense historic and symbolic value but it is also true that immense work is needed to glue the gaps keeping Latino, Asian, black or Native American communities apart and ignorant of each other's cultures and destinies. If bridging those gaps is to go further than a witty but shallow operation of cosmetic surgery, it is necessary to keep historical and narrative memory alive and kicking. Barack Obama's new presidency may help root out old but ingrained conceptions of masculinity and American identity. Exceptional dexterity and wisdom will be necessary however to remodel significant portions of a big dream that once more has been invoked to hold together the faith of a nation.

NOTES

¹ Daniel Mendelsohn's review in *The New York Review of Books* exemplifies the first while Roger Evers in the *Chicago Sun Times* is example of the second.

² See Daniel Mendelsohn and W. C. Harris.

³ A total of 12,773 people were recorded in the 1990 US Census Bureau as Indian American or Alaska Native. In 2006, the figure was 19,194 which amounted to a 0.7 % of the total population. See U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990 Census of Population and Housing, Summary Tape File 1.

⁴ In a 1996 report on homicide and suicide amongst Native American Population, the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention from the US Department of Health and Human Services and Prevention stated that the rate of suicide in the period from 1979 to 1992 was 1.5 higher than the national rate while that of homicide was 2.0 higher. The study stated that "Both homicides and suicides occurred disproportionately among young Native Americans, particularly males. From 1990–1992, homicide and suicide alternated between second and third rankings as leading causes of death for Native American males 10–34 years of age." See Wallace, Callhoun et al. iii.

⁵ Welch's success led the French Government to award him with the *Chevalier de l'Ordre des Art et des Lettres* in 2000.

⁶ Louis Owens committed suicide in July 2002.

⁷ From Barack Obama's acceptance speech delivered at Chicago, Illinois on the 4th of November 2008.

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