Ina Arens' Masters Thesis, (Un)heard, (Un)voiced, (Un)searched: Decolonization in Métis Literature. Arens' thesis focuses on the mechanisms in selected works of Métis literature by which Métis writers overcome the effects of colonization in order to decolonize their stories, language, history and identity. This document is to be used for research purposes only. Copyright Ina Arens. The reproduction of this document in whole or in part is strictly prohibited without the express permission of the author.

Chapter One

Introduction

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I owe much of my earliest inspiration for the title of this thesis, as well as for its approach, to Beatrice Culleton Mosionier's fictionalized autobiography, *In Search of April Raintree*. The fact that one of the two Métis sisters searches for her Métis roots despite her cultural dislocation, while the other sister spends most of her adolescence in utter denial of her origin, served as the basic concept for the fourth chapter of this work, from which the remaining two chapters derived later. The notion of searching for a Métis identity as opposed to not searching for it is symbolized by the prefix –un, as it describes the discrepancy between the two states. While "unsearched" refers to a state in which the respective character for various reasons feels unable to reconnect with her/his Métis roots, "searched" epitomizes the process of decolonization through which an individual reclaims her/his Métis identity.

Apart from the aspect of searching for ones Métis roots, voicing Métis resistance toward the colonizer and hearing the stories that originate in the Oral Tradition are also recurrent themes in some literary works by Métis writers. Thus, after reading Marilyn Dumont's *A Really Good Brown Girl* and Maria Campbell's *Stories of the Road Allowance People*, I conceived the idea for the remaining two literary analyses chapters, whose concepts are similar to the chapter "(Un)searched." Thus, I named the third chapter, "(Un)voiced" and the second chapter, "(Un)heard." Again, the prefix –un draws a contrast between the state of colonization and the process of decolonization. The brackets that enclose the prefix –un, as they separate "voiced" from "unvoiced" and "heard" from "unheard," support this contrast. Resulting from this separation are dual possibilities, which for the chapter "(Un)voiced" encompass voicing resistance through literature or by remaining silent. For the chapter "(Un)heard," those dual possibilities entail preserving oral stories or leaving them forever unheard. The prefix –un,

therefore, indicates the general concern of my thesis: mechanisms in selected works of Métis literature by which Métis writers overcome the effects of colonization in order to decolonize their stories, language, history and identity.

During the research of my thesis, I often saw myself confronted with a recurrent question that people kept asking me: "Who are the Métis?"[1] My general answer was that the Métis of Canada are a unique people of mixed European and First Nations ancestry with a distinct language and culture.[2] The confused looks on the faces of the questioners told me that most people seemed to have difficulties grasping the concept of a people who are neither European nor First Nations, but combine the best of both cultures. These conversations in their shortness and superficiality never longed for a more detailed answer in contrast to this thesis. The first chapter therefore, is dedicated to giving a brief overview of Métis history, beginning before Métis ethnogenesis and ending with a discussion on Métis identity in the context of the Constitution Act of 1982.[3]

The question "Who are the Métis" was usually followed by "And is there such a thing as Métis literature?" Sadly enough this question reflects the general attitude of Canada's mainstream society toward Native literature. It is a literature that has been marginalized in the Canadian publishing scene and in the shelves of bookstores as much as its writers have been pushed to the periphery of the Canadian mosaic. Out of this marginalization, however, a literature written by Métis people developed that apart from illustrating Métis traditional life, also depicts how its authors

[1] In the mid 1980s historians began to look into Métis ethnogenesis and posed the question whether the Métis are only a Western Canadian phenomenon. Brown and Peterson in their essay collection *The New Peoples: Being and Becoming Métis in North America*, challenge the notion of Métis identity. In doing so they purposely spell the word "Métis" with a small "m" as to be inclusive rather than exclusive. Since I do not attempt to challenge the definition of a Métis person, but wish to show the mechanisms of decolonization in Métis literature, I will use the capitalized spelling. Moreover, the non-capitalization of Métis would be highly inappropriate for my thesis, as the literature I am dealing with breaks away from colonial structures – the word "métis" however supports colonial oppression with its subjugated spelling. The word "Métis" itself "is French and means 'a child of different races, a mix,'" says Purich in the introduction to his book *The Metis* (1988, 5). Other mixed populations can be found in Latin America, where people of Iberian and Indigenous descent are called Mestizos (Préfontaine 2003, 3). Although, today the Métis in Canada are more likely associated with the Prairie Provinces (Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta), Dickason points out a high probability that métissage also happened in the East of Canada as well (1985, 19).

[2] Under the Constitution Act of 1982, the government of Canada declared Inuit, Indian and Métis to be the three Aboriginal peoples of Canada. Resulting from this decision I am going to use "Aboriginal" when referring to these three peoples as a whole. Because "Indian" is, apart from being a misnomer, which epitomizes Columbus's error, very derogatory, I will employ the term First Nations. The glossary of *Expressions in Canadian Native Studies* asserts "First Nations is usually used to refer to a politically autonomous band under the Indian Act, a nation of First Peoples" ("First Nations" 2000, 568).

overcome colonial domination. Since publications like Harold Cardinal's *Unjust Society* (1969), Maria Campbell's *Halfbreed* (1973) and Howard Adams' *Prison of Grass* (1975), Métis writers have produced many literary works through which they digest a century of discrimination, severe racism and economic poverty, in an otherwise thriving country.

One of the first books published by a Métis was Maria Campbell's *Halfbreed*, in 1973. Penny Petrone calls it "the decade's most acclaimed native autobiography" (Petrone 1990, 118). This powerful story of Campbell's young life, she was only 33 years old when she began to write it down, both shocked her white audience and hit the nerve of her Aboriginal readership, as it tells a story many fellow Aboriginal people related and still relate to. In the beginning of her autobiography Campbell writes, "I am not bitter. I have passed that stage. I only want to say: this is what it was like; this is what it is still like" (1982, 13). What follows is Campbell's circular journey from a "healthy and whole child to an unhealthy and unwhole woman and finally to recovered woman," as Janice Acoose aptly remarks (Acoose 1993, 39). In the end of her autobiography Campbell overcomes drug addiction, prostitution and poverty and is able to reconnect with her true Métis identity. As a sign of the book's liberating influence Lenore Keeshig-Tobias and Daniel David Moses call Maria Campbell "The Mother of Us All" (Lutz in v. Berg 2001, 20).

Considering the success of *Halfbreed* and the attention it received as one of the first written works of Native literature, it appears appropriate to assert that Campbell's autobiography inspired many other Métis writers who published after her. The first that come to mind are the works of Lee Maracle, a Métis from British Columbia, and Beatrice Culleton Mosionier, a Manitoba Métis. The former achieved success with works such as, *I am Woman* (1988), her autobiography *Bobbi Lee, Indian Rebel* (1990), and *Ravensong* (1993). A few years earlier, in 1984, Beatrice Culleton Mosionier published her fictionalized autobiography *In Search of April Raintree*.

The late 1980s and 1990s too, witnessed the publications of autobiographies written by Métis. In 1989 James Tyman went public with *Inside Out: An Autobiography by a Native Canadian*, which illustrates how the cultural dislocation into his foster family affected him. Never quite fitting in because of his skin colour and harassed at school, Tyman commits his

first break and enter at the age of sixteen. What follows are years of crime, drug and alcohol abuse, prison and poncing. Although Tyman reconnects with his biological family, he never manages to find his true Métis identity, in contrast to Gregory Scofield. Scofield's autobiography, *Thunder Through My Veins: Memories of a Métis Childhood* (1999), shares a similar circular journey with Campbell's life. Scofield moves from a happy and whole child to a teenager, who is desperately trying to fit in, to a healthy and whole adult. Thus, Scofield writes in the foreword to his autobiography, "This is my story of survival and acceptance, of myself and my widening family" (1999, xv).

Apart from a number of autobiographies, Métis literature also encompasses poetry, drama and short stories. In poetry recent publications are among others Joanne Arnott's *Steepy Mountain: Love Poetry* (2004), Sharron Proulx-Turner's *What the Auntys Say* (2002), Marilyn Dumont's *Green Girl Dreams Mountains* (2001), and Gregory Scofield's *Singing Home the Bones* (2005). In 2001, Margo Kane, Greg Daniels and Marie Clements had their plays published in the drama collection *DraMétis: Three Métis Plays*. Besides Maria Campbell's *Stories of the Road Allowance People* (1995) and her short story collection *Achimoona* (1985), Joe Welsh is noteworthy. His collection *Jackrabbit Street* was published in 2003 and contains thirty-six stories and anecdotes. Told in the voice of St. Pierre, many of the anecdotes are flavoured with Welsh's distinct humour, which adds to the collections genuineness.

Many works of literature produced by Métis writers show a strong concern for Métis history and the search for Métis identity. The former is a result of decades of misinterpretation, in which Eurocentric historiography denied the Métis their rightful place in Canadian history. Once free and independent people, the Métis were relegated to the road allowances at the beginning of the 20th century.[4] Only in 1982, almost a century after the resistance at Batoche in 1885, the Canadian government recognized the Métis as one of the three Aboriginal people in Canada. Thus, Klooss asserts, "viewed against this background, it cannot come as a surprise that the promotion of historical consciousness and the search for (ethnic) identity

[4] Maria Campbell in her autobiography simply describes road allowance as "crown land on either side of road lines and roads" (Campbell 1982, 13).

have become prime issues in contemporary Canadian Métis literature" (Klooss 1990, 207).

The promotion of historical consciousness and the search for identity inevitably lead to a subversion of colonial structures. Since the colonial power dominates the discourse on history and identity, the oppressed need to undermine this discourse in order to develop their own historiography and identity. The challenge of the imperial centre has become known as decolonization,[5] a process which Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin define as "revealing and dismantling colonialist power in all its forms" (1998, 63). Consequently, the process of decolonization as described in this thesis follows that of colonization. After centuries of suppression and denigration of Aboriginal cultures by colonialist practises, the oppressed begin to actively resist and overthrow the assumption of the colonialist's superiority. In doing so they attempt to establish programmes of decolonization that work against the "occlusions and overwritings of pre-colonial cultural practises," say Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (1998, 64). Among these programmes, for example, are activities that "seek to revive and revalue local languages" (1998, 65). Thus, Aboriginal people begin to subvert Eurocentric cultural models that privileged the imported culture over the indigenous culture (1998, 64).

Frantz Fanon in his much-acclaimed book, *Wretched of the Earth*, describes the process of decolonization in a more radical manner by writing, "decolonization is always violent" (35). Fanon continues, "decolonization is quite simply the replacing of a certain 'species' of men by another 'species' of men" (1963, 35). Moreover, Fanon explains that the colonized world is divided into two: "settler's towns and the native town, Negro village, the medina, the reserve" (1963, 37). Consequently, decolonization in Fanon's eyes entails the subversion of this constructed division, or its reversal. Thus, decolonization is not only the replacing of one species with another

[5] In the past few years extensive research has been done in the field of post-colonialism, especially decolonization. It is thus my aim to only briefly state what the process of decolonization entails. The analysis of the literary works in the chapters "(Un)heard," "(Un)voiced" and "(Un)searched" will reveal further aspects of decolonization. For a more detailed analysis, I recommend Stefanie von Berg's *'Uncomfortable Mirror': (De-) Kolonisation in Gedichten Zeitgenössischer Indigener Nordamerikanischer Autorinnen; 1973 – 1997*, as well as Ashcroft, Griffiths, Tiffin's *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader.*

species of man, but also the reversal of the geographical division of the settler's town and the Native town, the reserve.

In terms of decolonization in literature, Brydon and Tiffin assert, decolonizing fictions are "texts that write back against imperial fictions and texts that incorporate alternative ways of seeing and living in the world" (1993, 11). Stress lies on "alternative ways," as the phrase implies that decolonizing fictions should encompass strategies of gaining power other than the strategies employed by the colonizer to oppress the colonized. Brydon and Tiffin's appeal to "seek non-repressive alternatives to imperialist discourse," then seems to stand in contrast to Fanon's call for replacing the one by the other.

Many works of literature written by Métis are decolonizing fictions, as they respond to the dominant discourse. Works like *Stories of the Road Allowance People*, *Thunder Through My Veins*, *A Really Good Brown Girl* and *Papîyâhta* attempt to dismantle the colonizer's power and subvert his discourse – a discourse that determines how the Métis are perceived by others and by themselves. Thus, writers like Maria Campbell, Gregory Scofield, Rita Bouvier and Marilyn Dumont use their literary works to counteract the colonizer's discourse and to reclaim their Métis identity, Métis history, and aspects of language. In doing so they create a discourse that speaks *to* their people, instead of allowing the external discourse to continue to write *about* them.[6] Unfortunately, the field of decolonization in Métis literature or decolonizing Métis fictions is rather ill researched. While works like Campbell's *Halfbreed* and Culleton's *In Search of April Raintree* have been extensively researched, other equally important Métis literary works have not yet been discovered. With my thesis I wish to call attention to these works and the mechanisms of decolonization employed in them.

Because the selected works of Métis literature attempt to reclaim Métis identity, Métis history and aspects of language, I divided the thesis accordingly. The chapter "(Un)heard: "The Great White way could silence us all" therefore, will be dealing with language and how language use can

[6] Ketu Katrak in her article "Decolonizing Culture: Toward a Theory for Post-Colonial Women's Texts," criticises Post-colonial theory for continuing to engage in a discourse that is similarly oppressing and alienating the 'Other' as the imperial discourse, which it anticipates to subvert. Thus, she writes, "Often, with the best intentions, Western intellectuals are unconsciously complicit in an endeavor (sic) that ironically ends up validating the dominant power structure, even when they ideologically oppose such hegemonic power" (2004, 256).

serve as a mechanism of decolonization. Maria Campbell's collection *Stories of the Road Allowance People* serves as an excellent example in this analysis. Through transliteration, code switching and punctuation, to name but a few, Campbell induces into the stories the voice of her community. Written down in what linguists call "village English," Campbell celebrates and thus revalues her people's speech. At the same time Campbell deliberately undermines the colonizer's language. In doing so she privileges the non-standard over the standard English, and the oral over the written. Moreover, Campbell prevents these stories, whose origin lie in the Oral Tradition, and the dialect of her community from becoming unheard.

The following chapter entitled "(Un)voiced: Voice equals speech. Voice has the floor. Voice is authority," is dedicated to history and analyses how Métis poets re-write Métis history and thus subvert Eurocentric historiography. Poems like "A Letter to Sir John A. Macdonald," "Policy of the Dispossessed" and "Riel is dead, and I am alive" criticise the distorted image of the Métis created by the dominant culture. Thus, they work against the portrayal of the Métis as rebels and traitors – a depiction that is not only demeaning but also ossifying. In a figurative way, Gregory Scofield, Marilyn Dumont and Rita Bouvier re-write history, whereby they reclaim the Métis' dignified involvement in the founding of Canada.

"(Un)searched: Gregory Scofield's *Thunder Through My Veins,*" the last chapter of the thesis, examines the author's autobiography under the aspects of ethnic and sexual identity. A look at the events following the two Métis resistances at the end of the 19th century reveals the origin of Métis denial. Blatant racism and acts of hatred against Métis people caused many Métis to live their culture clandestinely or entirely deny their Métisness. Because Gregory's grandfather desired to escape the racism and economic poverty of his Métis childhood, he crossed the colour and class line and therefore lived a life in denial. Gregory, however, actively searches for his grandfather's secret and thus unearths his Métis heritage. Gregory's stepfather Don, a violent alcoholic on the other hand, chooses to leave his Aboriginal ancestry unsearched. Instead, Don equilibrates his own subjugation to mainstream society by oppressing Gregory and his mother. Consequently, Gregory has to overcome the self-hatred and internalized racism, which he experiences at home, in order to be able to embrace his

Métisness. It is only when he reaches self-acceptance of his ethnic identity that he also begins to acknowledge his homosexuality. By reclaiming the tradition of the Two-Spirited people, Gregory decolonizes his body and his sexual orientation. Hence, reclaiming ethnic and sexual identity are the mechanisms of decolonization in the final chapter.

The results of the literary analysis will be summarized in the conclusion. It is the aim of this thesis to illustrate how Métis writers like Maria Campbell, Gregory Scofield, Rita Bouvier and Marilyn Dumont, employ tools of decolonization in their stories, poems and autobiography. The hypothesis is that appropriation of English, rewriting history and reclaiming ethnic identity are prominent features of decolonization found in Métis literature.

Chapter Two

"We're still here and Métis": A Brief Overview of Métis History

The history of the Métis in Canada goes beyond the story of "rebels." It is a story of people who fought and still fight for their rightful place in the Canadian mosaic, despite the government's greatest efforts to deny them this position. It is a story of a people who contributed considerably to the founding of Canada, especially to the formation of Manitoba, but who are pushed to the periphery of the Canadian psyche. Thus, Marilyn Dumont's key line "We're still here and Metis"[7] from her poem "Letter to Sir John A. Macdonald" powerfully describes the Métis' resistance towards the government's attempts to assimilate them (Dumont 1996, 52). Although the Canadian government robbed them of their land, sent many of them to residential schools and stripped them of their language, identity, and culture, the Métis "are still here" and give voice to their requests.

When writing about decolonization in Métis literature, one must inevitably examine Métis history. Many works of Métis authors are closely tied to important historical events, in such a way that the past very much affects the present. The best way to examine the Métis' emergence and

[7] The spelling of the name "Metis" without the accent is the anglicized spelling of "Métis."

their struggle for recognition is to use the historical overview by the historians Darren Préfontaine and Fred Shore. The following outline attempts to give a brief insight into the history of the Métis in Canada, as some of the events will be dealt with in the literary analysis.

____ – 1750 Origin of the Métis People in Central and Atlantic Canada

When the French and English reached the eastern shores of today's Canada the country was all but a terra nullius – it was peopled but with people who had a different sense of landownership than the Europeans. The colonists, arriving as early as 1534, mostly settled in the East and seldom brought female companions from their home countries to live in the new colony. Many colonialists engaged in relationships with Aboriginal women both to secure the survival of the settlement and out of sheer need for human companionship. Dickason argues, however, that their offspring were most likely assimilated into either the mother's or the father's culture (Dickason 1985, 20). Because every person born in New France as well as every person converting to the Catholic belief became automatically subjects of the King of France, without having to undergo the process of naturalization, the emergence of a distinct Métis identity in the East was prevented (Dickason 1985, 22).

Darren Préfontaine, in his online article "Métis Identity," agrees with Dickason in that "the Prairie/Great Plains Métis are not the only mixed blood populations, which have existed in the Americas and the world" (2003, 3). People of mixed ancestry developed wherever two distinct people met. As an example Préfontaine mentions "the conquering Conquistadors of Spain and Portugal [who] created vast populations of *Mestizos* in Latin America" (2003, 3). He continues by also pointing out that in the United States "whole populations of African-Americans married into American-Indian bands" (2003, 3). Consequently, the Métis, in respect to métissage, are not unique. Yet, what distinguishes them from other mixed heritage populations is their development of a group consciousness, says Préfontaine (2003, 3).

1750 – 1800 Origin of the People in Western Canada

As to when exactly the Métis were born remains historically uncertain. Some historians like to answer this question humorously by

saying the Métis originated "'nine months after the first White man set foot in Canada'" (Sealey 1975, 1). This is only partly true. Although Métissage is one of the oldest concepts of human history it does not always lead to the birth of a new nation. What distinguishes the Métis of Western Canada from other mixed-heritage groups is that they developed a distinct culture, language and group consciousness (Préfontaine, 2-3). Thus Métis ethnogenesis can be estimated to have emerged after French Canadian voyageurs and coureurs du bois reached the area of the Great Lakes and within the French fur trade (Shore 2001, 72).[8]

These coureurs du bois were "the serfs or indentured servants of the colony's seigneurs" (Adams 1994, 30). After escaping from the seigneurs into the woodlands they engaged in fur trapping and thus resided close to the posts along the fur trading routes. It was near these posts that they built stable families with their First Nations wives (Adams 1994, 30). By 1681, says Adams, "more than 400 coureurs du bois were living with their families in Indian villages" (1994, 30). Their offspring resembled a combination of the best of both the paternal and the maternal cultures. Despite the fact that most Métis spoke French as well as an Aboriginal language, thus making them indispensable in the fur trading economy, they "were outcasts on the periphery of a totalitarian French colony" (1994, 31). Unfortunately, this forced marginal position is still a reality for most of them today.

Another source for French Métis roots are the French mercantilists who, during the 17th and 18th century, pushed deeper into the woodlands in order to extend the fur trading routes. In this manner many posts were founded close to Aboriginal villages, which led to relationships between French Canadien traders and First Nations women. Adams, however, points out "these Frenchmen [unlike the coureurs du bois] did not establish permanent residences with the Indians and were absent for extended periods of time" (1994, 31). It can be assumed that their offspring were either assimilated into the maternal family or were adopted by other Métis. Still other French mercantilists "fostered ties with their children" (1994, 31).

[8] Coureurs du bois means "travellers of the woods," a name given to French youths who travelled into the western interior to trade with Aboriginal nations (Barber Christel 1994, 7).

Besides recognizing the French Canadien and mercantilists as paternal ancestors of the Métis Nation, one cannot forget another source of roots of the "New People": the English and Scottish employees of the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC). Adams describes these employees as "labourers and semi-skilled workers" (Adams 1994, 33).[9] Their offspring were commonly called "Halfbreeds," a term that is not only derogatory but also expresses the HBC's fear of racial impurity.[10] Furthermore, the term is highly inaccurate "as there [are] few Métis who [are] actually of pure White and pure Indian ancestry in half and half portions" (Duke Redbird 1980, 1).

When the HBC was founded in 1670 and England thereby officially entered the fur trade, it was London's policy to prevent any contact with the Indigenous population except for business purposes. This was in opposition to the French who saw the commercial advantages of Aboriginal wives.[11] In a document entitled "Company's Governor's Orders For the Men's Behaviour" dated September 26, 1714 the HBC director formulated the following rules:

1. All persons to attend prayers.
2. To live lovingly with one another, not to swear or quarrel but to live peaceably without drunkenness or profaneness.
3. No man to meddle, trade or affront any Indians, nor to concern themselves with women …Men going contrary to be punished before Indians. (McLean 1987, 28)

These rules not only resemble English Christian morality but also exemplify how far removed London was from the dynamics of life in Rupert's Land (McLean 1987, 28). Rule number three is a sheer contradiction to the natural human drive for companionship.

Soon the HBC realized the advantages of Indigenous wives in contributing to the fur trade. They provided the traders with food and "were trained in the skills that made life possible in the North (McLean 1987, 29). An Aboriginal wife consequently secured the traders' survival and the

[9] Darcy Ribeiro, a Brazilian Anthropologist, named the hybrid groups of Latin America "new peoples," as they are "the most significant historical consequence of the wrenching collision and entanglement of the Old World with the New" (Brown and Peterson 1985, 3-4). The same can be applied to the Métis of Canada.

[10] The English colonizers shared this fear with their French counterparts who thought of metissage as "adulterat[ing] the purity of the blood, leading to deterioration" (Dickason 1985, 21). Thus, the companies' policies towards the treatment of Aboriginal people were similar, despite the popular myth. Both colonizers considered them to be "savages" that need[ed] to be Christianized (Préfontaine, 8).

[11] I think it is also important to mention that not all relationships between European fur traders and Aboriginal women were voluntary. Purich points out that Indigenous women were often kidnapped and raped (Purich 1988, 20/21).

success of the company. Thus many of these alliances were arranged for the simple motive of survival and commercial success (Sealey 1975, 4). In a wider scheme it can even be argued that the fur trade would not have been possible if it weren't for First Nations women.

The offspring of these French Canadian, English, and Orcadian fur traders and their Aboriginal wives grew more numerous. With two very different cultural backgrounds the Michif[12] people developed an extraordinarily distinct culture.[13] Around the 1700s some historians found evidence of already 50 communities of French mixed-blood traders and their families living west of the Chicago-Green Bay area (Purich 1988, 18). This evidence is supported by Adams, who writes that "a century after the conquest (1760) there were at least thirty thousand [Métis] in the West" (Adams 1984, 31). It was in this western area of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers,[14] where the Métis Nation was finally created. Around the mid 18th century some of these people referred to themselves as either "Bois-Brûlés"[15] or "Métis"[16] and to the Red River as their homeland (Shore 2001, 72).

1800 – 1821 Birth of Métis Nationalism

Eurocentric interpreters of Métis history, and especially the events around the birth of Métis nationalism, argue that the North West Company[17] used the Métis during its struggles with its competitor, the HBC, and the

[12] Apart from "Métis" the term "Michif" will be employed rather frequently. Michif is not only the language of the Métis but also refers to the people themselves. In contrast to "Métis," which was imposed on them by the government, "Michif" is a self-named term, free from colonial control and oppression. Thus, "Michif" epitomizes the process of decolonization, as it breaks off the oppressor's control over naming people. Ellen A. Gibbs, for example, in *The Changing Face of the Métis Nation* quotes Geoff Burtonshaw, a Métis researcher, who believes that Métis is a misnomer and asserts people of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal ancestry are Michif or Michif People (Gibbs 2000, 7). Keith Goulet claims to have never heard the term "Métis" while growing up (Keith Goulet, Regina, 22 October 2005). To him Métis were always known as "apetogosan" (half son). Resulting from this information, I decided to employ both names. I chose "Métis" because it has become a legal term to refer to the Michif people and Michif because it is a self-named term.

[13] Like their Indigenous mothers, Métis women considerably contributed to the success of the trading posts, as they often functioned as excellent interpreters (Van Kirk, 1983, 111).

[14] The fork where the Red and Assiniboine River meet is now known as Winnipeg. In the fur trade this area marked a strategical important location as transportation was mainly organised by water. Thus, Don McLean calls the Red River "the fur trading capital of the west" (McLean 1987, 37).

[15] The expression "Bois-Brûlés" comes from the Ojibway word "wissakodewinmi" meaning "half-burnt woodmen" (Sealey 1975, 14) or "half-burnt stick men" (Préfontaine 2003, 6). The French Canadians then picked up the translation and named the Métis "Bois-Brûlés".

[16] Other historians claim Louis Riel to be the first who called his people "Métis" (Préfontaine 2003, 6). For further historic Métis identifications see Préfontaine's article "Métis Identity."

[17] Fur traders from Montreal founded the North West Company in the late 18th century. It became the biggest competitor for the Hudson's Bay Company.

Selkirk settlers who arrived in 1812.[18] These settlers posed a threat to the Métis way of life and disrupted the fur trade of the NWC. After Miles Macdonell, Governor of the District of Assiniboia,[19] prohibited the export of pemmican in 1814, "it was decided [by the NWC] to assist in creating a New Nation of Métis that would be in opposition to the settlers" (Sealey 1975, 38).[20] Historians like Donald Purich believe that "the NWC urged the Métis to retaliate [which] they did" (Purich 1988, 36). Thus, under the leadership of Cuthbert Grant the Métis fought the new governor of the colony, Robert Semple, at the Battle of Seven Oaks on June 19, 1816.

Such a perspective of the accounts surrounding the Battle of Seven Oaks implies that the Métis held a passive role in the forming of their nation. It would be biased to assume that all that was needed for the Métis to develop a sense of nationalism was the NWC's belief that the Métis were a nation and that the HBC was stealing their land. This rather Eurocentric view diminishes the Métis to a mere tool of the NWC, incapable of acting for themselves. Fred Shore in his reconstruction of Métis history, argues that Métis nationalism developed rather out of "the dynamics of Métis cultural, economic and political evolution" (Fred Shore 2001, 73). Hence, the political circumstances of 1816 with the common threat of incoming settlers and the Métis way of life in jeopardy, the Michif people united to rightfully protect themselves.[21]

On a more social level, the impact of intermarriage also contributed immensely to the evolution of Métis nationalism. Peterson asserts, "if such nations [whose parent nations happen to be belligerents] are peaceable, intermarriage will occur and a relatively stable composite group will develop (Peterson 1985, 37). In this manner the realm of the fur trade formed the

[18] In 1811 Lord Selkirk purchased 116,000 acres in the Red River area from the HBC. The first settlers, mostly Scottish farmers, arrived under Miles Macdonell in August 1812. The Métis, however, were never consulted and Macdonell ignored the fact that the Métis settlement predated his (Purich 1988, 34).

[19] Also known as the Selkirk Settlement.

[20] Sealey claims "buffalo pemmican was the basis for the development of the West" (Sealey 1975, 25). It consisted of dried buffalo meat mixed with hot buffalo fat and berries. Once cool "it hardened and an axe was usually used to cut off chunks which were eaten raw or boiled" (1975, 25). Besides trading fur, pemmican formed the second key income of the Métis. Thus its prohibition had a major impact on Métis life.

[21] It is also believed that during the Battle of Seven Oaks the Métis for the first time flew their flag: "a horizontal figure eight on a blue background" (Purich 1988, 38).[21] The Interpretative Centre in Duck Lake, however, says that the first Métis Flag (white infinity symbol on a red background) was given to the Métis by the NWC as a gift of special recognition in 1815.

nourishing ground for a Métis collective identity, which was fostered by endogamy.

1821 – 1870 The Golden Years

The golden years of the Métis began with the merger of the NWC and the HBC in 1821, which also marked the end of the competition between the two major fur trading companies and granted the HBC an assumed trading monopoly in Rupert's Land.[22] As a consequence of the merger many Métis who formerly worked with the NWC were dismissed. Some of them became independent traders with St. Paul, Minnesota, in the so-called free trade movement. This movement was seen as illegal in the eyes of the HBC (McLean 1987, 58). As the HBC saw its profits decline the company "passed stringent regulations, [for example prohibiting] natives from trading or selling furs amongst themselves, [making] illegal the use of furs as gifts and [giving] HBC employees the power to search residences [...]" (Purich 1988, 41).

One of the actions undertaken by the HBC was the Sayer trial in 1849. On May 17 "the company charged four Metis with contravening its monopoly" (Purich 1988, 42). Jean-Louis Riel, father of Louis Riel, gathered approximately 300 Métis on the steps of the St. Boniface Cathedral. Intimidated by the armed Métis "the jury, after finding Sayer guilty, recommended mercy" (Purich 1988, 42). Upon Sayer's emergence from the courthouse the crowd is said to have roared: "Vive la liberté! La commerce est libre!" (Purich 1988, 42). Thus the release of Sayer and his three companions marked the decline of the HBC's trading monopoly in Rupert's Land which culminated with the sale of the area in 1869.

From the 1850s onward land was to become an important political and economic entity.[23] From south of the border came the threat of Manifest Destiny, a concept "used to describe the desire of Americans to gain control of all of North America" (Sealey, 75, 67). And Upper Canada, now Ontario, afraid to lose the Northwest sent out expeditions, which detected that the

[22] Fred Shore argues that the HBC assumed a trading monopoly because of their victory over the NWC. The Métis, however, as the major in the NWC viewed the merger differently (Shore 2001, 73).

[23] It is noteworthy to mention that the Métis adopted their concept of land and its usage from their Aboriginal ancestors, meaning, that among themselves they did not own land in a European sense (Sealey 1975, 113).

until then "jealously guarded fur land, was, in fact, a potential 'Eden' ripe for occupation by an industrially and agriculturally inclined Upper Canada" (Shore 2001, 74).[24] Consequently, Canadian settlers began to reside in and around Red River, behaving "in such a Eurocentric manner over the ten years from 1859 to 1869 that they successfully made the Métis extremely wary of Canadian intentions (Shore 2001, 74; Stanley 1961, vii). When in 1869 the Canadian militia arrived in Red River, the Métis "reacted and took up arms to protect themselves" (Shore 2001, 74).[25]

1869 – 1885 Resistance and Dispersal

The Red River resistance began with the capture of Fort Garry in November of 1869 and culminated in the approval of the *Manitoba Act* in July 1870 (Shore 2001, 74). The Métis Provisional Government[26] conceived this act based on a "List of Rights," which became effective after extensive debate among the Métis. Amongst other rights, the *Manitoba Act* entailed the protection of French, religion, and laws, and called for the formation of the province of Manitoba, formerly known as Rupert's Land (Shore 2001, 76). It thus created a bilingual and bicultural province (French and English). However, reality proved that "the very Act that should have protected Métis rights was subverted to deny them the land that was rightfully theirs" (Shore 2001, 76). Various interpretations of Section 31 of the Act, which preserved the Métis' land holdings, prevented them from becoming the rightful owners of their land. Furthermore, the Dominion Government "made it an almost physical impossibility for the Métis to obtain [...] the 1,400,000 acres of land they had been promised in Section 31 of the *Manitoba Act*" (Shore 2001, 76; Sprague 1980, 416-418). Thus, by 1872 the Métis of Manitoba had lost and were losing most of the lands they had owned prior to the Confederation in 1867.

[24] These expeditions were sent out during the years of 1857 and 1858 by both Canada and the United Kingdom (Shore 2001, 74). The expeditions by Hind and Palliser were of importance, as their results recommended to open up the Northwest for agricultural use.

[25] Fred Shore contends this militia, also called Red River Expeditionary Force (RREF), "represented a will to violence that had not been seen before in the Canadian West" (2001, 75). Shore remarks "assaults, 'outrages' (a term used during the period to indicate sexual assaults or extremely violent assaults), murder, arson and assorted acts of mayhem were practiced on the Métis anytime they came near Fort Garry" (2001, 75).

[26] Notice the condescension behind the term *provisional government*.

Other evidence relating to the government's inability to properly address the Métis and Aboriginal title is the scrip system – this fraudulent system is seen by many as evidence that the government never wanted to settle Métis grievances. Scrip was introduced at a time when "threats, brawls, beatings and even death were the daily fare of the persecuted Métis (Sealey 1975, 93). It was supposed to entitle "the bearer to either a specified acreage of land or a sum of money which could be applied to the purchase of land" (Purich 1988, 107-108). However, immoral business practices, combined with a general sense of despair amongst many Métis left 90% of scrip certificates in the hands of bankers, lawyers, and merchants (Purich 1988, 117). The *Half-Breed Land Protection Act* was installed in 1873 to prevent the sale of Métis land to speculators; however, growing violence, rapid settlement of Manitoba and land fraud were used as methods to thwart the Métis from taking up their lands (Shore 2001, 76).

Stripped of the basis of their way of life, many Manitoba Métis left Manitoba and dispersed to the margins of the Canadian Prairies, a space that was to become too well known to them. In this manner the last Métis member of the Legislative Assembly left his office in 1878 – and, as Shore says, "the Nation was in retreat" (Shore 2001, 76; G. Friesen 1979). Many of these dispersing Métis settled in the northern and southern parts of what is today known as Saskatchewan. Purich notes, "between 1877 and 1883 the population of the Batoche – St. Laurent area swelled by 1,450 Metis migrants from Manitoba" (Purich 1988, 81). Often they did not only settle in already existing Métis communities but also founded new ones, like St. Louis. There they settled in their well-known system of river lots, which date back to the Red River area and their French – Canadian forefathers in Quebec.

It was not long before the policies of the *Dominion Lands Act*, implemented in 1872, reached the area around Batoche. This act established "a uniform policy for settlement in the west, [including] a homesteads policy and a survey system whereby the land was divided into one-mile squares" (Purich 1988, 82). Needless to say this system of land holdings did not agree with the river lots, but rather broke them up

(Dumont 1993, 11). In this manner it operated in favour of the rapidly arriving new settlers and the encroaching Canadian Pacific Railway.[27]

Yet the Métis were not the only group of people who felt John A. Macdonald's pressure to fulfil his dream of a "nation from sea to sea." As the CPR ate its way through the Prairies, the government, eager to extinguish the Indian title and open up the land, confined the Indigenous population to reserves. Treaties were signed and promises were broken. Although the water ran and the grass was still green, many First Nations, by the early 1880s, faced diseases and severe cuts in food rations (Purich 1988, 89). Feeling their life endangered by threats similar to those faced by the Métis – namely loss of land, rapid immigration from the East, and food shortages – a few of their leaders turned to Louis Riel.

Thus the mere but rightful assertion of Métis rights and First Nations treaty rights found its defeat in the 1885 Resistance, which began at Duck Lake on March 25 and ended at Batoche on May 12. Their greatest leader lost "at the end of a Canadian rope," the Métis after 1885 "found themselves branded as "rebels" and "traitors" and relegated to the "road allowances" of the Northwest (Shore 2001, 77).

Viewing the events that led to the Battle at Batoche in an alternate interpretation the fate of the Métis after 1885 seems to take on a new significance. Sociologist Don McLean and Métis activist Howard Adams were the first to suggest a conspiracy theory. Thus, Adams claims that the Northwest "Rebellion" was a "constructed plan by the federal government [in which Ottawa] would make certain concessions to the white residents of the Northwest, while at the same time allowing the Métis and Indian situation to aggravate itself to the point of desperation and hostility" (Adams 1975, 75). In Adams' eyes the war against the Métis was constructed in order to justify the sending of Canadian troops westward, thus securing the North-West Territories and the financially troubled CPR (Adams 1975, 75). Keith Goulet in the introduction to Don McLean's book *1885: Metis Rebellion or Government Conspiracy?*, also conjectures "that the Canadian government may have conspired the Metis into a state of armed rebellion" [which] "saved the CPR from bankruptcy, and the federal

[27] Also known as CPR.

Conservative government from political limbo, by uniting the West to the Canadian East in a tidal wave of patriotic fervor (sic)" (Don McLean 1985, 5). At this point in time the conspiracy theory has not been widely accepted by the public. However, it is important to note that if the theory indeed was fact and the government deliberately waged war against the Métis, the Métis' position in the land claims process would be drastically strengthened.

1885 – 1900 The Forgotten Years

Facing racial discrimination, and having lost the land and the buffalo – the two foundations of their existence – the Métis were pushed to the periphery of the Anglo- Protestant mind. Living in a state of Third World poverty on the margins of both First Nations and Euro-Canadian societies, the Métis were conveniently forgotten by a country to whose founding they contributed so significantly. The consequence of the blatant racism against Métis after 1885 can be seen in a comparison of the 1881 and 1901 census from the Northwest Territories, which shows a decrease of Métis and First Nations by 23,168 people (Don McLean 1987, 241). Many of those "missing" people escaped to the far north of Saskatchewan and Alberta. And as McLean writes, "others fled to the USA, while many who remained were reluctant to identify themselves as Metis" (Don McLean 1987, 241). Thus the denial of their heritage was to become a painful reality for many Métis and as the 20th century approached continued to eat itself through the generations to come.

1900 – 1950 The Road Allowance People

During the first half of the 20th century the Métis also became known as the "road allowance people." After the encroaching settlers chased most of them off their land many had no other choice than to squat on the road allowances of Canada's highways. There they lived under circumstances unbelievable to most people while the rest of Canada prospered.

1930 – 1960 Struggle and Rebirth of the Métis

The Great Depression that so immensely characterized the 1930s threatened this prosperity. The Métis however, experienced additional difficulties to survive, as the Alberta government "not only required them to

pay for hunting, trapping and fishing permits but had put restrictions on their freedom to fish throughout the year" (Harrison 1985, 94). As a consequence to these severe restrictions, many Métis engaged in illegal trapping to be able to feed their family. Maria Campbell vividly recalls her father being put in jail for illegal trapping (Campbell 1982, 54). In his six months absence the family barely survived. The vicious circle of poverty and starvation continues as the Métis were refused relief. Many of them were too poor to pay taxes and thus were denied relief money to help them over the winter.

It were these overwhelming natural and social problems in which Malcolm Norris and Jim Brady formed a Métis political movement in Alberta. In this manner the first annual convention of L'Association des Métis d'Alberta et les Territories au Nord-Ouest was held in 1932. During its meeting resolutions were passed on the issues of land, registration of trap lines, education and welfare (Harrison 1985, 97). A solution came in 1938 in the form of "colonies" in which Métis families could settle and engage in agriculture. Since many Métis were not accustomed to a life as farmers these colonies were seen with scepticism. Dobbin in his book *The One-And-A-Half Men*, however, remarks "the colonies meant a renewed opportunity to take part in the main stream economy of Canada" (Dobbin 1981, 67). Nonetheless, Jim Brady's doubt about the government's involvement in the colonies proved right: "The Metis could not rely exclusively on the state, or government, to assist them in their liberation struggle" (Dobbin 1981, 124). The 1950s then became a decade marked by political retreat and stagnation (1981, 183).

Resurgence 1960 – 1967

With the liberation movement of the 1960s many Métis began to reassess the wrongs that had been done to them. As "most Metis political and cultural reawakening began as an offshoot to First Nation's agitation for change (Shore 2001, 78), new interpretations of Métis history were produced. These alternate perspectives indicated that the Métis were more than "rebels." Thus the reconstruction of history marked the beginning of a changing Métis psyche, a psyche that for over one hundred years had been scarred by the perpetual iteration that Métis were to be ashamed of who

they are. Fred Shore cites the end of the period of resurgence and rebirth with the founding of the Manitoba Metis Foundation in 1967 (Shore 2001, 78). Through this foundation the Métis cultural and political voice found new expressions after being suppressed for almost a century.

National Reformulation 1967 – Present

With decolonization settling in the minds of the Métis, they slowly relearn their traditional customs (Shore 2001, 78). At this point it is noteworthy that not all Métis people slipped into the denial of their culture and identity. Some did not have the choice as their outward appearance gave away their heritage. Others resided in communities with a high Métis population where the unity of their people allowed them to peacefully practise their traditions. Again others secretly practised their traditions and customs. It is thanks so to those who resisted the genocidal machinery of assimilation that the Métis are able to reclaim their heritage today.

"You can win what once was lost" were the words that Gabriel Dumont and Louis Riel whispered on the battlefield of Batoche in 1885 (Batoche National Historic Site). After almost a century of being denied recognition as one of the three Aboriginal people in Canada, the Métis are on their way to materialize the words of their greatest leaders. *The Constitution Act of 1982* marked a milestone on the journey of winning back what once was lost. However, the constitutional recognition of the Métis as a distinct people in the Canadian mosaic was followed by the question "Who *are* the Métis in Section 35 of the 1982 Constitution Act?"[28] The Métis themselves, said Norman Fleury in a workshop on the Michif language, know who they are (Norman Fleury, Regina, 22 October 2005). Fleury continues and says that the confusion lies on the side of the non-Métis population.

Because the answer to this question entails great legal consequences for whoever is considered Métis, a sole definition seems impossible. The importance of a Canada wide definition, however, is shown by the following quotation from an article published by the Métis National Council: "a

[28] What the *Constitution Act of 1982* did not provide was a definition of who the Canadian government considers to be Métis.

national definition would help to get recognition of our rights, such as hunting, trapping and fishing rights" (Métis National Council 1992, 2).[29] To achieve recognition of Métis rights the MNC attempted to define the people it represents during the discussions of a constitutional reform in 1992. As part of the *Metis Nation Accord* the Métis organisation offered an exclusive rather than inclusive definition that identifies a Métis as:

> [...] an Aboriginal person who self-identifies as Metis, who is distinct from Indian and Inuit and is a descendant of those Metis who received or were entitled to receive land grants and/or scrip under the provisions of the Manitoba Act 1870, or the Dominion Lands Act, as enacted from time to time. (Métis National Council 1992, 4)

To be recognized as a Métis under this definition, a person has to fulfil all of the three criteria. This attempt, however, excludes those who self-identity as Métis but whose ancestors were prevented from receiving land grants and/or scrip.[30]

The rejection of the *Charlottetown Accord* by the Canadian public on October 26, 1992 – which included the *Metis Nation Accord* – induced the MNC to formulate a definition that forgoes the land grants and/or scrip taking, focusing instead on the "Historic Métis Nation Homeland."[31] Thus the national definition of Métis, adopted on September 27, 2002 by the Métis National Council, describes a Métis person as someone "who self-identifies as Métis, is of historic[32] Métis Nation[33] ancestry, is distinct from other Aboriginal peoples[34] and is accepted by the Métis Nation" (Métis National Council). This definition then refers to the descendents of the Métis who once lived in Western Canada. Recently, the MNC also accepted "Métis individuals and communities in British Columbia and Ontario" as part of the

[29] Also known as the MNC.

[30] The Dominion government introduced the scrip system after the Red River resistance of 1869/70. The scrip was supposed to entitle "the bearer to either specified acreage of land or a sum of money which could be applied to the purchase of land" (Purich 1988, 107-108). However, immoral business practices, combined with a general sense of despair amongst many Métis left 90% of scrip certificates in the hands of the bankers, lawyers, and merchants (Purich 1988, 117).

[31] "Historic Métis Nation Homeland" means the area of land in west central North America used and occupied as the traditional territory of the Métis or Half-Breeds as they were then known (Métis National Council).

[32] "Historic Métis Nation" means the Aboriginal people then known as Métis or Half-Breeds who resided in Historic Métis Nation Homeland.

[33] "Métis Nation" means the Aboriginal people descended from the Historic Métis Nation, which is now comprised of all Métis Nation citizens and is one of the "Aboriginal peoples of Canada" within s.35 of the Constitution Act of 1982.

[34] "Distinct from other Aboriginal Peoples" means distinct for cultural and nationhood purposes.

Métis Nation ("Métis"). The MNC now estimates its population to be between 350,000 and 400,000 Métis Nation citizens.

Chapter Three

(Un)heard:
"The Great White way could silence us all"

The title of this chapter, "(Un)heard," describes the plight the Métis and many Aboriginal people find themselves in as they enter the new century. It is a time of fundamental loss, since many of the Aboriginal languages are at the verge of extinction. Within the next few generations only three of the rich and diverse Aboriginal languages will survive (Johnston 1998, 99). The remaining fifty, including Michif, will forever be unheard; they are in Basil Johnston's words "one generation from extinction" (99). In many Aboriginal communities Elders take their language to their graves, as the next generation functions in English only.[35] Because language is an instrument of communication and a transmitter of culture, its loss is fatal to every affected community.

Simultaneously to losing their language to eternal silence, the Métis and other Aboriginal people also face the loss of their orally transmitted stories. Consequently, the parentheses that enclose the prefix "–un" in this chapter's title symbolize the dual possibilities of preserving these oral stories or forever silencing them. In his online article "When the Stories Disappear, Our People Will Disappear: Notes On Language and Contemporary Literature," Peter Bakker points out that through the Oral Tradition "a world view and a value system are transmitted to younger generations" (Peter Bakker 2003, 3). Thus it is not surprising that oral

[35] Exceptions are to be found in some Inuit, Cree and Anishinaubae communities. Johnston estimates their survival for a few more generations (Johnston 1998, 99).

stories are considered by many Elders to be the "backbone of their culture" (3). The loss of stories means the spiritual death of a people; or in the words of one Cree Elder: "If our stories disappear, our people also disappear" (3). In order to prevent oral stories as well as their message from becoming unheard, many Aboriginal people are now writing them down. In doing so they have to make a limbo between creating and/or killing a story.

With Aboriginal languages and the Oral Tradition in jeopardy, Marilyn Dumont's warning "the Great White way could silence us all" rings true (Dumont 1996, 54). Because the machinery of assimilation, as she says, "had its hand over my mouth since my first day of school" (54), Dumont and many other Métis today are removed from the Michif language.[36] Hence, the possibility of using Michif as a language to further ideas of resistance and decolonization has become limited. Instead, Métis authors and poets, like Maria Campbell, have shifted their attention to the colonizer's language as they re-invent it and turn it into a tool of decolonization. This chapter therefore, will briefly look into the challenges oral stories face, as well as examine language in the context of decolonization, before analyzing Maria Campbell's language use in "Jacob."

3.1. Language and the Oral Tradition in the Context of Decolonization

3.1.1. "Stories grow us. Grow us into who we are":[37] The Oral Tradition and its Challenges

As pointed out in the introduction to this chapter, the Oral Tradition and Aboriginal languages face similar challenges: fifty languages and many oral stories will soon be unheard.[38] In order to keep a vital part of Aboriginal culture alive and prevent further cultural alienation, many authors, writers

[36] This state of being removed from the Michif language is even truer for the readers of Métis literature.

[37] This quotation is taken from Fyre Jean Graveline's *Healing Wounded Hearts*.

[38] As I am going to discuss the discrepancy between creating and/or killing an oral story when fixing it on a white page, I would like to refrain from going into great detail about the role of the Oral Tradition in Aboriginal cultures. This much needs to be said: The Oral Tradition is as old as the first inhabitants of Turtle Island. From Time Immortal Aboriginal people have learned who they are and where they belong through oral stories. Because of the fragility of the Oral Tradition, Hartmut Lutz calls its transmission of valuable knowledge "a very vulnerable existence" (Lutz 1995, 79).

and educators of First Nations, Métis, Inuit, and non-Aboriginal ancestry have begun to write down or record stories from the Oral Tradition.[39] In 1995 Maria Campbell published *Stories of the Road Allowance People,* a collection of Métis stories that celebrates Métis culture and heritage. However, apart from the act of cultural preservation, which has become increasingly important, Campbell also has to face the question: "What happens to the oral story when it shifts from speech to writing?"

In a lecture at the University of Regina in March 2005, Campbell answered this question bluntly stating this shift away from the oral "kills them [the oral stories]" (*New Breed* 2005, 25). She continued by saying "once in print, the oral story is dead because it can no longer be passed on orally" (25). The oral transmission of a story from one generation to the next is, however, a fundamental aspect of the Oral Tradition. Thus when fixed onto a book page the story is silenced; its articulation shifts from the oral to the written, from listening to reading. Consequently, the performance of a storytelling event is reduced to the single and individual act of reading. This means that the purpose for people to come together, to eat, to laugh, to watch, to talk, and to listen, is replaced by the solitary act of either reading or listening. In a very pragmatic way one could argue that through writing down oral stories the individual is privileged over the community, silence is privileged over sound and noise, and the written word is privileged over the spoken.

Elsie Mather calls the privileging of silence over noise and the written word over the spoken word "a necessary monster" (1995, 20). In the age of literacy it becomes more and more necessary to write stories down and preserve the Oral Tradition for future generations. Mather also claims that as the field of child education becomes increasingly dependent on a learning model that uses the written word, it becomes indispensable to also write

[39] Apart from Maria Campbell and Joe Welsh, Harry Robinson from the Okanagan Nation in British Columbia is another well-known example of how Aboriginal people attempt to preserve their rich Oral Tradition. He has, however, been criticised on various occasions for having allowed the stories to be published through the hands of the "white, middle-class female," Wendy Wickwire (Robinson and Wickwire 1989, 16). Robert Dale Parker calls the outside world's interest in Native American (Aboriginal) story telling "a nostalgically recovered orality" (Parker 2003, 80). Thus, he laments the serious problems a canonical practise of translation and/or an interpretation of narrative orality have caused over the last few decades (81). These problems become apparent in Gerald Vizenor's book *Dead Voices*, in which he depicts the discrepancy between federal reservations, as a place where people got robbed off their culture, and the cities, where cultural appropriation is practised in the form of published Native American oral stories (Vizenor 1992, 136). Both Vizenor and Parker find it important that Aboriginal communities themselves begin to preserve their oral stories.

down oral stories. In doing so she hopes to bridge the gap “between our students and the past [Elders]” (20). This dependency nevertheless is a “monster” in her eyes, because of the distance it creates between the information giver and the receiver (20). Despite this distance it is important that people like Maria Campbell engage in the process of cultural preservation to stop any further loss of Aboriginal Oral Tradition. By writing down orally transmitted stories of her Métis heritage Campbell resists the machinery of assimilation and demonstrates an act of decolonization.

Furthermore, Kimberly Blaeser argues “that oral stories written down harbour an absence which is really a presence, inviting or alluding to a greater political message” (Blaeser 1999, 53). Consequently, the creative act of writing down oral stories extends the mere desire of cultural preservation, as the shift from the oral to the written itself becomes an act of decolonization. As Blaeser says, by consciously challenging “the ‘logic’ of English in its basic structures, they [Native authors] also challenge and subvert the acceptable literary forms” (60). The greater political message that Blaeser is thus encouraging is resistance on a literary and linguistic level. By appropriating the Standard English and challenging literary conventions, writers like Maria Campbell resist the dominant discourse. Moreover the written down oral stories become a medium by which Campbell can express the injustices done to the Métis. Thus, in stories like “Jacob” the narrative voice of the storyteller informs his readers about the effects of the residential school system. In this manner writing down oral stories becomes a political act rather than an act of “killing” as Campbell herself suggests.

3.1.2. Language in the Context of Colonization

Language is a tool of communication. Through language we manifest our worldview, our thoughts, our feelings and our emotions. Hence, as Johnston says, “language is crucial, […] language is essential” (Johnston 1998, 100-101). Without a language of our own we do not “only lose the ability to express the simplest of daily sentiments […] but […] can no longer understand the ideas, concepts, insights, attitudes, rituals, ceremonies, institutions brought into being by their ancestors” (99-100). Language then

becomes the essence of our sense of well-being. It is this very ability to communicate with words that distinguishes humankind from the animal kingdom. Language also enables people to express both their collective and individual identities. In our desire to belong to a collective we can adjust our use of language and thus converge. Divergence from the hegemonic language, however, can become a way to express differing beliefs or individual identity (Peter Bakker, Regina, 22 October 2005). Hence, the ability to use language is a tool with which we display power and identity.

Because language takes on such a decisive role, it is not surprising that, as Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin say, "the colonial process itself begins in language" (2004, 283). They argue as well that the assertion of power over language by the colonizer was and still is the most forceful means of control. In their book *The Empire Writes Back,* Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin contend that language becomes the vehicle through which concepts like 'truth,' 'order,' and 'reality' are established (1989, 7); by forcing the language of the oppressor with its concepts of truth and reality on a people, the oppressed become literally unheard. In Canada, missionaries and residential schools were colonial institutions in which Aboriginal languages were silenced. The aim of these imperial institutions was to slap and beat the "Indian" language out of their wards – the physical and verbal abuse caused Aboriginal children to "disparag[e] until in too many the language was shamed into silence and disuse" (Johnston 1998, 104).

Although this silence is hanging like a dark veil over Canada, many Aboriginal academics, writers, and poets have begun to re-invent the "enemy's" language. In order to re-invent the language of the centre, they appropriate and abrogate it. Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin define the appropriation and reconstitution of the imperial language as "the process of capturing and remoulding the language to new usages to mark a separation from the site of colonial privilege" (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 1989, 38). They quote from Raja Rao who calls appropriation the attempt to "convey in a language that is not one's own the spirit that is one's own" (Ashcroft, Griffiths, Tiffin 1989, 38-39). This appropriation of an imposed speech "is essentially a subversive strategy," say Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, because its alteration to the needs of decolonization manifests a greater resistance

against the power of the standard language (2004, 284).[40] In this manner the colonized people appropriate strategies of the colonizer – for example to exercise control through language use – to resist the imperial centre. Stefanie von Berg explains that in the process of altering the standard language to the needs of decolonization, English becomes english (von Berg 2001, 46). This non-capitalized english, says Chinua Achebe "bear[s] the burden of one's own cultural experience" (Ashcroft, Griffiths, Tiffin 1989, 38-39). Consequently, it is this altered english through which the colonized and/or decolonized people express their cultural experiences and their resistance.[41]

Thus, re-inventing the language of the centre becomes an "ethnographic tool with which a 'world' can be textually constructed" (Ashcroft, Griffiths, Tiffin 1989, 42). This construction includes an abrogation or denial of English, say Ashcroft, Griffiths, Tiffin. They continue by defining abrogation as the "rejection of the metropolitan power over the means of communication" (1989, 38). By abrogating English, authors like Maria Campbell not only reject the meaning of words but also the worldview perpetuated through Standard English. Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, however, warn that abrogation without the process of appropriation may lead to a simple reversal of colonialism, in which one assumes power and privilege over the other.

In order to appropriate and abrogate the English language one has to become alert to its ideology. Bird and Harjo argue that only when the writer is aware of the language's ideology, s/he can begin to manipulate its vocabulary and hence dismantle the power it conveys (Bird and Harjo, 24). Métis writer and educator Fyre Jean Graveline concurs by writing: "Language can be an EnemyWeapon. / used to perpetuate Racism. and Hate. / I must bend and shape language to make Truth. / recreate new ways. to Wordsmith. to Heal. Grow. Love" (Graveline 2004, 16-17). Janice Acoose, another Métis poet and educator, considers writing in the colonizer's language to be liberating as it enables her to recreate and

[40] Applying this to Maria Campbell's *Stories of the Road Allowance People* one can very well say that through the appropriation of Standard English, Campbell privileges the oral over the written and the non-standard over the Standard English. For a more detailed analysis of Campbell's language use see the following subchapter (3.2.).

[41] I purposely use "colonized and/or decolonized people" here as I find the transition from one state to the other a blurry and long process.

rename both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, thus causing power to shift between the colonizer and the colonized (Acoose 1995, 12). Emma LaRocque calls the relationship of a Native writer to the English (or French) language a dialectical relationship, comparing English to "an ideological onion, whose stinging layers of racism and sexism must be peeled away before it can be fully enjoyed" (1990, xx). The English language can only be successfully appropriated and abrogated – thus perpetuating resistance – if one is aware of its ideology, says LaRocque.

3.2. Language use in Maria Campbell's "Jacob"

One example of how Standard English is appropriated as a means of decolonization is Maria Campbell's "Jacob," which was published in 1995 in the story collection *Stories of the Road Allowance People*. In an arduous eighteen-year journey, Campbell translated the stories from Michif into English, only to realize once she had done so that "there was something missing" (Lutz 1991, 49). A Métis Elder explained to her that "'you have trouble with the English language, [...] because the language has no Mother'" (Campbell "Interview", 49). What he meant by this is that the English does not have the capacity to eloquently and genuinely express Métis culture. In order to return "the Mother" to the English language, Campbell gave her stories the voice of her father and her community. It is in this "broken English" or "village English" that she does the stories and her people justice. "But do not mistake them [accents and grammar of the narratives] for unsophistication" reverberates Ron Marken's warning rightfully in the "Foreword" of the collection. Because it is the rhythm and vocabulary that "coil[s] and spin[s] lightly around the lives and voices of a complex and courageous people" (Campbell 1995, 4). Thus, the story collection is a celebration of Métis culture and heritage.

Due to her deliberate employment of transliteration, gender, negation, code switching, reduplication, the restoration of Métis names, and punctuation, Campbell challenges Standard English and powerfully decolonizes and demythologises Métis cultural identity.

"Jacob" is a story of hope and the belief in one's cultural identity. After having been to residential school for twelve years, Jacob has been stripped off his language and the connection to his people.[42] Only with the help of a strong community does the young man relearn his language and his people's way of life. In this manner the narrative poem depicts the decolonizing process in microcosm, as it teaches Métis and other Aboriginal communities how to deal with the effects of the residential school system. "Jacob" teaches them to be strong and patient, and to help those who have been forcefully taken away to become full members of their community again. Children in these residential schools, often hundreds of kilometres away from their communities, were given new names and were forbidden to speak their native language. What happened after their return is best described as a painful process of reintegration into their community coupled with a desperate search for identity.[43]

Transliteration

The voice of the community plays a significant role in Campbell's stories. What gives these stories their special rhythm and melody is the fact that Campbell wrote them down in the way her father and her family used to speak English. The act of fixing this so-called "village English" on a page is termed transliteration by linguistics and described as changing letters and words of one alphabet into the corresponding characters of another alphabet (Gingell, Saskatoon, 22. September 2003). To Campbell transliteration epitomizes more than the transcription of her father's speech onto a page. It is rather a means by which she resists the standardized orthography and phonology. Words like "granmudder" and "granfawder" (86), as well as phrases like "dat ole lady" (89) and "an dah Indians dey don gots many horses" (90) are good examples of transliteration. By writing

[42] It is significant to mention that some historians deny the Métis' attendance in the residential school system (Logan 2001, 3). In doing so they skew the picture of Canadian history. Apart from the denial on the part of historians the government has done its portion as well. Tricia Logan contends, "some government records on Residential Schools are often unreliable or non-existent at times" (2001, 2). The Métis have too long been ignored and forgotten in Canadian history and their battle for recognition continues today.

[43] The main character's reintegration is unfortunately an exception. There are too many examples in literature where colonial institutions like the residential schools or the foster homes (sixties scoop) have caused considerable physical, psychological and social damages. Two literary examples in which Native writers digest their own cultural dislocations are Richard Wagamese's *For Joshua* and Tomson Highway's *Kiss of the Fur Queen*. Both novels describe the author's feelings of alienation from both their Aboriginal culture as well as mainstream society after being released from either residential school (Tomson Highway) or foster care (Richard Wagamese).

“dah” and “dey,” instead of “the” and “they,” Campbell refuses to subvert to Standard English orthography, which is followed by her rejection of Standard pronunciation. Moreover, she makes the readers of the story her associates; as the readers read, they too, resist the standard language.

Apart from rejecting standardized orthography and phonology, the transliterated style privileges the oral over the written, as it encourages the reader to read the stories out loud. In fact, Ron Marken demands Campbell’s stories to be read out loud. In the foreword to *SRAP* he writes, we should “read them with ours (sic) ears first” (in Campbell 1995, 5). To prioritise the ears over the eyes challenges the dominant discourse, which values the written over the oral and dismisses anything that is not written down as inadequate. Susan Gingell in her article “When X Equals Zero: The Politics of Voice in First Peoples Poetry by Women” asserts that transliteration also counteracts “Western superiority and the privileging of the alleged accent-free grapholectal English, over those varieties that, in the scheme of things, are pejorated as mere dialects” (Gingell 1998, 458).

A further consequence of reading “Jacob” out loud is a subversion of the concept of the western reader, who is seldom granted participation that extends the sole act of reading. However, by following what Ron Marken demands, the reader also becomes the listener, as s/he begins to listen to the story s/he is reading. The reader then experiences a development – s/he transforms from the position of being only the reader to a state of being reader and listener. This fusion of reader and listener, caused by the transliterated style the stories are written in, epitomizes what Susan Gingell calls a “culturally hybrid form” (Gingell 1998, 457; Hymes 1981). Thus, in combining the western tradition of writing with the Aboriginal Oral Tradition, Campbell creates a stylistic métissage (457).

Another effect that is reached by reading the stories out loud is the defeat of silence. As established in the introduction to this chapter, with every passing generation more and more Aboriginal voices become unheard. Also, centuries of oppression and infused inferiority have caused many Aboriginal communities to become quiet. Transliteration and its demand for audibility counteracts this silence. By reading “Jacob” aloud, the voices of Campbell’s community are no longer *unheard*. Instead the voices

of the people she has grown to love become *heard*. Consequently, Campbell privileges the oral over the written and the voice over silence.

Bringing alive through these stories the voices of her community, Campbell resists the machinery of assimilation. By collecting and publishing some stories of the Métis people, Campbell makes them available to future generations – for generations of both Métis and non-Métis people. In doing so she counteracts a process aptly observed by Gabriel Dumont: "When a dominant culture demands cultural conformity, it simultaneously sets out to erase cultural difference" (1993, 17). In the age of assimilation and conformity, *SRAP* is a celebration of difference; a celebration of Métis heritage, and their tradition of handing down knowledge orally from one generation to the next does in no case diminish their teachings as "hocus-pocus."[44]

Grammatical Gender

Campbell's use of the male pronoun can be seen as another marker of decolonization. Her sole employment of the English male pronoun "he" and "his" symbolizes how, as Susan Gingell says, "the gender politics of English imperial culture have overturned the balance of male and female principles central to First Peoples cosmologies" (Gingell 1998, 460). Gingell continues by quoting Tomson Highway who explains, "The most explicit distinguishing feature between the North American Indian languages and the European languages is that in Indian (e.g. Cree, Ojibway), there is no gender. […] the male-female-neuter hierarchy is entirely absent" (Highway 1989, 12; Gingell 1998, 460). Although the absence of a male-female grammatical distinguisher does not negate a gender hierarchy, it is known that the gender roles imposed by the colonizer disrupted pre-contact gender modes.

In the beginning of the narrative poem, the replacement of the male pronoun for the female pronoun causes some bewilderment to the

[44] In her chapter "Oral Literatures," Penny Petrone emphasises the inviolableness of the spoken word by claiming, "through [the] sacred power of the *word*, aboriginals sought to shape and control the cosmic forces that governed their lives" (10). She insists that the power of the spoken word shall not be dismissed as "hocus-pocus" (10). Mary Bighead adds that the power of stories lies in their ability to guide and teach the younger generation how to live a meaningful existence (Mary Bighead 1996, 28).

reader/listener who is used to hearing European languages.[45] Although the storyteller talks about his "granmudder" (86) he assigns her the English male pronoun "he": "Mistupuch *he* was my *granmudder*" (italics mine) 86).[46] By using this aspect of the Cree language, Campbell marginalizes non-Cree readers/listeners, as she puts them in the position of the colonized. For a short moment, the non-Cree readers/listeners experience, through Campbell's use of language, what it means to be at the mercy of a completely different worldview. They witness how language on one hand reflects a certain worldview and how language on the other hand has the ability to marginalize anyone not accustomed to that particular language. The difference between the context of reading "Jacob" and the context of colonialism then is that the non-Cree readers/listeners have the choice to return to their "world" after having read the story – a choice that the colonizer denied Aboriginal people. Through the residential school system, for example, English and the worldview that comes with it was forced on the Métis and other Aboriginal people. Since the ideology of English differs considerably from the ideology of Aboriginal languages, Aboriginal people were unable to fully communicate in the colonizer's language. This partial and imposed inability to participate in the speech of the imperial centre creates a marginalization of Aboriginal people. Campbell reverses this experience of marginalization through her language use by limiting the non-Cree speaker's full participation in the story.

Campbell may cause this confusion not only to marginalize the non-Cree reader/listener but also to dismantle imperial gender politics. In doing so she appropriates the colonizer's patriarchal worldview and uses it against him. When she writes "He doctor everybody dat come to him / an he birt all dah babies too" (86) it first appears as if the doctor who helps to "birt all dah babies" is a man. In past patriarchal societies, however, the process surrounding birth was a female sphere. This male doctor therefore is

[45] Due to the discussion above I would like to call the reader of *SRAP* also the listener. By this I wish to underline the fact that the stories are what Thomas King calls interfusional literature, meaning that they are "a blending of oral literature and written literature" (King 1997, 244; Gingell 1998, 458). Written before Campbell's publication of *SRAP* in 1995, King calls Harry Robinson's *Write It on Your Heart* "the only complete example we have of interfusional literature" (244). Reason being "the patterns, metaphors, structures as well as the themes and characters come primarily from oral literature" (244). Gingell however, sees in King's analysis of Harrison a recognition of "Campbell's achievements also" (1998, 458).

[46] I use the male pronoun for the storyteller because Maria Campbell in a lecture explained that the story belongs to a male Métis Elder (Campbell "Jacob" 2005).

intruding into an area which until then had been ascribed to women. Through this reversed colonial experience, Campbell exemplifies how colonial gender roles have disrupted Aboriginal gender roles. When the colonizer forced his gender politics on the colonized, Aboriginal societies dramatically changed.[47] The confusion (not so much the pain) the latter must have endured is reversed in "Jacob" and forced on the non-Cree speaker.

In the line "He marry my granfawder" (86) the degree of confusion is taken to another level. It now seems as if two men have married. From the context of the story the reader/listener knows that this is not the case, that it is in fact the grandfather who marries the grandmother. For a brief moment, however, the use of the male pronoun leaves the reader/listener to assume that two men have married. Homosexuality, however, was considered to be a sin and thus was offensive to both English and French imperialists. Campbell uses the colonizer's homophobia and employs it against him. The homosexuality and/or same sex marriage which is suggested here between the lines is only caused by the colonizer. Due to his patriarchal society and male dominated language, which were both forced on Aboriginal communities, Aboriginal people were left to deal with the stinging layers of racism and sexism. Consequently, the perplexity caused by the masculine pronoun in "Jacob" can be seen as a direct result of colonialism. Campbell consciously employs the pronoun as a tool of decolonization by making the reader/listener aware of the imperialist's male dominated hierarchy. In this manner, the replacement of the female pronoun by the male pronoun can be seen as an act of decolonization through which Campbell dismantles imperial gender politics.

Grammatical Negation

[47] This is not to say that all Aboriginal people had equal gender roles. It is important to keep in mind that colonialism meant the destruction of existing social policies in order to "maintain or extend control over other areas or peoples" ("colonialism"). Campbell, however, through the voice of the storyteller, asserts:

> If dah woman he work
> den dah man he help him an if dah man he work
> dah woman he help.
> You never heerd peoples fighting over whose he was
> dey all know what dey got to do to stay alive. (87)

Through this example it becomes apparent that the Métis had flexible gender and work roles and that the main goal was survival.

As argued in the previous paragraphs, Campbell resists Standard English in its orthography and phonology by privileging the oral over the written. Apart from the transliterated style negation in its grammatical sense it becomes another important vehicle in the process of valuing the ear over the eye and in the process of decolonization. Both can be best seen in Campbell's use of the word "can," which appears eighteen times in "Jacob." In eleven of eighteen appearances, "can" in its approving form causes the reader/listener some confusion. From the context of the story the reader/listener knows that "can" should in fact be "can't." "He can come home you know" (90) actually means "he *cannot* come home" because, as the stories continues, "dah school he was damn near two hundred miles / away" (90). In this manner the voice of the storyteller lifts the confusion. The reader/listener comes to understand that Jacob is sent to a residential school that is almost two hundred miles away from his home, making it clear that the boy *cannot* visit his parents. After this deliberate use of "can" instead of "can't," the reader/listener realizes that not every word carries the meaning it appears to carry. The abrogation of the meaning of "can" demands the reader/listener to be more alert and read/listen more carefully. With this increased sensitivity in her readers/listeners, Campbell achieves a decolonizing effect, directly attacking non-Aboriginal people's inability to listen to and value what Aboriginal people have to say (Gingell 1998, 459).

Campbell's use of negation also serves to subvert Eurocentric beliefs in the one or the other reader/listener.[48] She is aware of the English language and the way in which English can "construct difference, separation and absence from the metropolitan norm" (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 1989, 42). Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin contend "the ground on which such construction is based is an abrogation of the essentialist assumptions of that norm and a dismantling of its imperialist centralism" (1989, 42). After becoming aware that in "Jacob" the word "can" may also mean "can't," the reader/listener assumes that this must be the case in the following line also: "He can talk his own language" (92). Years of punishment and

[48] The glossary in *Expressions in Canadian Native Studies* describes Eurocentricism "as a label for all the beliefs that presume superiority of Europeans over non-Europeans" ("Eurocentricism"). Adams calls Eurocentricism the inferiorization of Aboriginal people (1999, 20).

suffering have caused Jacob to forget his language. Calling into memory Basil Johnston's words on how the "Indian" language was beaten out of Aboriginal children, the reader/listener is quick to assume that "he can talk his language" must actually mean "he can't talk his own language." Once again Campbell is playing with the reader/listener's assumptions. It might be true that Jacob, after returning from residential school, was not able to utter a single word in the language of his people. Due to his strong community, however, Jacob has not only re-learned his language but has also been taught "how to make an Indian living" (92). By deliberately muddying the meaning of "can," Campbell obliges the reader/listener to not readily assume that even though residential school beat the language out of Jacob, he will not be able to relearn it. Thus Campbell teaches the reader/listener to question the superiority proclaimed by Eurocentric institutions like the residential schools.

At the same time Jacob and his strong community depict a microcosmic version of decolonization, comprising aspects of what Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin call "nativism" – "the desire to return to indigenous practices and cultural forms as they existed in pre-colonial society" (1998, 159). In reintegrating Jacob and allowing him to become part of their centre again, "dah people" (93) work against the forces of the colonizer. While the colonizer tried to divide and conquer their community, "dah people" remained united, overcoming what Howard Adams in his book *Prison of Grass* decries as "centuries of hidden hatred [which] have often been directed inwards against fellow natives in form of beatings, stabbings and shootings" (Adams 1989, 166). Adams claims that this has to change, that "hostility and violence must be directed outwards […], against the external forces that continuously oppress" Aboriginal people in Canada (166). Jacob's community knows that and proudly reinstils within him his Métis heritage. United they try "dah very bes dey can" (92) to impede the priest from taking another generation of Métis off to be "civilized" in the residential school.

Apart from the act of decolonization, the use of "can" instead of "can't" serves to remind the reader/listener of the origin of "Jacob" (and the remaining stories in Campbell's *SRAP*), which lies in the Oral Tradition. Susan Gingell suggests "the absent *t*, which would produce the negative

can't, will be understood from the likely dwelling on the terminal *n* of *can* here and the tone of and emphasis on the word" (Gingell 1998, 459). Thus a phonological negation is reached when the *n* in *can* is stressed.[49] This is only possible in an oral performance, in which Gingell argues the negative *can't* "may well be accompanied by a head shake" (1998, 459). In its written form *SRAP* is missing the aspect of oral performance. With this absence Campbell reminds the reader/listener of the importance of the Oral Tradition. In doing so she adapts the written stories to their oral origin, and thus withstands the standardized orthography. The reader/listener is constantly required to cautiously re-think what s/he is reading in order to discover when "can" means "can" and when it means "can't."

Code Switching

Another powerful aspect of Campbell's language use is code switching, which Appel and Muysken define as the "use of grammar and lexicon of not just one language" (1990, 117). Gingell applies this definition to *Stories of the Road Allowance People* and asserts that Campbell is "weaving Cree into predominantly English texts" (Gingell 1998, 452). The incorporation of Cree into the colonizer's language takes on the shape of single words or entire sentences and is a deliberate step towards decolonization. Appel and Muysken define six functions of code switching, one of which is found in Campbell's stories.[50] The directive function, they argue, involves the hearer directly as it is either inclusive or exclusive (1990, 119); in other words the partial use of another language can exclude certain people from a portion of a conversation (or in this case, a story) but also include other people by using their language. In "Jacob" the insertion of Cree into English serves both to include as well as to exclude reader/listeners. Campbell's deliberate use of Cree words and names marginalizes the non-Cree speaker while simultaneously centralizing the reader/listener who understands Cree. Thus

[49] The same applies to Campbell's use of "don" (e.g. 87; 88; 90; 92) instead of "don't." Again the reader/listener is reminded that what s/he reads and listens to is a transcript of an oral story. Campbell therewith gives priority to listening over reading.

[50] Others are the referential function, which "involves lack of knowledge of one language or lack of facility in that language on a certain subject" (118), expressive function, though which "speakers emphasis a mixed identity through the use of two languages in the same discourse" (119), phatic function, which "indicate a change in tone of the conversation" (119), metalinguistic function, which is "used to comment directly or indirectly on the language involved" (120), and lastly the poetic function which "involves switched puns, jokes" (120).

it can be said that *SRAP* conceptualizes the idea of "writing back" and "writing home."

Although code switching in "Jacob" is not the story's dominant aspect it does exemplify how switching between two languages affects the audience. Aside from two names, Campbell leaves only one sentence in the story involving Jacob untranslated. In a highly emotional moment, when "an ole woman" (98) tries to catch Jacob's attention in order to tell him that he has been married to his own sister, the woman says: "Pay api noosim" (98). This exclamation is enclosed within the sentence by the transliterated English text. For the reader/listener unaccustomed to Cree, this insertion of a foreign language causes a feeling of being excluded, as s/he must guess the meaning behind "Pay api noosim" (98). The one or the other reader/listener might also assume that the following sentence, "'Come an sit down my grandchild I mus talk to you. […]'" (98), is a translation of "Pay api noosim." Either way, the non-Cree speaking audience cannot be entirely sure about the meaning of the old woman's exclamation.

This gap in the comprehension of the story puts the non-Cree speaker in a marginalized position.[51] As s/he cannot completely follow the narrative poem, s/he becomes passive and is no longer able to fully participate in the reading/listening of the story. The code switching causes the reader/listener who does not understand Cree to become dependent on the storyteller. Only the storyteller can decide whether to fill the non-Cree speaker in or to leave her/him ignorant, placing the storyteller in the position whereby s/he has control over the story's meaning. And it is in this moment of uncertainty that Campbell plays with the colonizer's stereotypes of the colonized. The colonizer's belief in his or her own superiority and omniscience and consequently his or her conviction of the colonized's ignorance, is chastised. The colonizer is reminded of the opposite, as s/he is now the marginalized and the one left in ignorance. As a result the old woman's request "Pay api noosim" (98) serves to exclude the colonizer rather than include her/him.

[51] Heather Stretch points out that the "dialect" the stories are written in keeps the reader, especially the non-Native reader, at a distance, turning him/her into an eavesdropper (1999, 115). I do concur that transliteration and code switching result in a different treatment of Native and non-Native reader. However, to assume that the non-Native reader engages in something secretive and forbidding, like eavesdropping, might be misleading. Instead, code switching includes Cree speakers, while excluding non-Cree speakers.

This act of excluding then epitomizes what has become known as “writing back,” as Campbell directly responds to the colonizer.

Gingell, on the other hand, ascribes a further function to code switching. In her article “When X Equals Zero” she writes: “Such lexical choices may well be grounded in the sense that the most intimate and sacred aspects of that life cannot be adequately represented in a language that has been a medium in which that life has been so often pejorated and profaned” (Gingell 1998, 453). Despite the process of appropriating and abrogating the English language and turning it into english, English does not have the capacity to eloquently express emotionally charged moments. “Pay api noosim” (98) could be one of those moments. It is the old woman’s task to tell Jacob that he has been married to his sister and has started a family with his own blood relative. Thus she becomes the bearer of a message so devastating that Jacob’s wife/sister commits suicide. “Pay api noosim” might express in three words what the English language cannot deliver in an entire sentence. Campbell therewith inserted her own language to do this moment justice and to express the high emotionality.

What so far has been analysed as “writing back” to the colonizer and the empire is a justified analysis. However, it over stresses the unbalanced and distorted relationship between the centre and the margin and ignores the aspect of “writing home.” Stefanie von Berg therefore contends that instead of adapting to the Standard English, Aboriginal writers should begin to define their own theory and articulate their own code (2001, 48). In doing so they do not address the centre – what Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin define as “writing back” – but begin to address their own people; they “write home” (48). “Pay api noosim” (98) is Campbell’s way of writing home, as it directly includes the Cree speaking audience. Through the sound of familiar words they are made part of the story telling process, in contrast to the non-Cree speaking reader/listener who is excluded by means of lexicon.

In this manner, code switching has a decolonizing effect: the interruption of a predominantly English text by the Cree lexicon can be seen as the symbolic interruption of the circle of internalized shame of speaking Cree or any other Aboriginal language. Centuries of dehumanization and degradation have taught Aboriginal people to be ashamed of their language,

culture and identity. As a result many voices have become unheard. Campbell breaks this silence by letting the voices of her past become alive again. Hence the switching between codes reminds the colonized of the value of those entities. Moreover Campbell's code switching compels the colonized to remember their identity and heritage by reinstalling pride and confidence in that very same language. As Chinua Achebe explains, it is the writer's responsibility to his own society to lift the embarrassment of speaking the native language (Walder 1998, 11).

Reduplication of the Grammatical Subject

The writer's responsibility to lift the shame of speaking one's Native tongue can extend beyond the insertion of a few Cree words. In the case of *SRAP* Campbell also employs a grammatical feature, which exists in both the French and the Cree language, namely the duplication of the subject (Gingell 1998, 453). In constructions like "*Awchak he* was your wife's Daddy too" (italics mine) (98) the use of reduplication raises the reader/listener's awareness of the Cree/French origin of Michif.[52] Campbell's desire is to cause a positive re-evaluation of these roots and assign the language her people speak a new status. At the same time the deliberate use of reduplication is a refusal to give in to Standard English syntax. Because syntax is a set of grammatical rules of the standard language, its adaptation can be seen as subjugation to the colonizer. It can then be asserted that the resistance toward Standard English syntax carries a decolonizing message, which entails the celebration of the Métis language.[53] Paul Chartrand, in the article "Michif Language Conference", concurs by saying:

> Languages are a bridging gap between isolation and community. In the past the system went to great lengths to try to prevent Metis people from speaking the Michif languages but Metis ingenuity and tenacity prevented this from occurring. It is important that the Michif

[52] Moreover the double use of the subject counteracts the objectification of Aboriginal people in the process of colonization. Through actions like confining Aboriginal people to reserves and denying them their rights, the colonizer dehumanizes Aboriginal people turning them in a figurative sense into objects rather than subjects.

[53] A further method by which Campbell resists English grammar is her way of forming the past tense. Except for a few rather random parts as in "Ooh *he was* a good doctor too" (itlalics mine) (86), she refuses to subvert the stories to the logic of the English grammatical past. Instead she applies the regular simple fast form where an irregular declination is needed: "*he knowed* lots of stories […] / *he* even *knowed* dah songs" (89). In other cases Campbell completely refuses to subvert to any kind of grammatical past and simply uses the present form: "Dat woman *he kill* hisself" (100). However, analysing the content the reader/listener understands that the woman had killed herself already and that thus a simple past is required, if not the author desires to proclaim a message of decolonization.

> take their rightful place in Canadian history. The freedom to express oneself in one's own language is a fundamental and collective right of the Michif people. (*Metis Nation* 1986, 6)

Consequently, reduplication becomes a marker of difference by which Campbell differentiates between the logic of English and Michif, between the colonizer and the colonized – respectively revaluing the latter.

Names

Apart from reinstalling the Cree language, Campbell also restores Métis names. In doing so she directly attacks the colonizer's practise of replacing Aboriginal children's given names with Christian ones (Gingell 1998, 452).[54] To emphasize the refusal to be colonized through name changing, Campbell includes in "Jacob" two characters who insist on keeping their Aboriginal names. Mistupuch, the grandmother of the storyteller, "never gets a whitemans name" (89). This is why, the storyteller says, "he knowed lots of stories. / Dat ole lady even knowed dah songs" (89). In opposition to Mistupuch stands Kannap, her husband: "dah whitemans dey call him Jim Boy / so hees Indian name he gets los" (87). It is because of his new name that his community "don know who his peoples dey are" (87). Consequently the practise of changing names is equated with the loss of family, relations, stories, and songs - the very essence of a healthy cultural existence. Resisting this practise and keeping one's "Indian name" is linked, in Campbell's story, to knowing who your people are. Awchak, Jacob's father, is the second character in the story who resists taking on a Christian name. He does not only insist on keeping his "Indian name" but is also unwilling to convert to Christianity: "He never gets a new name cause he never become a / Christian" (97). His son Jacob, however, does not have the same choice. A Christian name is forced onto him and, with it, a new language that alienates him from his community.

[54] It is also worthy of noting that the imperial power not only erased the names of the First People but also took the liberty of changing the names of the land (mountains, lakes etc.). Maria Campbell however laments the biggest step in colonization to be the disconnection between the people and the land (Campbell, Regina, 21 October 2005). She continues by declaring if a people no longer know the stories of their land, they have been colonized. Hence part of the decolonizing process will entail the reclaiming of place names. For an interesting exposition on Saskatchewan's efforts to replace colonial place names with names of honourable Aboriginal people see the chapter "Enduring Landmarks: Geo-Memorial Project Honours the War Dead" in Douglas Cuthand's book *Tapwe: Selected Columns of Doug Cuthand* (2005, 91-93).

This alienation is metaphorically digested in the expression “broken roots.” In the narrative poem the storyteller refers to “broken roots” (88) when describing the social and mental effects of the colonizer’s name changing practise and the effects of residential schools. In a biological sense roots are the suppliers of nutrition. They secure a steady foothold in the soil and provide the plant with water and minerals. Without roots there would not be plants. In Jacob’s community “roots” stand for the people from whom he learns where he belongs and who he is. Therewith “roots” are family; “roots” are life. When these roots are cut off and the nutritious juice ceases to flow life as it was is over. Thus it is difficult to instil into a child a sense of belonging and identity when it is taken away from its relations. This, however, is the colonial situation the community in “Jacob” has to face. “Our roots dey gets broken so many times” (88), which is “dah reason why we have such a hard time / us people” (88). This disconnection from people and place causes a psychological trauma that is not possible to put in words.

To counteract this suffering and to mend those “broken roots,” Jacob begins to write in a “big book” (102). He appropriates the method by which the priest wrote down all “dah names / of all dah kids / an who dey belongs to” (94). A tool of colonization for the priest, in Jacob’s hands the book becomes a tool of decolonization in which he writes down “dah Indian names of all dah Mommy and Daddy” (102). Adjacent to their Aboriginal names he would also note their Christian names, which subverts the priest’s influence in the community. He dethrones the priest from his self-appointed position as the people’s genealogist and begins the healing of his community.

One trauma Jacob will never be able to overcome, however, is his marriage to his sister and her subsequent suicide. The irony of their marriage is that if the Catholic Church had not broken Jacob’s roots he would have known his sister and this tragedy would have been averted. Because of the practise of changing the names of Aboriginal children, the Catholic Church provoked this incestuous behaviour, a conduct Catholicism highly rejects as sinful. This is one more example of how Campbell plays with the colonizer’s set of rules, appropriates these rules to use them against the imperial power.

Punctuation

Punctuation in "Jacob" is rare. When Campbell does use punctuation, she exclusively uses periods, and then only at the end of the storyteller's thought units. Thus she rather employs white paper space where the western literary tradition would use punctuation. With this technique Campbell communicates that what is fixed on the page "is a written transcription of an oral story" (Gingell 1998, 455). Gingell also says that the space on the page is "a way of recording the slow and measured manner of delivery that characterizes the conversational style typical of Cree speakers" (Gingell 1998, 455). It can then be asserted that the pauses present in oral storytelling are conveyed through white space on the page; thus, when the written stories are read out loud they take on the slow and prudent rhythm of an oral story. Again Campbell clearly privileges the oral over the written, by prioritising the ear over the eye and white space over western rules of punctuation.

The thought units that are partitioned by periods do not follow any rules in their length.[55] They can range from only a few words to six lines. In highly emotional moments the thought units tend to be short. Close to the end of the story the storyteller agrees with Jacob who "fight dah government to build schools on the / reservation" (103). The voice declares:

> You know
> Dat ole man was right.
> No body he can do dat.
> Take all dah babies away. Hees jus not right. (103)

Over the course of only four lines the reader/listener finds four thought units. The use of a full stop once after the third line and twice within the fourth line demands the reader to pause and mentally digest what has been said. The stress lies on the last two lines of this excerpt, both of which are highly emotional. Combined with the reduplication in "*No body he* can do dat" (italics mine), they emphasize the desperate but human desire of this

[55] Because these thought units do not follow any rules of length their undefined complexity might cause the one or the other reader/listener some uncertainty. This uncertainty can be compared with the ambiguity created through code-switching. By not subverting herself to any grammatical rules, Campbell plays with the reader/listener's expectations and thus demands her/him to read and listen more carefully. It can also be seen as a play on the colonizer's inability to listen to what the colonized have to say.

community to keep and raise their children. Often with police force and in the name of God many Aboriginal communities were robbed of their youngest generation. Mothers were left behind childless; fathers were left with no family to feed, and Elders all of a sudden had no pupils to teach. Hence, the voice of the storyteller is right: “No body he can do dat. / Take all dah babies away. Hees jus not right.”

In the beginning of this chapter Basil Johnston rang over the pages with his warning about the death of Aboriginal languages and consequently the death of oral stories. An analysis of Campbell’s use of language in the story of “Jacob” will not change this disastrous fact. It must, however, be stressed that through various techniques Campbell has managed to keep the stories of the road allowance people alive and heard. Through transliteration and code switching she not only privileges the oral over the written but also reverses the colonial experience of her people; she marginalizes the non-Cree speaker and the reader/listeners unaccustomed to her people’s way of speaking. The process of decolonization is best seen in her constant refusal to submit to the rules of English orthography and grammar. Consequently she arrives at a re-evaluation of the way her father spoke English and highlights the beauty of his tongue. Moreover, Campbell emphasizes Métis pride in restoring Métis names and through Jacob’s community depicts a micro version of decolonization. Thus Campbell’s use of language in “Jacob” and the remaining stories of her collection celebrates Métiness, pride and strength.

Chapter Four

(Un)voiced:
"Voice equals speech. Voice has the floor. Voice is authority"[56]

This chapter's central concern is the concept of voice and how Métis poets use their poetry to voice their resistance. Ron Marken in the foreword to Maria Campbell's *Stories of the Road Allowance People* describes voice as being tantamount to "authority" and argues, "to have voice is to have power," while the state of voicelessness "is synonymous with being ignorant" (1995, 5). In the context of colonization, the colonizer is generally characterized as being voiced, in contrast to the colonized, who are made voiceless. Consequently, voice and speech are symbols of control – if the

[56] "Voice equals speech. Voice has the floor. Voice is authority" is a quotation taken from the foreword to Maria Campbell's *Stories of the Road Allowance People*.

centre is voiced then it can be assumed that its audibility at times silences the periphery. In the process of decolonization, however, the colonized move beyond the sphere of the unvoiced into the sphere of the voiced.[57]

For the Métis, as well as other colonized peoples, poetry has become a significant tool in this process. Through poetry both the individual and collective identity of a people is reaffirmed in various ways. As Barbara Harlow states, "Poetry is capable not only of serving as a means for the expression of personal identity or even national sentiment. Poetry, as part of the cultural institutions and historical existence of a people, is itself an arena of struggle" (1987, 33). Many Métis writers are well aware of the capacity that poetry holds to reflect thoughts of resistance and deliberately employ this medium to establish a platform for their voice. For the three selected Métis poets the act of gaining voice begins with a reflection of the past. Because Eurocentric history writings has created a skewed picture of Métis people that caused many Métis to feel ashamed of who they are, poets like Scofield, Dumont and Bouvier use their poems to rewrite colonized history from a Métis point of view. Through an examination of past events these poets are "able to develop the kind of consciousness that is crucial to an acceptance of the Métis people in their present condition" (Klooss 1990, 213). Consequently by digesting the past, Dumont, Bouvier and Scofield can reconstruct and thus reclaim their Métis identity.

4.1. "History" in the Context of Decolonization

> In time every event becomes an exertion of memory and is thus subject to invention. The farther the facts, the more history petrifies into myth. Thus, as we grow older as a race, we grow aware that history is written, that it is a kind of literature without morality, that in its actuaries the ego of the race is indissoluble and that everything depends on whether we write this fiction through the memory of hero or victim. (Walcott 2004, 370-371)

[57] I am fully aware of the fact that voice not always and automatically leads to being heard. It is rather like Jordan Wheeler asserts: "The right to speak must be fought for. The right to be heard relies on people who want to listen" (1992, 40). Thus voicing thoughts of resistance and decolonization does not necessarily result in being heard, as the people have to be ready and willing to listen.

With this quotation, Walcott touches on some of the most crucial aspects of history in the context of post-colonialism: fact versus fiction, power versus powerlessness. Writings on the past have been viewed with a critical eye, especially in the past few decades, as they usually have served the more powerful's aim to suppress the less powerful. As a result, Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin contend that "History" is "*the* prominent instrument for the control of subject peoples" (2004, 355). Because a people can only know from history where they have come from and who they are, the dissemination of that history by the colonizer can have power to oppress and misrepresent a people's entire culture. Denying a people their history then becomes a matter of legitimization so Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, as that act includes some people while excluding others – creating a situation in which a few powerful write and thus rule over many whose power was forcefully taken.

In Canada (and the United States) Eurocentric history writing began with the doctrine of *terra nullius*, which served as a justification for the occupation of the Americas. Howard Adams reflects on the history of Eurocentrism locating its origins in the ancient Roman and Greek civilizations (1999, 21). The myth of the European race as superior, says Adams, came to the forefront during the Renaissance by means of three forces: mercantilism, Christianity and racism (22). Over centuries of suppression the Aboriginal psyche has internalized Eurocentrism or the belief in the superiority of Europeans to an alarming extent. In the context of Métis history such Eurocentric beliefs entail the portrayal of the Métis as rebels and traitors. Darren R. Préfontaine, historian, in his article "Métis Identity" identifies three such authors who perpetuated in their works the "anti-Métis biases of their time" (2003, 16). Préfontaine contends "Giraud, Stanley or Morton reveal more about the scholar's and the dominant society's prejudices than about the Métis" (16).[58] Writers like Giraud, Stanley or Morton deny the Métis their rightful place in history by only mentioning them in connection with the fur trade or when they interfered in fur trade politics (Barkwell, Dorion, Préfontaine 2001, 13; Préfontaine 2003, 15). The marginalization of the Métis in Canadian historiography was further

[58] For more detailed information on the approaches of Giraud, Stanley, and Flanagan's works see "Criticism of Métis Historiography" in Howard Adams' *A Tortured People*.

confirmed by their marginalized position in the Canadian mosaic. Other writers only focus on the role and person of Louis Riel, thereby disregarding social, economic and political influences that shaped history (Barkwell, Dorion, Préfontaine 2001, 3; Adams 1999, 24). What these Eurocentric works share is the fact that they present a fragment of history, which was viewed at in isolation.

In order to decolonize themselves, the colonized must dismantle Eurocentric historiography and begin to reclaim their own history.[59] They must break the silence and move from being unvoiced to being voiced. In his article "Mixed-Bloods," Howard Adams contends "We [the Métis] cannot hope for liberation until we reclaim our history and understand our unique identity, thereby freeing ourselves from the colonizer's racist dominance" (1994, 29). The reconstruction and deconstruction of history however is not an easy task, because the ground from which the post-colonial writer writes is a reality structured by this very historical narrativity (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 2004, 356). Consequently, decolonizing history entails stepping beyond the mere act of challenging the message of many writings on history and engaging in the "medium of narrativity itself, to reinscribe the 'rhetoric,' the heterogeneity of historical representation" (2004, 356). Due to the power struggle in this field many post-colonial writers choose to voice their opinion through their literary writings. Apart from the obvious need to perpetuate Canadian history from a Métis point of view, the power struggle in the field of history is another reason why so many Métis poets incorporate events of the past into their poems.

4.2. A Poem Each

Through poetry Métis writers digest the past and pave the path for the future.[60] Acoose points out that for many Aboriginal writers the act of writing becomes an act of resistance and reclaiming (Acoose 1993, 33). By engaging in the written word they take over control of themselves and

[59] Although this chapter focuses on voice in terms of reclaiming history, the Métis' impact on the present should not be forgotten – after all they are not a people from the past who are at the verge of extinction. Duke Redbird for example asserts, "The western Métis image and cultural characteristics that now serve as a bridge between the halfbreed on a national scale, must not rely solely on the historical context" (Duke Redbird in Goldie and Moses, 124). Thus Redbird emphasizes the Métis' contribution to present-day Canadian life and claims Métis to develop an awareness on this level also.

[60] Apart from literary writings the liberating and activist climate of the 1960s also saw the beginning of Métis historical, social, political and cultural decolonization when regional, feminine, and ethnic historians engaged in the researching, writing and publication process (Barkwell, Dorion, Préfontaine 2001, 13).

begin to construct their own identity. Aboriginal writers refuse to occupy the colonial space of oppression, silence, violence and invisibility. Barbara Harlow compares these poets to guerrilla leaders of resistance movements by claiming that poets "consider it necessary to wrest that expropriated historicity back, reappropriate it for themselves in order to reconstruct a new world-historical order" (Harlow 1987, 33). Thus Métis poets like Gregory Scofield, Marilyn Dumont and Rita Bouvier reclaim their "displaced history."

Marilyn Dumont does so in her poem "Letter to Sir John A. Macdonald" (1996, 52). Published in 1996 in her first poetry collection *A Really Good Brown Girl*, the poem is written in the form of a letter to Canada's first prime minister. The persona expresses how after several attempts of assimilating the Métis, they are "still here and Métis."[61] Divided into two stanzas with twelve and seventeen verses, the poem is written retrospectively, beginning with the building of Macdonald's railway in the second half of the 19th century and ending in the present with the Métis stronger than ever.

In his poem "Policy of the Dispossessed," Gregory Scofield takes a similar approach to decolonize his people (1996, 53-55). Published in 1996 in *Native Canadiana: Songs from the Urban Rez*, the poem is introduced by excerpts from the *Manitoba Act of 1870* and the Official Report of the Debates of the House of Commons. It continues to move powerfully and chronologically through both Canadian history and Scofield's family history. Each of the five stanzas represents one Métis generation and depicts their individual struggles of cultural and literal survival. "Policy of the Dispossessed" thus displays autobiographical parallels.

Rita Bouvier's "Riel is dead, and I am alive," published in 2004 in Bouvier's poetry collection *Papîyâhtak*, on the other hand does not focus on Métis history as its central theme. Instead Bouvier accuses "academics" and "cultural imperialists" of imprisoning the Métis in the past and denying them any cultural progress. In six stanzas each encompassing four lines, she demands of the reader not to believe in the "sterile talk" but to begin to remember again.

[61] As this poem is entitled with and written as a "Letter…" both terms, poem and letter will be used interchangeably, especially when aspects of the second are analysed.

A comparative analysis of these three poems will show how the poets employ poetry as a vehicle to reclaim identity, culture and history. Sometimes in a humorous and sarcastic tone, sometimes in a very emotional one, the poems will reveal such topics as dispersal, loss of land, assimilation and jeopardized culture. Through code switching, personification, alliteration, assonance, and imageries, Scofield, Bouvier and Dumont powerfully reclaim Métis history and re-construct their identity. Their poems speak of the resistance of a strong and vital people.

A letter to …

Dumont's "Letter to Sir John A. Macdonald" is written in the form of a letter. Dumont consciously chose this form as it symbolizes best the distance that existed and still exists between the Canadian Prairies and central Canada. This distance is both a physical and mental one – one which people living in the Canadian West even today often experience when it comes to federal politics. They literally feel too far away from the "East," represented by Ottawa as the governmental centre and thus, the centre of power. This feeling of being ignored and overlooked has also been experienced by the Métis. In the past (as much as in the present) they have felt misunderstood and ignored by Ottawa. By writing a letter to Sir John A. Macdonald, Dumont repeats the method by which her ancestors already attempted to voice their protest. Both Gabriel Dumont (although he did not write the petitions himself) in 1885 and Marilyn Dumont in 1996, 111 years later, engage in letter writing to contend that they as Métis will not give up their land, their language and their way of life. While the petitions and representations under the leadership of Gabriel Dumont remained mainly unheard in Ottawa, Marilyn Dumont obtains a platform for her poetry to be recognized. In doing so she powerfully continues the Métis legacy of resistance and this time her voice is being heard.[62]

Furthermore, by directly addressing the letter to Sir John A. Macdonald, Dumont suggests that much of the suffering of the Métis people can be traced to the Macdonald government. Macdonald, Canada's first

[62] Although Dumont's voice might not be physically heard, however, the fact that she got her poetry published and that it is now being taught in university classes is tantamount to being heard and becoming voiced.

prime minister, is even today one of the nation's most celebrated but also controversial politicians.[63] What dominant society chooses to overlook, however, is that due to Macdonald's policies of a nation "from sea to shining sea" and the resultant rapid settlement of the Prairies, the Métis suffered great losses.[64] They lost large portions of their land in what is today Manitoba and were racially discriminated and relegated to the road allowances in present day Saskatchewan. Spurred by the government's genocidal attempts the persona manifests its discontent towards Macdonald by vehement refusing to address him with his title "Sir." The only exception is the title, which serves as a clarification for the reader. Instead the persona counteracts Macdonald's royal status by only referring to him by his first name John, as in: "Dear John" (1), "and you know, John" (10), "and John" (19). In calling Macdonald "John" Dumont in a humorous and sarcastic manner ridicules him and denies him his peerage. Because naming has power, Dumont takes over Macdonald's control by calling him "John" only.

Writing Back and Writing Home

Dumont's poem is also significant on another level. The letter addressed to a representative of the colonizing force epitomizes the concept of "writing back," as the persona literally writes from the margins back at the centre. Moreover the letter is the periphery's answer to Macdonald's attempts to assimilate the Métis. The persona accuses Macdonald of having railroaded her/his people and thereby begins to write back at the colonizer. Consequently the poem annuls the binarisms of colonial discourse, which JanMohamed describes as manichean polarities: the self – other, civilised – native, and us – them (Ashcroft, Griffiths, Tiffin 2004, 8). Dumont subverts the division constructed by colonialism which made her the voiceless Other and the imperialist the voiced self. Thus she moves from passivity to

[63] John A. Macdonald, born in 1815 in Scotland, immigrated to Canada in 1820, where he became a successful lawyer and business owner. After a long career in politics, Macdonald considerably contributed to the founding of Canada. In order to secure the west from being taken by the U.S., he strongly supported the building of the railway and the rapid settlement of the Prairies (Hodgins and White, 1990, 591-615).

[64] I am very well aware that the Métis were not the only ones suffering under Macdonald. As mentioned in chapter two, the Macdonald government also broke treaty promises with First Nations and ignored the settlers' request for support.

activity, from being illiterate to being literate. The letter's subversion of colonial constructs signals the decolonization of the so-called Other.

Another means by which these colonial constructs are subverted is the concept of "writing home." What has been briefly analysed in chapter three also becomes apparent in Gregory Scofield's poem "Policy of the Dispossessed." Instead of addressing the centre like Dumont did, Scofield chooses to address his own people; he "writes home." He does so by inserting Cree vocabulary into the poem, which marginalizes the reader not accustomed to Cree, and also by repeating pronouns like *us*, *we*, and *our*, creating an atmosphere of inclusiveness rather than exclusiveness.

The switching between English and Cree is one way by which Scofield writes home, as the insertion of Cree vocabulary includes Cree speakers while excluding non-Cree speakers. Although the Cree vocabulary in the poem is limited to three words only, "Cheechum" (54), "mosôm" (54), "katipâmsôchik" (55), these words powerfully reinstate the Cree expressions for great grandmother, grandfather and the Michif People. Their untranslated appearance in the poem itself suggests that the English language may not be capable of eloquently representing their entire meaning, insofar as it is the language of the oppressor. Both the non-Cree speakers as well as the Cree speakers must be aware of the deficiency of English in respect to the untranslated words in the poem. This realization leads to a further exclusion of the readers not accustomed to Cree. At the same time the Cree speaking readers feel included, as they are the only ones who understand the words.

Through the translation of "Cheechum" (54), "mosôm" (54), "katipâmsôchik" (55) at the bottom of the poem, the non-Cree speaking readers are able to compensate their lack of understanding, which was created after reading the poem first.[65] Nevertheless, they are required to accept the legitimacy of words like "Cheechum," "mosôm," and "katipâmsôchik" as valid expressions. This reinstation of Cree is taken to an audible level at the very moment when the reader attempts to pronounce the foreign word. To simplify the attempt s/he might say the word out loud, thereby giving Cree back its voice. Scofield's poem then epitomizes a

[65] Because the poem is three pages long, the reader only discovers the translation of the Cree vocabulary after reaching the last page.

platform for Cree this specific Cree vocabulary to be heard again. Moreover it can be argued that the insertion of Cree words into a predominantly English poem creates an interruption in the flow of English, which undermines English in its monopoly of being the only language of communication.

Like the tactic of "writing back," "writing home" too functions as a subversion of the dominant discourse, a discourse characterized by the unvoiced Other and the voiced self. By weaving Cree into a predominantly English poem, however, Scofield addresses his people, the so-called "Other" and makes them the centre of attention. This shift in concentration relegates the self to the margin – in this very moment the dominant discourse loses control, as the self becomes the other. The reversal of power is supported by Scofield's choice to offer a translation for "Cheechum," "mosôm," and "katipâmsôchik" at the end of the poem. In so doing he refrains from leaving the non-Cree speaker in ignorance.[66] The focus on creating an understanding gap for non-Métis, as Campbell does in *Stories of the Road Allowance People*, is replaced in Scofield's poem by the sole focus on the Métis. It can be concluded that Scofield, like Dumont, subverts the dominant discourse, which forced the colonized to listen to the colonizer. In the process of decolonization the oppressed become voiced and the oppressor is left to listen.

The second means by which Scofield addresses his people is the repetition of the possessive adjective "our." Employed five times in the poem, "our" implies a certain inclusiveness which thereby excludes anyone not Métis. In this manner Scofield directly speaks to the Métis, assuring them that whatever syntactically follows the word "our" belongs to them and cannot be taken away. Moreover Scofield's repetition of "our" strengthens Métis collectiveness, which is marked by the boundary between us and them. This collectiveness is finalized in the last verse of the retrospectively written poem. "Our" is employed twice here, in the phrases as in "our homeland" (53, 55) and "our displaced history" (55). Because the last verse is characterized by reclaiming land, language, history and identity the double usage of "our" creates a certain insistence. Scofield

[66] The translation of foreign words also serves to teach the reader not accustomed to that particular language the beauty and meaning of this tongue.

thereby challenges the colonial constructs of land and history, insofar as he points out that the Métis too possess land and history.[67] He attacks Eurocentric historiography, which intended to relegate the Michif to the margins of Canadian history and society. At the same time Scofield also attacks Canadian politics "in which / land was granted and sweet-talked / for chocolate bars or candies" (54). Here he clearly refers to Métis scrip, turning the reader's attention to the government's land theft through which so many Métis lost their land.

Scofield's insistence on "*our* homeland" and "*our* displaced history" (italics mine) (55) carries a strong tone of resistance. In the hearts and minds of the Métis "that part of the country" (53, 54, 55) is and will always be their "homeland." Consequently the Métis will not give up the "ancient language" (55), "the buffalo bones and memories" (55), which metaphorically stand for their culture and heritage. Scofield speaks to his people and demands them to remember that they "were always *katipâmsôchik* – The People Who Own Themselves" (55). Therefore, the multiple use of "our" underlines Scofield's tactic of "writing home" through which he places a strong emphasis on Métis collective identity.

The Aspect of Land

As this chapter analyses the concept of re-writing Métis history in the poems of three Métis poets, the aspect of land carries certain significance. While Marilyn Dumont and Rita Bouvier do not directly conceptualize the issue of land, Scofield makes it the centre around which his poem "Policy of the Dispossessed" develops. This focus becomes apparent in the poem's title and in the first excerpt that follows the title. Further references to land are to be found in every one of the five verses. What is described in these five verses is the colonization of Métis land and Scofield's lyrical efforts to claim this land back.

Significant in Scofield's reclaiming process is the way he contrasts the excerpt from the *Manitoba Act* of 1870 with the poem itself. The former

[67] This is in reference to Eurocentric history writings, which have denied the Métis their rightful place in history by presenting a skewed picture of Canadian history. In doing so the fact that many Métis had been robbed off their land by Métis scrip is left unmentioned. Moreover by writing Canadian history from the colonizer's point of view the colonizer denies the Métis their history. Scofield in his poem, however, argues that the Métis, contrary to Eurocentric historiography, do have a history, a history that is closely tied to the land.

promises land "to the extent of one million four hundred thousand acres thereof, for the benefit of the families of the halfbreed residents" (53). The five verses of the poem however reflect a certain landlessness: "Dispossessed […] / In that part of the country / *our homeland* / they ended up squatting / anywhere there was road allowance" (53). Consequently the first excerpt creates within the reader a certain expectation as it directs her/him into believing that the Métis were treated fairly by the Macdonald government.[68] This expectation is subverted by the poem's content, which informs the reader of "some deceptions left unmentioned. / The children's scrip, for example, in which / land was granted and sweet-talked / for chocolate bars or candies" (54). Scofield therewith refers to immoral business practises that left ninety per cent of Métis scrip certificates in the hands of the bankers, lawyers, and merchants (Purich 1988, 117). The glaring contrast between Section 31 of the *Manitoba Act* and Scofield's poem exemplifies the discrepancy between Eurocentric historiography on this event and Métis reality. By incorporating this part into his poem, Scofield re-writes Canada's history from a Métis point of view. He shows the reader how promises were not fulfilled, and in doing so dismantles colonial interpretations of Métis history.

Closely tied to the aspect of figuratively reclaiming land are the first two lines of every verse. While the first line, "In that part of the country," introduces every one of the five stanzas, the second line differs in almost all verses. Exceptions are the first and the last verse, in which "In that part of the country" is followed by "*our homeland*" (53, 55). By repeating "*our homeland*" (53, 55) in the beginning and the end of the poem, Scofield creates a sense of thematic circularity. What his great-great grandmother's people called "*our homeland*" is colonized and thus altered to "*our motherland*" (53) in the second verse, then "*all public lands*" (54) in the third verse and "*Canada*" (54) in the fourth verse. In the final verse Scofield decolonizes "that part of the country" by calling it "*our homeland*" (55) again.

[68] Scofield, as well as Dumont, traces much of the sufferings of the Métis people back to John A. Macdonald and his government. This is supported by the two excerpts, which Scofield places before the actual poem.

This thematic circularity depicts the colonization and decolonization of Métis land. Before "the prairie was completely taken over [by the] influx of newcomers" (53) the Métis referred to "that part of the country" as their homeland. It was their place of birth and their source of life. After the disappearance of the buffalo and the turn towards agriculture in the Canadian Prairies, Scofield calls "that part of the country" "motherland." He distinguishes between "homeland" and "motherland," granting the former more significance. While "homeland" is one's place of belonging, "motherland" on the other hand is more a patriotic term, as it is the land of one's ancestors. Thus the second verse symbolizes the beginning of the colonization of "land." Over the next two verses "that part of the country" first becomes "all public lands" (54) and then "Canada" (54). Like on a palimpsest the concept of land is figuratively erased and replaced by a new concept. With every new palimpsest the colonizer's power over the land increases, while at the same time the Métis are culturally and physically alienated from their land.

To exemplify the process of alienation from the land, Scofield employs two powerful images: his great-grandmother, who desperately tries to hold on to the land, and his grandfather, who loses touch with it. The line, "My *Cheechum* was born clutching prairie dust" (54) implies a strong tie between Scofield's great-grandmother and the land she was born on.[69] Upon her birth "Cheechum's" hands energetically grasp the soil, the land, which her ancestors called homeland; she refuses to let go of the "prairie dust" (54).[70] Her fingers splayed out, she literally holds on to the land. Thus she does not only touch the soil but clutches it as if somebody was pulling her away from it. This image of resistance, of not willingly

[69] The noun "dust" possibly implies that there was nothing there for Scofield's great-grandmother to hold on to. Dust is like fine powder: almost invisible and even harder to touch. Thus one could argue that the imagery of Scofield's great-grandmother clutching dust, which figuratively stands for Métis culture, implies that Métis heritage was in jeopardy and that she desperately tried to resist assimilation. On the other hand dust is also carried away by wind breezes and thus spreads all over the country. This metaphor is rather appropriate as it refers to the dispersal of many Métis families after the two resistances. Scofield thereby implies that the Métis in order to survive on a cultural as well as literal level dispersed into the northern regions of the Prairies and sometimes even crossed the border to the United States.

[70] Her refusal to give up her land and thus her way of life strongly reminds me of Campbell's Cheechum. In one instance Campbell describes how her Cheechum with all her power defended her land, home and culture: "Years later when the area was designated for the Park, the government asked her to leave. She refused, and when all peaceful methods failed the RCMP were sent. She locked her door, loaded her rifle, and when they arrived she fired shots over their heads, threatening to hit them if they came any closer" (Campbel 1982, 15).

giving up her land, is reinforced by the repetition of the consonants *ch* in "Ch*ee*ch*um*" and "clut*ch*ing" (emphasis mine). The sound of these two letters together is rather harsh and forceful, and brings attention to the phrase "clutching prairie dust," with its powerful metaphorical significance. Cheechum's act of resistance is supported by the onomatopoeic word "clutch" as the sound produced by saying "clutch" resembles the sound of a hand hitting dry soil.

Scofield's grandfather, on the other hand, holds on to neither his land nor his heritage. Instead of being born with the desire to live his culture, "a bottle was planted in [his] hand / the day of his birth" (54). The word "bottle" could be a reference to alcoholism in which case Scofield's grandfather was an alcoholic from an early age. Because the verb "planted" implies a growing process, the reader is led to assume that his grandfather began to drink when he was very young and maybe never recovered. The reasons for "*mosôm's*" alcohol problem are not directly mentioned in the poem. In his autobiography, however, Scofield suggests the reason to be internalized shame: "Like most of the children of half-breed families in the 1920s, they (grandfather and his sister and brother) grew up in poverty and shame" (1999, 8). Consequently, Scofield expresses that while his great-grandmother was born holding on to her culture, his grandfather internalized the shame of being Métis and lived in denial.

The estrangement between the land and Scofield's grandfather is further symbolized by the colonization of "that part of the country." In the fourth verse, which stands for the generation of his grandfather, the second line reads "*Canada*" (54). The colonizer has altered Métis land from "*homeland*" to "*motherland*" to "*public lands*" (54) and finally to "*Canada*" (54). Because Scofield's grandfather was so drastically alienated from the land this verse epitomizes what Maria Campbell calls the biggest step in colonization: "the disconnection between the people and the land" (Campbell, Regina, 21 October 2005).

Scofield, however, counteracts the disconnection between himself and the land. While his grandfather was too ashamed to live his culture, Scofield powerfully re-connects with the land and his heritage. He claims "that part of the country back" and calls it "*our homeland*" (55) again. In the last verse of the poem Scofield writes: "I went back and dug in the

prairie soil" (55). Like his great grandmother Scofield touches the land with his hands, an act that symbolizes the importance of the ground he stands on. The adverb "back" in this line carries certain significance as it implies that Scofield has returned to a place he had been before. Since Aboriginal spirituality conceives the past, present and future as being circular, Scofield embodies his ancestors as well as his future family. Going "back," then, represents Scofield's return to the land of his ancestors during the "Back to Batoche Days." This is supported by a comment in his autobiography, where Scofield writes: "As we left Batoche I felt my heart sink into the very landscape, my spirit joining those of my ancestors in the empty ravines and coulees" (1999, 166). The climax of his re-connection with the land is Scofield's becoming one with it, as decades of assimilation and denial are counteracted by his sole act of fusing with the land and claiming it back.

Reconstructing Identity

Scofield's fusion with the land, through which he reconnects with his ancestors, enables him to reconstruct his identity. He does so by employing a powerful image of the land as the source of knowledge from which people learn who they are. Scofield thereby criticises the dominant discourse and its overemphasis on the written word. Instead of seeking Eurocentric history books to learn about his people Scofield chooses the land as a source of knowledge, underlining that it is the prairie soil, which carries the story of his ancestors, their tongue and thus their heritage: "I went back and dug in the prairie soil. / There among the buffalo bones and memories / an ancient language sprang from the earth / and wet my parched tongue" (55). From the soil Scofield unearths "buffalo bones and memories," which metaphorically stand for the Métis way of life and for their history. Over a century ago that life revolved around the buffalo. The Métis traded its fur and processed its meat into pemmican. When there was not enough buffalo left to live off the Métis way of life was endangered. Consequently the buried buffalo bones symbolize a life long gone. Scofield however counteracts the Eurocentric portrayal of the Métis as a people who died with the extinction of the buffalo by figuratively unearthing what was central in their life. In bringing part of the Métis heritage back to light, Scofield

reminds the reader that his people are still very much alive, thus decolonizing the story of his ancestors and reconstructing his identity.

Scofield's reconstruction of his identity comes full circle when he unearths the language of his ancestors: "There among the buffalo bones and memories / an ancient language sprang from the earth / and wet my parched tongue" (55). The personification of language, which figuratively leaps out of the soil into Scofield's mouth, demonstrates that it is alive. Scofield, through depicting this "ancient language" as alive, sets it apart from "buffalo bones," which are tantamount to death, not only because of the extinction of the buffalo itself but also because of the word "bones." In an ironic way, the contrast between the liveliness of language and the death of the buffalo suggests hope: despite the drastic change in Métis life style following the extinction of the buffalo, the Métis people are still celebrating their culture and heritage.

This celebration of Métisness is further supported by the antithesis of "wet" and "parched." Since "wet" stands for vitality, liquidity, flexibility and thus for movement, the opposite "parched" symbolizes dryness. In the context of the literal act of speaking, a "wet" mouth suggests health, whereas a dry mouth suffers a certain absence, an absence of fluids and nourishments. Before the language of Scofield's ancestors revived his mouth, the language of the oppressor scorched it lifeless. This destructive force of the English, again, suggests that the poet feels he cannot eloquently express his identity through a language that served the imperialist as a means of oppression and assimilation. Because identity and language are dependent on each other, Scofield must decolonize that "ancient language" in order to re-construct his identity. He does so by unearthing it from its grave among the buffalo bones and memories and by employing some of its words in his poem.

While in "Policy of the Dispossessed" Scofield reconstructs his identity by decolonizing the language of his ancestors, Rita Bouvier underlines the importance of memories. In "Riel is dead, and I am alive" Bouvier criticises Eurocentrists who "claim monopoly of the truth" (2). The persona's solution out of this "mumbo-jumbo for a past" (18) is memory. S/he concludes by asserting that her/his memories belong to her/him and cannot be taken by "strangers". By remembering "mother" (21), "grandmother" (22) and "great

grandmother" (23) the persona can do them more justice than in believing "cultural imperialists" (14), whose discourse is counteracted by memories. Memories are there to inform the perona about her/his people, and to offer an alternative to Eurocentric books: "all mumbo-jumbo for a past, that is / irreconcilable. this much I know / when I remember – I remember" (18-20). The repetition of "I remember" emphasizes the first person singular as well as the act of remembering. The stress lies on "I" as the persona is moving out of the forced passivity into a self-assigned activity and in doing subverts the academic discourse. S/he refuses to be objectified any longer by listening and believing in Eurocentric analysis of her/his people. The persona rather re-constructs her/his identity through memories.

These memories entail reminiscences about the persona's ancestors:

> my mother – her hands tender, to touch
> my grandmother – her eyes, blue, the sky
> my great grandmother – a story, a star gazer (21 - 23)

The emotional rather than factual memories are emphasized by the cumulation of mother to great grandmother, alliteration and assonance. The alliteration of the consonants "h", "t" and "s" and the repetition of the sound "ey" in the second line create a soft rhythmic effect. The gentleness of sound and rhythm is supported by Bouvier's word choice, as words like "tender" (21), "eyes" (22), "sky" (22), "star" (23) create an affectionate and warm atmosphere. In this manner Bouvier expresses that it is the act of remembering, not "sterile talk," through which she reconnects with her past. She also puts an emphasis on "my mother," "my grandmother" and "my great grandmother" by syntactically separating each of the three relatives from the remaining line with a hyphen. That break highlights the three women and reminds the reader that these were real people, with real feelings, and most importantly real lives. Thus Bouvier criticises the academic discourse, which too often objectifies the Métis and assigns them categories to suit the colonizer's purposes. She counteracts the discourse's dehumanization, especially of women, and gives them back their dignity. Moreover Bouvier suggests that Métis women are essential in the construction and re-construction of identity. It can be concluded that both Bouvier's and Scofield's poems dismantle the colonizer's monopoly over information on Métis history and heritage. They assert that they do not

need strangers to tell them who they are because they "were always *katipâmsôchik*" – The People Who Own Themselves (Scofield 1996, 55).

Ossification

Through reconstructing their own identity, Métis people subvert the ossification of their culture. Howard Adams contends that the "ossification of native society" is a direct consequence of the genocidal machinery of assimilation (1989, 35). Not only have Aboriginal people been forced to take up a life on the margins of the dominant society, the latter also relegates Aboriginal culture to a static, ossified stage. In this limited space, Adams argues, "Indians and Métis collaborate with their white oppressors by portraying archaic culture through such public spectacles as the Calgary Stampede" (1989, 36). Thus the display of pre-colonial traditions in a 20th century (or 21st century) frame reduces Aboriginal culture to a stage of primitiveness, which in return corresponds to mainstream society's stereotypes of Aboriginal people (36). These misrepresenting performances then become one source by which Aboriginal children are taught their place on the periphery of Canadian society. Apart from the public displays of so-called "Indian culture," the church and school system form another source of (mis)education. Adams argues, "church and school determine much of the ideology of the native communities by teaching native children to believe in white supremacy, and thus in their own inferiority" (1989, 40).

However, Eurocentric historiography also perpetuates ossification of Métis culture by assuming that Métis history begins and ends with Louis Riel. In "Riel is dead, and I am alive," Bouvier criticizes academics of reducing contemporary Métis culture to the events that surrounded Batoche in 1885. Bouvier describes this limited view of historiography as "a sterile talk" (5) - "sterile" because it carries no meaning and is mostly characterised by absence. What is missing is the Métis perspective in respect to history and to their present contribution to Canadian society. Because the voice of the Métis has been ignored over past decades, academic discourse presents a skewed picture of Métis history and Métis heritage. Thus Bouvier accuses this sterile talk of "presenting the life of a living people, / sometime in eighteen eighty-five" (6-7). Special intonation lies on "the life of a living people," as both words "life" and "living"

emphasize Bouvier's insistence that the Métis are still alive. This insistence is further supported by the repetition of the consonants "f" and "v," which creates a melodic rhythm but lends weight to the liveliness of the Métis as well. In this manner Bouvier expresses that contrary to the illustrations of academic discourse the Métis have continued to exist after Riel's death.

To gain the attention of "academics [and] cultural imperialists" (13, 14) the persona just wants "to scream. listen you idiots, / Riel is dead! and I am alive!" (10-11). The verb "listen" followed by the insult "you idiots" in the first line alludes to the colonizer's inability to listen to what the Métis have to say.[71] The exclamation "Riel is dead! and I am alive!" (11), then refers to the belittlement of Métis history and heritage by mainstream academics. Bouvier counteracts the mainstream's misrepresentation of Métis people by screaming, an act, which epitomizes the concept of "writing back," as it annuls the construct of the voiceless Other. By screaming Bouvier demands the dominant discourse to listen. Their intolerable depiction of the Métis as a people of the past is further undermined by the antithesis of "dead" and "alive". By contrasting Riel's death to the persona's liveliness Bouvier stresses that despite his execution the Métis continued and will continue to exist. In this manner Bouvier also annuls the ossification of the Métis people.

However, the desire to scream, "Riel is dead! and I am alive!" (11) remains merely that for the persona - a desire only. "Instead," the poem continues "I sit there mute and voiceless" (12). It appears as if the persona becomes the voiceless Other again. What could be mistaken for a defeatist tone in Bouvier's poem, however, is rather her way of exemplifying how Eurocentric discourse has killed her twice. While in 1885 her ancestors were killed by RCMP guns, Bouvier writes that "this time the gatling gun / is academic discourse, followed / by a weak response of political rhetoric" (15-17). By assuming a monopoly of the truth and thus by perpetuating an ossifying portrayal of Métis history and culture, academic discourse mutes the Métis people. Moreover, that discourse infantilizes them and denies

[71] In her poem Dumont, too, criticises the colonizer's inability to listen or react to the petitions sent by the Métis. The letter form, which Dumont chose for her poem underlines her criticism. The letter to Sir John A. Macdonald alludes to how he treated the Métis in the weeks before the two resistances. By ignoring the Métis, the First Nations, and the white settlers, Macdonald made the possibility for a peaceful solution impossible.

them a dignified history. Bouvier therewith illustrates how the Métis were colonized twice: first by force of arms and secondly by the academic discourse. In doing so Bouvier calls for the end of Eurocentric paternalism and demands a contemplation of memories.

Although Dumont criticises Métis ossification in her poem "Letter to Sir John A. Macdonald" as well, she does not conceptualize the symbolic death of the Métis people by the academic discourse. She does, however, employ the same exclamation as Bouvier does. Both Bouvier and Dumont contend, "Riel is dead" (Bouvier 2004, 11; Dumont 1996, 22). While Bouvier rectifies the Eurocentric notion that the Métis did die with Louis Riel, Dumont insists that Riel is not their only hero. In contrast with Eurocentric history writings, which make Louis Riel the one and only Métis leader, Dumont asserts that there are many yet to come. Thus the persona says: "Riel is dead / but he just keeps coming back" (22-23). The conjunction "but," which follows the acknowledgement of Riel's death symbolizes objection, as the persona refuses for Métis history to end on November 16th in 1885.[72] Instead Dumont ensures that the spirit of Louis Riel continues to be reborn "in all the Bill Wilsons yet to speak out of turn or favour" (24). Dumont, like Bouvier, subverts the ossification of the Métis. She lets the reader as well as Macdonald know that although "we [the Métis] were railroaded / by some steel tracks that didn't last / and some settlers who wouldn't settle / […] we're still here and calling ourselves halfbreed" (26-29).

"Metis" and "halfbreed"

Striking in Dumont's poem is her use of the terms "Metis" and "halfbreed." While the persona refers to itself as "halfbreed" (1) in the beginning of the poem, s/he calls her/himself "Metis" (12) in the middle of the poem, and again "halfbreed" (29) in the last line of the poem. What becomes apparent here is Dumont's play with dominant society's labelling strategy. Wolfgang Klooss quoting from Bataille and Sands asserts, "one of the ways in which a people are destroyed is by their believing in the labels given to them" (Klooss 1990, 211; Bataille, Sands 1984, 122). In respect to

[72] On November 16th in 1885 Louis Riel was hanged in Regina, charged with high treason.

the Michif people such labels were "halfbreed" and "Métis." The former was imposed on the Michif by the HBC and also served to categorize them in legal documents, like the *Manitoba Act* of 1870.[73] In the liberation movement of the 1960s and 70s, "halfbreed" was then discouraged in favour of "Métis," which became the legal term to refer to the Michif people.

Dumont's deliberate use of "halfbreed" to name herself and her people is a means by which the poet raises awareness to dominant society's hypocrisy. While "halfbreed" seemed an appropriate term for the colonizer to categorize the Michif people at the end of the 19th century, the latter now considers it improper. This is not to say that Dumont criticizes the progress of people's moral and ethical standards, instead she attacks the need of mainstream society to paternalize the Michif people by imposing labels on them, which "ignore any genetic, cultural or parental characteristics for ethnic identification" (Klooss 1990, 211). Dumont counteracts this naming strategy by taking it upon herself to decide what name best refers to herself and her people.[74]

As established before the poem is written in retrospect insofar as its first verse is set in the times after the railway had already reached the prairies. In those days the Michif were referred to as "halfbreeds." Hence Dumont's exclamation: "I'm still here and halfbreed" (1) in the very first line of the poem. By the end of the first verse, in line twelve, the time frame has shifted to the 1960s and 70s, and Dumont no longer calls her people "halfbreed" but instead proclaims that: "we're still here and Metis" (29). This is the time when the term "Métis" came into use. In the second verse the poem moves from Elijah Harper and Meech Lake in 1990 to the present day and thus Dumont shifts from employing "Metis" to saying: "and it's funny we're still here and calling ourselves halfbreed" (29). In doing so Dumont figuratively hands over the right of naming to the Michif and in doing so dismantles the colonizer's power.[75]

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[73] Fifteen years later in the Official Report of the Debates of the House of Commons, John A. Macdonald repeatedly used the term "halfbreed" to refer to the Michif people.

[74] Penny Petrone writes about Maria Campbell's use of the term "halfbreed": "Instead of rejecting the term of abuse, she wears it as a badge of merit and pride" (Petrone 1990, 120).

[75] Compare the similarity to Campbell's story "Jacob," in which Jacob takes over partial control of the names of his community members. In the process of decolonization labelling and naming are significant aspects. It is necessary to dismantle the colonizer's power over the naming procedure in order to move out of being unvoiced. Changing somebody's name results in the erasure of this person's life up until the moment s/he receives the Christian name.

Moreover, she challenges the oppressor's hypocrisy by decolonizing the term "halfbreed."

Scofield too opposes the government's imposed labelling strategy by using a self-named term. In "Policy of the Dispossessed" he refrains from employing any of the dominant discourse's names to refer to the Michif people. Instead he writes "we were always *katipâmsôchik*" (55), which translates into "The People Who Own Themselves" (55). This is by far the most powerful line in the poem as it signals to the reader that at all times the Michif people owned themselves. This statement of liberation and decolonization is supported by the adverb "always," which implies the axiomatic survival of their identity and heritage despite the impact of colonization. In this manner Scofield asserts that although his ancestors were pushed out of their land by "the influx of newcomers" (53) and had to wipe "away any trace of a dark language" (54), his generation was able to reconnect with their Métis roots. Scofield subverts the stereotypical image of the Métis as traitors and rebels and reclaims his identity, and his choice to refer to his people as "*katipâmsôchik"* epitomizes the final act of decolonization.

The force of the line "we were always *katipâmsôchik*" (55) is further strengthened by the alliteration of the "w." The repetition of the consonant creates a rhythmic effect, which is then interrupted by the insertion of the Cree word "*katipâmsôchik"* – providing for an optical break as the word is written in italics. In doing so Scofield sets off the Cree expression from the rest of the predominantly English poem. Both interruptions, the audible and the visual, serve to highlight the difference between English and Cree, between the imperialist and the margins. The Cree translation for "The People Who Own Themselves" (55) thereby stands out and thus is perceived by the reader as increasingly significant. Moreover, the translation transmits the message that no one can rob the Métis of their culture, history and identity.

In conclusion it can be asserted that all three Métis poets take similar approaches in their decolonization of Métis history. Bouvier, Dumont and Scofield all agree that the Métis voice has been silenced long enough. In order to counteract colonial oppression and paternalism their poems speak

of a proud people who have managed to resist the genocidal machinery of assimilation.

Chapter Five

(Un)searched:

Gregory Scofield's *Thunder Through My Veins*

This chapter's topic is the search for one's ethnic and sexual identity. Moreover it is about the choice people have: whether to search or not to search for their true identity. For various characters in Gregory Scofield's autobiography this choice means to deal with decades of racism, homophobia, discrimination and economic oppression. It therefore is a choice between the arduous journey of overcoming self-hatred and shame and finding one's place of belonging or remaining in a state of denial never knowing for certain where one belongs. While Gregory's stepfather, Don, lives in utter denial of his Aboriginal ancestry and uses alcohol to deal with his subjugation by mainstream society, Gregory chooses to search; his violence towards Gregory and Gregory's mother is a by-product of his alcohol abuse. He is persistent to unearth his grandfather's secret and proudly reclaim his family's Métis heritage. To do so Scofield must challenge a society that has trouble understanding the concept of the Métis being neither white nor Native. Resulting from society's ignorance, Scofield, as a boy and young adult, subjects himself to dominant society's categorization of only being either/or, as he longs to be a Great Chief.

Often the search for Gregory's ethnic identity is inextricably linked with the search for his sexual identity. Here too, his life is marked by denial and adaptation to the heterosexual norms of mainstream society. Eventually Gregory is able to overcome his self-hatred and shame. He decolonizes

himself by reclaiming his Métis heritage and by embracing his homosexuality.

5.1. The Search for Métis Identity

The reason why many Métis are disconnected from their ancestors can be traced back to the social and political results of the two resistances at the end of the 19th century. After the Métis were defeated at Batoche in 1885, many chose to hide their Métis heritage. The reaction the Métis faced after their leader was caught and hanged on November 16th, 1885 was a repetition of what many of their relatives and ancestors had to endure some fifteen years earlier in Manitoba. There, Métis were gradually deprived of their political power, dispossessed of their land and harassed because of their heritage. Under the "reign of terror" of the Red River Expeditionary Force (RREF), the Canadian West experienced a will to violence that it had not seen before, says Fred Shore (2001, 75).[76]

Shore in his dissertation chapter "The Process of Intimidation, 1870 – 1872," investigates the mayhem that caused so many Métis to either disperse into the northern parts of Saskatchewan, Alberta and Montana, or deny their identity completely. During this mayhem, brought about by volunteers of the RREF, Métis in Winnipeg were chased, had rocks thrown at them, severely beaten, and killed (Shore 1991, 225-228). This "violent group of men, not amenable to control even if such had been the intent of their officers," raided Métis homes and burnt them down, raped women and threatened to poison Riel (228-230). In addition to the physical abuse and the risk of being killed in the streets of Winnipeg, the Métis also saw their land occupied by arriving settlers. The loss of their traditional lands and thus their source of food and power pushed many of them away from the new capital of the province (241). Consequently, Shore concludes: "In and

[76] "Reign of terror" is what Shore, in quoting from the *Daily Pioneer* in St. Paul, calls the presence of the RREF. On October 6, 1870 the paper wrote that the purpose of the RREF was to "drive out by threats or actual violence all the French half-breed population" (Shore 1991, 224).

of itself the violence was the main reason why the Red River area was no longer home to the Métis and combined with other reasons, left them little choice but to look elsewhere for safety" (254 – 255). Thus many Métis decided to settle at the banks of the South Saskatchewan River.

The second dispersal took place after the fires of the battlefields around Batoche went out. Despised by a nation to whose founding they considerably contributed to, the Métis were labelled rebels and traitors. As a result, many soldiers looted and burnt cabins at Batoche (Sealey 1975, 133). Moreover, many Métis lost their land due to the scrip system. In addition to their land-and homelessness the government also denied them their only chance of getting food. Through forcing the Métis to hand over their guns to the Canadian troops they were prevented from their traditional food acquisition.[77]

Thus the Métis Nation was pushed to the periphery of the incoming settler society. The new focus on a life style of agriculture, which replaced the fur trade, relegated many Métis to the road allowances and forced them into becoming labourers for white homesteaders (Sealey 1975, 133). With the growing impoverishment and marginalization came the shame of being Métis. Sealey asserts that this feeling of shame marked the beginning of the Métis' denial of their identity: "Métis began to cross the color (sic) line. They became White" (1975, 133). Christine Welsh agrees and writes in her essay "Women in the Shadows: Reclaiming a Métis Heritage": "In the dark years that followed [Batoche], very few Métis spoke about being Métis and there was a widespread denial of Métis identity among generations of Métis who survived that troubled time and who grew up in its aftermath" (Welsh 1997, 64).[78] For many Métis the assimilation into white society meant an escape from racism, oppression and poverty.

Welsh on the other hand argues that the denial of Métis identity over so many generations must be seen as a means of survival rather than a betrayal of those who came after. Thus she writes, "I am finally able to see it [the denial of our Native heritage] not as a betrayal but as the survival

[77] After forcing the Métis to hand over their guns, laws that prohibited hunting were an additional means by which the government prevented Métis and other Aboriginal people from practising their tradition.

[78] Although many Métis families chose to deny their Métis identity or crossed the colour line into being Caucasian, it is important to mention that not all the Métis did so. Not every Métis for example was physically able to pass as White. Others lived in a predominantly Métis community and thus were capable of securing their Métis heritage.

mechanism that it most certainly was (1997, 65). It can be seen as this because the Métis did survive. In an ironic twist the survival of Métis identity was only possible because of the life on the road allowances, a life that so many Métis desired to escape from.[79] The isolation of the road allowances, says Michael Fisher, enabled a cultural continuity, as Métis families stayed together, told stories and spoke Michif (Fisher "Electronic Conversation", 10 March 2006). Consequently, one must be cautious to look at the margins as a place of deprivation. After all, this life on the periphery of mainstream society facilitated what Fisher calls a "participatory democracy," a sharing and caring for one another that the anonymity of cities lacks. It is therefore the cultural dislocation from one's community that leads people to reconnect with their identity. And the fact that many Métis incorporate the search for and the reconnection with their Métis identity into their works of literature indicates that there was and still is a thriving culture on the margins.

5.1.1. Denial as Survival Mechanism in Scofield's Autobiography

The denial of cultural heritage plays a significant role in Scofield's *Thunder Through My Veins: Memories of a Métis Childhood*. Published in 1999, the autobiography of Gregory Scofield tells the story of three generations of Scofields and their different ways of denying their Métis heritage. Gregory Scofield's grandfather was the first of his family to disassociate himself from his Métis identity. Born to a Cree woman, Wilfred George Scofield grew up in the 1920s when the Métis were oppressed by poverty, shame and marginalization.[80] At the age of thirteen he left his home, and years later married the daughter of one of the first homesteaders in Saskatchewan. First the couple settled in Whonnock and later moved to Maple Ridge, British Columbia, where they raised their three

[79] Marie-Louise Perron adds and says that the survival of the Métis heritage was possible due to the so called clandestine (Perron, Regina, 21 October 2005). She asserts that the clandestine generation began after the events of 1869/70, with whoever could pass as white. Even though many Métis denied their heritage, some of them kept their culture going. They did so by outwardly denying their Métisness and secretly practising their customs. Thus Perron claims Métis clandestineness to be an act of resistance.

[80] These harsh circumstances took from many Métis families their hope for a better future. Maria Campbell, for example, writes in her autobiography *Halfbreed*, "I know that poverty is not ours alone. Your people have it too, but in those earlier days you at least had dreams, you had a tomorrow. My parents and I never shared any aspirations for a future" (Campbell 1982, 13).

daughters. In order to provide a better life for his girls, George Scofield kept his Cree ancestry a secret.

As a consequence Wilfred George Scofield's three daughters, (including Gregory's mother Dorothy), grew up in a state in which they suspected but only passively accepted their Métisness. Dorothy's uncertainty is reflected in her inner restlessness and her constant moves between British Columbia, the Yukon and the prairies. While Dorothy runs away from her father's secret, her partner and Gregory's stepfather Don, has internalized the shame of being of Aboriginal ancestry to a degree of self-destruction. To compensate his own subjugation by dominant society, Don physically as well as verbally abuses Gregory and his mother.

Gregory was born in 1966 in Maple Ridge, British Columbia. Despite all those years of experiencing Don's hatred and racism toward anything "Indian," Gregory feels the urge to search for his Aboriginal ancestry. His desire to find his place in Canadian society first leads him to see himself as a "Great Chief." Later in his twenties Gregory is able to accept his Métis identity. During the annual "Back to Batoche Days" he reconnects with the land of his ancestors and thus embraces their heritage. In the process of decolonization Gregory overcomes his shame and self-hatred and begins to celebrate the survival of a proud people.

Wilfred George Scofield

Wilfred George Scofield was born in a time of severe racism as the new arriving immigrants settled in the Prairie Provinces. Predominantly white, these settlers brought their own cultures with them, and soon both the history of the land and the people who had called it their home had been forgotten. In those years, and the years to come, being Métis meant to be neither part of the white nor the Aboriginal societies but to inhabit a poverty-stricken space on the periphery of the Canadian mosaic.[81] It is thus

[81] Duke Redbird in his book *We Are Métis* argues that up to the 1980s the Métis' marginal status has not changed. Moreover he calls it their common ground:

> The social status of today's Métis is summed up in a single word – 'marginal.' Whether in the bush in Northern Ontario or on the road allowances in the prairies, on marginal farmland in B.C., or on the fringes of industrialized areas, the one feature common to all Métis is their 'marginality.' There is a certain irony in the fact their very marginality or 'forgotten people' status gives them more in common than most other Canadians have with each other. (Duke Redbird in Moses and Goldie, 124)

understandable that Wilfred George Scofield desired to escape a childhood of racism, discrimination and economic poverty. The process of his dissociation from his Métis identity occurred in three steps. First Scofield's grandfather moved away from his home and never returned. Secondly he attempted to cross the colour as well as class line by marrying a white woman. For the rest of his life he keeps his Cree mother and grandmother a secret, which is the third step of the denial of his identity.

By leaving his home and never returning, Wilfred George Scofield breaks ties with the land. As already established in chapter four, the Métis as one of the three Aboriginal people in Canada have a special relationship to the land. Bev Cardinal, a Métis woman, asserts, "For Aboriginal people, the land is deeply intertwined with identity: they believe that they originate from the land – from their mother the Earth" (2002, 75). Thus the land both influences and also shapes identity. Because the land influences and shapes people's identity, George Scofield's decision to part from it is even more significant. While his Cree mother, Gregory's Cheechum, desperately tries to hold on to the land and thus her identity, George feels a strong urge to leave it. In this manner George desires to interrupt the interdependency between the land and identity. Instead he wants to dissociate himself from both and begin a new life.

His will to separate from the land as well as his maternal heritage is supported by his age; as Scofield writes: "Grandpa left home at thirteen" (8). Though still a child he considers leaving his only possibility of survival. What grandfather Scofield desires to escape from is poverty and shame. "Many of the families that had once been proud and strong, independent and hopeful, were now reduced to squatting on Crown Lands or living in shanty towns, outcasts in their own country" (8). Bearing this in mind George Scofield assimilates into mainstream society by detaching himself from his roots.

George Scofield's disassociation from his Métis identity marks the beginning of a life in denial, albeit a life with elements of self-sacrifice. George Scofield literally as well as mentally leaves his home behind to secure his daughters a life away from "shanty towns" (8). In order to do so he can under no circumstances lift the secret of his Cree ancestors: his mother Ida May and his grandmother Otter. As a result his secret did not

even penetrate George Scofield's marriage.[82] Too deep must have been the scars of poverty, oppression and racism that he felt he could not confide in his wife. "When she met Grandpa a short time later and they married, he never told her he was Native. […] I suppose Grandpa felt that his chances were already limited and he didn't want to restrict them any further" (9). By "chances" Scofield possibly refers to his grandfather's desire to assimilate into mainstream society. Thus marrying Avis Goud was his chance to live a life beyond racial discrimination. Consequently, he was afraid that if he included his wife in his secret she might not have married him. This would have reminded him of the reasons why he wanted to deny his Métisness in the first place. For that reason George Scofield "kept great-grandmother Ida a secret and refused to speak about her" (8).

Apart from self-sacrifice, George Scofield's denial of his Métis identity also depicts a survival mechanism. Retrospectively Gregory is able to see that his grandfather's aspirations to cross the colour line were to spare his daughters from racism, oppression and poverty. Thus he writes: "My grandparent's marriage of secrets provided a better life for my mom, and aunts, at least as far as racism was concerned. Perhaps, for Grandpa, it was the only way to try to guarantee them fairness and dignity" (11). What becomes apparent in Scofield's reminiscences about his grandfather is that the denial of his Métis identity served as a means of survival. The aspect of not just literal but also spiritual survival comes full circle with Gregory. While George Scofield's daughters leave his secret unsearched, his grandson Gregory begins the search for his Métis heritage. It can be argued that George's denial made it possible for Gregory to survive and reclaim his family's Métisness. This finds agreement in a comment made by Emma LaRocque, which she directed at Christine Welsh: "You and I are survivors. We're here because the generations that came before us survived, and maybe generations of a hundred years from now will be there because we survived" (Welsh 1997, 65).

[82] It remains questionable to Gregory how his grandmother could not have noticed her husband's Cree features. "It seems odd to me that my grandmother would have never identified him as being Native. Although he was fair-skinned, he had dark eyes and hair, predominant Cree features" (9). His astonishment can however result from his rather limited sources about his grandparent's life. Resulting from this Scofield simply assumes: "Perhaps she did know or suspect something, but chose to overlook it" (9).

Dorothy Scofield and Her Son Gregory

As much as her father, George Scofield, tries to hide his secret, his daughter Dorothy suspects their Métisness. However, with her father dead and his secret wrapped around him in his grave, Dorothy does not further question her suspicion. In this manner she accepts her Métis heritage in a passive way. Because she leads a life marked by a certain restlessness, abuse and violence, she may not have had the energy to actively reclaim her father's heritage. Her passive acceptance can be seen in her almost silent support of Gregory's friendship with Aunty Georgie, a Cree woman who lives in their building complex: "Mom never said much, only that she liked her [Aunty Georgie] a great deal and that she was happy I'd found such a good friend" (43). What Gregory's mother is really happy about is that Aunty epitomizes a bridge that connects them with their own, yet denied Métis identity.[83] Since Greg's mother is too afraid to speak out about what she has always suspected and thus openly affirm her Métisness, she silently appreciates that Aunty teaches Greg about their heritage.[84]

Gregory, however, lives through a similar state of suspecting but not certainly knowing who he is and who his grandfather was. Instead of suppressing his Aboriginal ancestry, which he suspects to run through his veins, Gregory embraces it. In doing so he does not passively accept his suspicion, like his mother did most of her life, but attempts to confirm it. In searching for the truth, Gregory first believes himself to be a Great chief. As a child he "was happiest wandering off into the forest or hiding in treetops, imagining [himself] to be a Great Chief dressed in a long-feathered warbonnet and buckskin shirt" (29). His imagination is nourished by the many books he finds in the various libraries of schools and towns: "To me, no one could be as interesting as watching the river flow by with its massive

[83] Gregory even believes to see a certain similarity between the two women: "She [Aunty] sort of looked like Mom, only older" (40). Gregory sees a certain confirmation of his own Aboriginal ancestry in the similar looks of Georgie and his mother.

[84] Because Aunty Georgie takes on a very significant role in Gregory's life it can be argued that she serves as a substitute for Gregory's dead grandfather. She takes over the teachings of the grandparents or the Elders, by instilling in Gregory a sense of belonging and by teaching him Cree stories, the Cree language and Cree medicine.

log booms or reading about the great chiefs like Sitting Bull, Red Cloud, Geronimo, and Chief Joseph" (39).[85]

At the same time Gregory also learns about the Métis. In Eurocentric history lessons, he is taught to despise the Métis, as his history books claim Louis Riel to be crazy and a traitor and his people to have "no culture or language and nothing to be proud of" (64). Gregory feels humiliated and ashamed. While his grandfather and his mother pretend to be white in order not to be Métis, Gregory chooses to be Cree: "I decided Aunty must be wrong about us being half-breeds. We were *Nay-he-yow-wuk* – Crees!" (65).[86] Gregory internalizes the Eurocentric writings of Canadian history, as well as the euro-Christian concept of purity,[87] as he wants to be rather "a true and pure Indian" (166) than Métis.

It is only in his early twenties when Gregory is able to overcome the internalized racism, which taught him "about crazy Louis Riel and the useless half-breeds" (164). During the annual "Back to Batoche Days" Gregory is given enough strength to acknowledge his Métis identity. He writes, "I looked around the theatre and saw *my* people. I knew I had come home at last" (166). In Scofield's emotional acceptance of his Métiness it is significant that he exclaims to have "come home," an expression, which is also the title of the respective chapter. "Home" implies that he has finally found the place of his ancestors and his true place of belonging: "Never again would I search for a place of belonging" (166-167).

His mother too, feels as if a weight has been lifted, the weight of not quite knowing. With Gregory's confirmation of their Métis identity his mother feels as if her questions have been answered and she is able to openly speak about the past. Gregory reminisces: "Mom immediately embraced being Métis. I recall the pride that came across her face as she thoughtfully fingered one of Grandpa's pictures, nodding her head as if her

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[85] Compare to Cheryl Raintree in Culleton's fictionalized autobiography *In Search of April Raintree*. Both Cheryl and Gregory find in these numerous books a stereotyped and romanticized picture of First Nations people.

[86] Compare with the last verse of Scofield's poem "Policy of the Dispossessed." There he exclaims "We were always *katipâmsôchik* – The People Who Own Themselves" (55). This change in naming clearly depicts Scofield's process of decolonization. While he is a boy he wishes for nothing more to be true than to be of Cree origin and thus names himself correspondingly. Later in his life, Scofield comes to accept his Métis identity and consequently changes the term by which he refers to himself and his people. This example shows how important naming and labelling is in the process of decolonization.

[87] As already mentioned in chapter two the colonizing forces feared their labourers to have relationships with the Indigenous population as they considered métissage to adulterate "the purity of blood" ((Dickason 1985, 21).

own childhood questions had suddenly been answered" (181). It almost appears as if she needed Gregory to proudly reclaim their Métis identity first, before she felt able to lift the veil of shame as well.

Dorothy Scofield's Métisness comes full circle as she replaces shame with self-respect. This turning point is also supported by Scofield's deliberate choice of the chapter's title: "Endings / Beginnings" (180). While the word "Endings" reflects the fact that Gregory puts an end to his grandfather's secret, the word "Beginnings" stands for the revival of their Métis identity. Although interrupted by a painful period of shame and self-hatred, the circle of Métis identity in the Scofield family is mended. Moreover, the closing of the circle and the overcoming of internalized shame depict a micro version of decolonization. Eventually both mother and son are strong enough to subvert the dominant society's racism, which served the colonizer's "divide and conquer" strategy, as Howard Adams in his chapter "The Basis of Racism" says (1989, 13). They do so by proudly affirming their Métis identity. Consequently, in the process of decolonization they do not only claim their Métis identity back but also their dignity as human beings, as they interrupt the circle of internalized shame.

Don, Gregory's Stepfather

When Gregory is almost eight years old, Don steps into his and his mother's life. Both recovering alcoholics Dorothy and Don befriend each other. While in the beginning their relationship appears to be harmonious, Don soon shows his abusive and violent side. He is, what Aunty teaches Gregory, an apple: "Dem are da worse kinda Indians. Apples! Red on da outside and white on da inside" (49).[88] Don's conflict between his outer looks and his inner self-perception is expressed in the physical attacks first on Gregory only and later on Dorothy as well. Courageous Gregory recalls one of many incidences:

[88] What comes as a surprise for both the reader as well as for Gregory is the information about Don's family background. In retrospect Gregory recalls a conversation he had with his mother, years after she left Don for good. As it turns out Don's "mother was a hereditary chief from northern B.C. and he, too, could have been a chief, but he disowned his mother and her family" (72). Instead, Don began to idealize his father, a Scot who left the family when Don was still a boy. Thus, Don admires someone who abandoned him as a child, someone who is characterized by absence rather than by presence. Also ironic is the fact that Gregory desires to be a Chief, a position Don could have been in. Gregory's desire and Don's reality show how similar their lives are, with one exception: while Gregory searches for his Métis identity, Don chooses to deny his Aboriginal ancestry.

> In the beginning Don would march me downstairs, force me to pull my pants down, and spank me. But then he started to use belts or whatever else he could find, like coat hangers or pieces of wood. Still, when that wasn't enough, he would hit me in the face or stomach. Sometimes he even threw me down the stairs. (45)

Helpless, the eight-year-old Gregory is at the mercy of his stepfather's furious rage.

What may well have caused Don's constant ambivalence is a high amount of self-hatred, shame and internalized racism, which dominant society instilled in him for being of Aboriginal ancestry. He counteracts this ambivalence by completely subjugating himself to the colonizer's systematic racism. Instead of accepting his Aboriginal identity, Don internalizes the euro-Christian belief in its own superiority. In his desperate need to be part of the dominant society, he completely denies his Aboriginal ancestry. When Aunty Georgie "asked him what tribe he came from" he reacts angry and claims "he was a Black Scot and God damn proud of it!" (49). In this fit of patriotism Don subjects himself to what Howard Adams calls "white supremacy" as well as to euro-Christian patriarchy, which privileges men over women. He does so by denying his maternal heritage and by claiming to be what his father was: Scottish. Consequently, Don rather idealizes his absent father than his mother who brought him up.

Don's self-hatred and shame for being of Aboriginal descent is also shown by his utter denial of his outward appearance. In one of the first meetings between the eight-year-old Gregory and Don, the first openly says what he suspects: "But you're an Indian" (45). Thereupon Don experiences great distress, as he is reminded of the truth, a truth he feels unable to accept. "His face went about twenty shades of red. He grabbed my arm and squeezed it so tightly, I began to cry. 'Don't ever fucking call me that again!' he hissed" (45). Alone, Don's word choice of "fucking" and "that" implies that he dissociates himself from anything remotely Aboriginal. Moreover, his verbally and physically aggressive reaction resembles a threat: if Gregory dares to remind Don again of his Aboriginal background, the latter will resort to even more violence.

Violence becomes a means through which Don vents the pain of his self-hatred and shame. In his brutality he often turns their house into his

own battlefield. Warlike he treats Gregory and his mother like his subjected soldiers: "In the mornings he would burst into my room, shake my bed, and stand over me, screaming the day's orders.[89] […] He was like an insane sergeant, forcing her [Gregory's mother] to her knees, slapping her over and over if she didn't bark back his orders" (70). It is in these moments of sergeant versus soldier that Don feels superior. From this master and servant relationship he nourishes his need for having to be in control. Only if he is in control he is able to suppress his own self-hatred and shame. By subjugating Gregory and his mother Don overcomes his own subjugation by mainstream society. Thus his violence against the weak is a way by which he counteracts the colonizer's suppression of himself.

Apart from being a means by which Don compensates his pain of assimilation, the image of war implies that he is fighting someone and/or something. The "enemy" in Don's battle is however neither Dorothy nor Gregory, but his internalized racism; an ideology which instilled in him the belief of the superiority of Euro-Canadians. His entire life he therefore fights the Aboriginal in him and in doing so becomes a victim of himself, like Gregory and Dorothy are victims of him. In this cyclic war of victimization Don is about to destroy his life and the life of the people that surround him.[90] Retrospectively Scofield describes their family situation by figuratively portraying Don as a bomb: "It was like living under the constant threat of a time-bomb" (71). Don's alcohol addiction and his violent outbreaks, metaphorically embody the explosion of this bomb. His mental and physical sufferings, caused by mainstream society subjugating him, become unbearable for the three of them. While Dorothy escapes into a world of tranquilizers, Gregory skips school and takes on a similar violent

[89] Having served in the Korean War, Don may have internalized a "regimented life of routine" (70). Moreover, Scofield remarks that Don "believed discipline made the weak, as he often called me [Gregory], strong" (70).

[90] The antithesis of Aboriginal spirituality and Christianity further supports the destructiveness of Don's denial. After the latter tells Gregory that he can no longer visit his beloved Aunty, Gregory refers to Don as the Devil by writing: "*Ke-chee-manitow* had given me Aunty – and now the Devil was taking her away" (47). While *Ke-chee-manitow* gives life by sending Aunty to Gregory, the Devil is taking away that life. Thus Scofield not only opposes Aboriginal spirituality to Christianity, but also good versus evil and life versus death. By referring to his stepfather as the embodiment of the Devil, Scofield underlines Don's assimilation into mainstream society. Don has dissociated himself so far from his maternal heritage and thus Aboriginal spirituality that he has become part of the Christian religion. But even there he only takes on a marginal role, as the devil epitomizes evilness in Christianity. Moreover, his self-hatred and internalized racism also make him an agent of assimilation, because Don rules "no more Indian stuff in the house" (46). In a figurative sense he attempts to kill the "Indian" in Gregory and subverts his search for his identity by forbidding him to see the boy's only link to his heritage – Aunty Georgie.

behaviour as Don. In this manner Don passes on his way of thinking and feeling to Gregory.

Don, in fighting the Aboriginal in him, negates the cultural survival of his mother's family and their legacy. Instead of searching for his Aboriginal identity, Don chooses to leave his maternal ancestry unsearched. He remains in a colonized state in which he feels subjugated, worthless and ashamed. His vehement denial can be compared to Gregory Scofield's grandfather's denial of his Métisness. Thus Scofield writes: "Ironically his [Don's] history was much like my grandfather's. One man chose a life of brutality, the other of kindness" (73). While Scofield's grandfather lived in clandestine to secure the cultural and physical survival of his family, Don becomes part of the genocidal machinery of assimilation. Once Don dies he will take his family secret into his grave and the internalized racism, which has taught him to hate himself and his mother's heritage, will have prevented his family's survival. Consequently, it can be argued that Don forever remains in the colonized state of "unsearched."

5.2. The Search for Sexual Identity

In his search for sexual identity, Scofield experiences similar obstacles. Again mainstream society has trouble accepting Scofield the way he is. Because it is his desire to fit in, Scofield as a boy and young adult, adapts to his homophobic environment.[91] He denies his homosexuality and

[91] It is interesting that until recently the word "homophobia" did not exist in standard dictionaries. Connie Fife in her essay "Sensuous Beings and the Role of Homophobia" writes: "I dive back into the dictionary and find that this word, 'homophobia,' does not exist. It is not defined. The fear of sameness and equality is housed within our own ribcages" (1994, 206). In doing so she suggests that the fear of sameness is constructed rather than natural.

acts accordingly to the heterosexual norms of dominant society. By reclaiming the sacredness of Two-Spirited people, Scofield is able to embrace his sexual orientation and to leave a childhood and adolescence of internalized shame behind him. Thus, through decolonizing his sexual orientation he achieves a new self-awareness, which helps him to accept himself. He comes to understand that the revival of the tradition of Two-Spirited people serves to heal the gay and lesbian Aboriginal community from centuries of sexual colonization. This, however, is not to be mistaken with a desire to return to pre-contact times as the reclaiming of the sacred role Two-Spirited people is meant as a source for self-confidence and self-acceptance in order to overcome the discrimination of a homophobic society.

5.2.1. "I used to be sacred": Two-Spirits in the Context of Decolonization

> The first Two-Spirit didn't come about
> because the Great Mystery was having
> a confused day.
> We got put on Turtle Island
> for a reason […]. (Scofield 1996, 63-65)

Scofield's poem "I used to be sacred" expresses what many critics and writers agree on: before the colonization of the North American continent people who housed both female and male spirits were widely accepted and considered gifted. Will Roscoe for example asserts, "alternative gender roles were among the most widely shared features of North American societies" (Roscoe 1998, 7).[92] Jim Elledge agrees and demands, "to be aware that the socially recognized role of two-spirits is one aspect shared among most of the Native American tribes" (Elledge 2002, XV). Beth Brant concedes, "There are some stories of Two-Spirits being revered *because* of their blurred gender" (Brant 1994, 12).[93] While there seems to be an overall

[92] These alternative gender roles generally encompass the so-called third and fourth gender. Roscoe explains that the third gender "refers to male berdaches and sometimes male and female berdaches, while fourth gender always refers to female berdaches" (Roscoe 1998, 7).

[93] In the field of psychology and sociology "sex" refers to the biologically determined features, which distinguish men and women (Zimbardo and Gerrig 2003, 489-491). Those features are the different functions of reproduction and the differences in the hormonal and anatomic equipment (491). Moreover, they are universal and cannot be changed by social influences (491). "Gender" on the contrary refers to learned behaviours and attitudes of men and women concerning gender roles (491). In terms of "sex" a person can either be a man or a woman, a boy or a girl. This person can, however, combine aspects of both genders: a feminine boy or a masculine girl. In spite of this many cultures punish behaviour that in

consensus over the frequency and sacredness of Two-Spirits in pre- contact Native North American societies, it is not this chapter's purpose to deny the opposite. The intention is, however, to outline the impact of European conquest upon Native American and Fist Nations sexual orientation and recent efforts to decolonize that "colonized, sterilized, whitewashed sexuality" (Brant 1994, 13).

When the first Europeans set foot on the North American continent they encountered men who dressed as women and engaged in women's work and vice versa. Will Roscoe quotes from Edwin T. Denig, a fur trader who entered the country of the Crow Indians in Montana in 1833: "Strange country this, where males assume the dress and perform the duties of females, while women turn to men and mate with their own sex!" (Roscoe 1998, 3). What Denig observed has become known as "berdache" tradition among anthropologists, a term describing alternative gender roles in North American societies.[94] Roscoe explains that berdaches are frequently attributed with spiritual powers (Roscoe 1998, 8). In many societies alternative gender roles were sanctioned by tribal mythology (Roscoe 1998, 8; Elledge 2002, xv). Although the accounts on Two-Spirited people's sexuality are very limited Roscoe contends, "the only sexual relationships berdache are not known to have formed are ones involving other berdaches" (1998, 10). He concludes that the primary characteristic of third gender sexuality was not its same-sex nature, but its non-reproductivity (10). Consequently, Native worldview opposed reproductive sex to non-reproductive sex, rather than heterosexuality to homosexuality (10).[95]

This Native belief in sexual diversity constituted an obvious contrast to Christianity's concern with same-sex relationships. The conquerors' belief in the superiority of their religion arrogated the condemnation of Native

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the eyes of the respective society is not gender conform. In this manner it is a common belief in U.S. society that the sex and gender of a person match, so Heike Gerds in her doctoral thesis (2004, 13). She continues by explaining, "heterosexuality serves as the normative model of sexual orientation" (13). This creates tremendous problems for people who do not fit into those categories constructed by Christian ideology.

[94] In the past decade the term "berdache" has caused discussions among anthropologists and Aboriginal people. Because the term "has its origins in Western thought and languages" scholars asked to drop its use (Roscoe 1998, 17). Instead, the name "Two-Spirited people" is preferred, which is an English translation of the Anishinabe/Ojibway term *niizh manitoag* (1998, 109). Roscoe asserts that its popularity derives from its affirmation of both sexual and racial identity (111). Moreover, it includes both sexes, whereas "lesbian" and "gay" is rather exclusive. Consequently, I will employ the term "berdache" only when it is part of a quotation.

[95] Moreover Roscoe explains that reproductive sex led to the fulfilment of one's kinship role, while non-reproductive sex was engaged in for pleasure and emotional rewards (Roscoe 1998, 10). In this manner it was seen as entertaining and necessary for good health.

North American (and South American) cultural as well as sexual diversity. In their genocidal drive to "civilize" and "Christianize" the many cultures of the North American continent, the colonizers left out no efforts to extinguish Native customs regarding sex and gender.[96]

The colonization of traditional Aboriginal sexuality has caused great pain in many communities. The results of homophobic discrimination toward gay and lesbian Aboriginal people are most evident in the high rates of alcoholism and suicide, says Williams (1986, 207). Many feel alienated from both mainstream and Aboriginal societies as they are burdened twice: on one hand dominant society stigmatizes them as "inferior savages" and on the other hand Christian religion stigmatizes them as "sick and sinful" (1986, 207). As a result, gay and lesbian Aboriginal people are pushed to the margins of the margins and become invisible and silent. Hodges and Hutter argue: "The ultimate success of all forms of oppression is our self-oppression. Self-oppression is achieved when the gay person has adopted and internalized straight people's definition of what is good and bad" (1977, 3). Inasmuch as every person is an agent of her/his own oppression, it is up to the individual's power to overcome its oppression (3). Thus, liberation from mainstream's homophobic stigmata must be initiated by the oppressed themselves.

The 1980s saw the beginning of a new self-awareness of lesbian and gay Natives. Through organizations like Gay American Indians (GAI) and American Indian Gay and Lesbians (AIGL) a social structure, based on traditional cultural values, was created (Roscoe 1998, 103). Their goal was among others to celebrate their "roles as gay and lesbian people in [their] traditional indigenous cultures" (108). This included the reclaiming of the sacred role of Two-Spirited people (109) and therewith the decolonization of traditional sexuality. Aboriginal gays and lesbians no longer accept the marginal position assigned to them by their Aboriginal communities as well as by the dominant society. Instead, they put an end to self-hatred and

[96] Children were taken to boarding / residential schools and were severely punished for any expression of their culture. They were forced to wear clothes that were appropriate for western categories of gender, but which entirely suppressed Two-Spirited children. In case of biologically males the hair was cut as well. As a result some berdache even committed suicide as they did not want to change their gender role (Williams 1986, 182). These institutions challenged the Native and Aboriginal order of life as children began to forget traditional ways and traditional medicine. In addition to forgetting the customs of their ancestors, children also began to internalize Christian notions about the evilness of sex. In this manner both the U.S. and Canadian government perpetuated their homophobic worldview.

self-oppression, which is summarized by the following quotation: “Five hundred years could not remove my original place of being and I know that past, present and future are related” (Fife 1994, 208).

5.2.2. Gregory Scofield’s Search for Sexual Identity

When Gregory is in grade seven he has “sexual thoughts about other boys” (59). His social environment, however, has instilled in him the belief that “sex” and “gender” of a person must match and that it is wrong for boys to fantasize about boys. Gregory has internalized this homophobic model of sexual orientation to the point where he first begins to think he is not normal and later escapes into denial in order to fit into a dominantly heterosexual society. Thus, Gregory reacts with a strong disassociation from his body and his surroundings after his first conscious experience with his sexual orientation. Confused by his physical attraction to his teacher Mr. Barnes, Scofield writes: “I began to feel as if I was floating out of my body, floating above the heads of my classmates, above Mom and Grandma, even Aunty” (59). Aimlessly he sees himself parting from his body, a body, which in his eyes does not react according to the standards of his social environment.

Gregory’s attempt to distance himself from his body is also shown by the following sentence: “I felt rootless and distant, like a ghost moving from room to room, never quite settling in one place” (59). The words “like a ghost” imply that Scofield makes a distinction between his mind and his body, which is initiated by his sexual feelings for Mr. Barnes. Metaphorically, in the shape of a ghost, invisible, silent and unreal, Gregory’s mind becomes the audience to his body’s doings. While the body remains on the floor, the mind moves without direction. The disharmony between body and mind is further supported by the words “rootless” and “distant,” which create an atmosphere of restlessness and insecurity. “Rootless” thereby reflects his fear of getting rejected by his family. Because family is often associated with roots, a rejection by the family can be experienced as a feeling of being “rootless,” in which case the word “distant” works supportively.

Gregory's conflict with the internalization of heterosexuality as a normative model and his homosexuality is also expressed in an image of physical pain: "My muscles and joints began to ache and I felt as if invisible hands were pulling my arms and legs" (59). The fear arising from his sexual orientation and moreover the fear of being different than his social environment results in a moment of bodily destruction, as Gregory finds himself unable to accept his sexual orientation. Consequently, the pain of being torn apart epitomizes the struggle between his body and his spirit. While his spirit says: "I began to think something was horribly wrong with me" (59), his body nevertheless feels drawn to boys.

To counteract the discrepancy between his body and his mind and to overcome his shame, Gregory begins to suppress his homosexuality. "Girls, too, were supposed to be on my mind. But like a thief, I found myself stealing glances at the boys in the gym" (63). Again his body stands in opposition to his mind. Because Gregory has internalized the euro-Christian belief that homosexuality is sinful and wrong, he feels he has to adapt to the standards of a homophobic society. His sexual assimilation, however, creates a conflict within him, as he still desires what society despises. This conflict is shown by the word "supposed," which expresses that he knows what behaviour is expected of him. Outwardly he plays by the rules of his social environment, but inwardly he desires to look at other boys.

Because Gregory is well aware of the rules of conduct in his social network, he begins to interpret his desire as a criminal act. In doing so he refers to himself as a thief, who is secretly "stealing glances at the boys in the gym." His comparison to someone who is illegally taking something that is not his own shows how deeply entrenched the euro-Christian belief of heterosexuality is in Gregory. Moreover, his association with crime shows that he also expects to be punished once his secret is lifted.

For Gregory this punishment entails beatings and insults, which ultimately lead to the exclusion from his peer group. Confused by his desire to watch other boys, Gregory asks himself: "Was I a fag like some of the boys who got beaten up after school? [...] I wasn't a sissy or a geek" (63). This quotation inevitably illustrates how students, who show behaviour of their opposite gender, are severely beaten and insulted. Gregory, however, does not want to be like those boys and in a determinant manner exclaims:

“But I just couldn’t be!” (63). This quotation confirms how Gregory’s environment too, has caused him to internalize homophobia.

The fear of being different and his experience of an abusive home, marked by violence and neglect, make Gregory all the more long for acceptance - an acceptance he has to pay a high price for. During the summer of his thirteenth birthday, Gregory observes: “Some of them [friends from school] had girlfriends and bragged about sexy things they did. I wanted to brag, too. But more than anything I wanted to belong” (60). This quotation shows how desperately Gregory is longing to be part of a group. In his need to fit in and do the things the other boys do, he is willing to deny an essential part of himself and therewith begins a life of self-oppression.

The oppression of one’s homosexuality or one’s ancestry often results in silence, as the persons affected do not talk about their secret. Too afraid of the reaction of their environment and in order to assimilate into mainstream society they conceal their identity. In doing so they go through an inner migration, in which they shut themselves off of their social network and suffer in silence. Gregory’s friend Sean is one example of how homophobia can deprive a person of her/his spirit. Since Sean is “soft-spoken and somewhat effeminate,” he is always “singled out at school for being gay” (73). Instead of defending himself, Sean wears “his persecution silently, seldom sticking up for himself” (73). Sean, like so many other gay men (and women) and Aboriginal people, withdraws himself from his environment and connives at his fate. In retrospect, Gregory thinks:

> I hurt when I think about those times, about Sean. So many gay men, like so many Native people and people of colour, are at the complete mercy of a society that condones homophobia and racism, and so many of us go through life silently accepting those stereotypes, ultimately dying spiritless and shame-ridden. (74)

As previously established, Gregory too, gives into self-oppression. The most significant expression of his denial is the destruction of the poetry and stories he writes. The writing of the poetry itself, however, is to Scofield a means of healing, as he can only be his true self on the pages filled with his poems. Thus, he asserts “the writing kept me alive, kept me somehow connected to an ancient world where I found peace” (106). In a cathartic

way the act of writing is Scofield's way out of his self-oppression, as it becomes his ultimate escape from a homophobic and racist society. The more momentous is Gregory's destruction of his poetry. By burning the poems, which contain his true feelings and thus his true identity. Gregory wishes to rid himself of the problems he faces because of his homosexuality and Métisness. Consequently, the destruction of his poetry resembles a symbolic purging of his identity, through which he reassesses himself. Recalling one instance from his teenage years, Scofield writes: "The notebooks in my duffle bag that held all of my poems and stories now seemed to belong to someone else. I walked around the back of the building, dug out the notebooks, and set them on fire. I watched them smoulder and burn, feeling absolutely nothing" (85). This quotation exemplifies how Scofield through burning his poems attempts to escape from his identity. In order to do so he dissociates himself from his identity and transfers it to someone else, which is supported by the phrase, "all of my poems and stories now seemed to belong to someone else." The consequence of his disassociation from his identity is a feeling of emptiness, of "absolutely nothing." In his search for a place of belonging, Scofield hopes to find this place by metaphorically erasing his identity and then reassessing it. Thus, the burning of his poetry also stands for a new beginning, which will only be completed once Scofield overcomes his self-oppression and begins to accept himself.

Gregory's journey of acceptance, which will ultimately lead to healing takes him many years, years of painful suffering and denial. Just as he believed to be Cree to deny his Métis heritage, Gregory wants to be straight in order to forget about his homosexuality. When he meets Lauren, he writes: "I felt as if I had started life over. I was normal and straight, determined to get married and have a family" (138). Again, this excerpt exemplifies how deeply entrenched the heterosexual life style is in him, as he considers any life style differing from the standard norm as abnormal. This is supported by the stress Gregory puts on the words "normal and straight." By mentioning these words together, he implies that the one results in the other, which means that in Gregory's eyes and in the eyes of society to be straight means to be normal while homosexuality equals abnormality.

The imbalance between the two spirits that house in his body is a further evidence for Gregory's adaptation to a "colonized, sterilized, whitewashed sexuality" (Brant 1994, 13). While Gregory is waiting for the bus, after being kicked out of Aunty Sandra's house, a strange feeling is coming over him: "It was as if I had been cut in two, separated into bad and good, ugly and beautiful, stupid and smart, hateful and loving" (84-85). This separation into bad and good, however, is not a split in Gregory's personality but rather embodies his two spirits, not yet in peace with each other. In this manner the "bad," "ugly," "stupid" and "hateful" stands for his effeminate spirit, which society tends to despise. The "good," "beautiful," "smart" and "loving" part, on the other hand, is the spirit most accepted by homophobic society. Gregory's division into two spirits and his acceptance of the one spirit while rejecting the other spirit shows his assimilation into mainstream society, a society that punishes people who deviate from its constructed standard norm.

To overcome the feeling of abnormality and self-hatred, Gregory must accept both spirits within his body – he must revalue the so-called "bad spirit" and allow it to become equally important and positive as the other spirit. The process to reach harmony between his two spirits can be called decolonization of pre-contact customs regarding sex and gender. This process involves a return to a respectful attitude toward people who house two spirits in their body, rather than the desire to completely reinstate pre-contact traditions. Scofield demands this respect in his poem "I used to be sacred," in which he also digests the stereotypes Two-Spirited people have to deal with. One of these stereotypes, through which mainstream society discriminates homosexuals, is the assumption that homosexuality is a mistake by Mother Nature. Scofield responds to this stereotype by writing: "The first Two-Spirit didn't come about / because the Great Mystery was having / a confused day" (1996, 63). Instead, he rectifies, "We got put on Turtle Island / for a reason" (63). By using the pronoun "we," Scofield does not only speak for all Two-Spirited people, but also includes himself as a Two-Spirited.

Scofield's acceptance of himself as a Two-Spirit then signals the beginning of his journey to decolonization, which may result in healing. In this manner he no longer uses pejorative western names, for example "fag"

(1999, 63) and “poofter” (45), to relate to himself or other homosexual Aboriginal people, but the term Two-Spirited. Will Roscoe explains by using the term Two-Spirited, “contemporary native can align themselves with traditional culture and can make a claim for acceptance that no other gay minority group in the United States [as well as Canada] can” (Roscoe 1998, 111). Consequently, Scofield’s use of the term Two-Spirited to refer to himself and other homosexual Aboriginal people symbolizes the acceptance of the two spirits that house in his body.

Gregory Scofield has searched and found. The journey to find his cultural and sexual identity, both of which he was unable to accept for many years, ends with a figurative reunification of Scofield and his ancestors. In his twenties he overcomes the affects of colonization, which caused him to deny his Métisness and homosexuality, and begins to decolonize himself. Among the last words of his autobiography are the following: “The boy I had searched for was safe at last. Finally, I was free to grieve, to laugh, and to dream” (199).

Chapter Six

Conclusion

"You will go through four phases in your life. And when you have completed your path, you will come to your ancestors" (1999, 199). These are the finishing words in Gregory Scofield's autobiography. They describe a journey that can be found in many works of literature written by Métis and other Aboriginal people. It is a journey that can last many years and sometimes even a lifetime. Moreover, it is a journey that leads through valleys of self-hate and hills of self-acceptance. Above it all it is a journey that encompasses the search for one's identity, heritage and place of belonging. Because of the various actions of the imperial centre to colonize and culturally dislocate the Indigenous peoples of North America, this search has become a necessary means of healing the wounds of colonization. This journey of searching is completed when the searcher reconnects with her/his ancestors and mends the circle that was interrupted by cultural displacement for many generations.

Often the passage of overcoming the alienation from one's culture embodies a circular development. As mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, Janice Acoose describes Maria Campbell's journey of searching for her true identity by comparing it to a circular movement. A similar thematic circularity is reflected in the works of Rita Bouvier, Marilyn Dumont and Gregory Scofield. In respect to my thesis I have noticed such circularity as well, as the starting point of this work was a brief overview of Métis history,

which evinced how historical events and political actions have relegated the Métis from a proud nation to an oppressed and marginalized nation. The process from a colonized people to a decolonized people was depicted in the three subsequent chapters, in which the analysis of Métis literature proved that the Métis complete(d) the circular movement of returning to the old new understanding of themselves by developing a cultural consciousness through artistic expressions like music, theatre and literature.

The examination of works by Campbell, Dumont, Bouvier and Scofield also showed that the process of decolonization, of overcoming the experienced cultural dislocation, is initiated by a choice. In order to decolonize themselves, all four writers had to choose between hearing and not hearing, between becoming voiced or remaining silent, and between searching and not searching. These dual possibilities are reflected in the prefix "-un" in the title of the thesis. It is a concept essential to this work, as it contrasts the state of colonization with the process of decolonization.

Through their works of literature Maria Campbell, Gregory Scofield, Rita Bouvier, and Marilyn Dumont, proved that they have long begun their journey of decolonization. Pen and paper as their most important tool, they produce a literature that becomes their platform of resistance and reclaiming. With the power of words Campbell, Dumont, Bouvier and Scofield reclaim their stories, history, identity, as well as the land and dignity of their ancestors. In a battle fought on paper they also resist Standard English, Eurocentric historiography and the dominant discourse that influences how Métis people see themselves. It was then the central concern of this thesis to illustrate the means of decolonization in the works of Campbell, Scofield, Bouvier, and Dumont.

The third chapter, "(Un)heard," showed that Campbell's instrument of decolonization is her language use. Campbell deliberately appropriates Standard English and turns it into english. In doing so she proves that she is not only aware of the function of language but also knows how to use it for her purposes. In her story collection *Stories of the Road Allowance People*, these purposes encompass the subversion of Standard English, the celebration of her father's way of speaking English and privileging the oral over the written word. Campbell implements her resistance by her conscious employment of language strategies like code switching,

transliteration and the reduplication of the subject. Her métissage of the ear and the eye is also a means by which the writer bethinks the Oral Tradition – a tradition that has partly become a victim of colonization. Moreover, the re-evaluation and return to old traditions proves that the literal marginalization of the Métis to the road allowances served as a niche for the survival of Métis culture.

The central concern of the subsequent chapter was the process of becoming voiced. During the analysis of the poems by Marilyn Dumont, Rita Bouvier and Gregory Scofield it became apparent that for Métis writers the act of rewriting history from a Métis perspective is a significant tool in overcoming their colonial voicelessness.

By employing techniques like code switching, writing back and writing home, the poets figuratively reclaim the Métis people's dignified place in Canadian history as well as subvert Eurocentric historiography. A further means by which the poets gain voice is by claiming back the right to name themselves. In doing so, the persona in Marilyn Dumont's poem for example, deliberately refers to itself and the Métis people as "halfbreeds" and thus criticizes mainstream society's paternalism of the Michif. Apart from history and labelling, the aspect of land too, was made a subject in the selected poems. Gregory Scofield, for instance, figuratively decolonizes Métis land and therefore counteracts any further assimilation of the Métis people. Resulting from the analysis of the three respective poems, it can be asserted that Scofield, Dumont and Bouvier are very well aware of the concept of voice and use their poetry to break decades of oppression and silence.

The last of the three literary analysis chapters dealt with Gregory Scofield's search for his ethnic and sexual identity. The examination of his autobiography revealed the author's long and painful journey to self-acceptance. Since Scofield's grandfather denied his Métis heritage, the following generations felt it difficult to reclaim their Métisness. Striking in Gregory Scofield's process of decolonization was his mother's ready acceptance of her ethnic identity after Scofield himself began to unearth and embrace his grandfather's secret. The younger generation's new gained pride in their Métis culture appears to be one of the necessary steps for the older generation to be able to reaffirm their Métisness. Apart from

overcoming the shame of being Métis, which Scofield internalized through school history lessons and through experiencing his stepfather's personal self-hatred toward his own Aboriginality, the author also had to accept his homosexuality. An important movement that helped Scofield to acknowledge his sexual orientation as a gift given to him by Creator was the revival of the tradition of the Two-Spirited people. By accepting the two spirits that house in his body, Scofield is able to put an end to self-oppression and begin to decolonize a "colonized, sterilized, whitewashed sexuality" (Brant 1994, 13).

In the process of coalescing this thesis, I noticed a scarcity of secondary literature, which might be a result of the general marginalization of the literary works written by Métis. I came to ask myself how this marginalized position would change if more and more Michif begin to engage in studying their culture, apart from significant scholars like Janice Acoose, Maria Campbell, Emma LaRocque, Bruce Flamont, Fred Shore, Olive Dickason, to mention a few. Would Canada's mainstream society stop asking "And is there such a thing as Métis literature"? Perhaps, if the younger Michif generation keeps continuing the legacy of the older generation and researches Michif culture, mainstream society would not be surprised to hear about Métis literature anymore. Collecting Métis literary works in an anthology could further support this development toward a greater understanding of literature written by Métis. After all, art is an essential part of a people's culture:

"Our people will sleep for 100 years and when they awaken, it will be the artists who bring their spirits back"[97]

- Louis David Riel -

[97] This quotation is taken from the "2005 Louis Riel Celebrations" program, presented by the Saskatchewan Native Theatre Company. The celebration was directed by Maria Campbell.

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