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Encounters between Native Americans and Whites in James Welch's Historical Novels *Fools Crow* and *The Heartsong of Charging Elk*

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Abstract

This thesis examines encounters between Native Americans and whites in James Welch's historical novels *Fools Crow* and *The Heartsong of Charging Elk*. I wish to show that the encounters are forced and happen against the background of imperialism and colonialism, and occur between peoples of unequal powers. In the novels, traditional Native American culture is profoundly affected by the encroaching whites, who believe they have a God-given right to colonize and settle Indian land. The novels illuminate that the peoples involved in the encounters have incompatible worldviews and values. The Blackfeet in *Fools Crow* view nature as sacred and as common property, while the whites favour private property, and think nature is there for them to exploit. These irreconcilable views cause clashes between the peoples, and eventually lead to a devastating massacre. *Fools Crow* shows that the Blackfeet fear dislocation and assimilation. In *The Heartsong of Charging Elk*, the Lakotas are dislocated and about to be assimilated into white culture. The protagonist, Charging Elk, leaves America with Buffalo Bill's Wild West show, and in France, he learns that the French look upon him as a savage belonging to a vanishing people. Charging Elk is assimilated into French culture, but *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* shows that he is able to keep his Lakota identity. In spite of all the hardships *Fools Crow* and *Charging Elk* experience, both novels indicate hope for the future.

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Introduction

In a globalized world, encounters between peoples happen on a daily basis. Meeting other peoples and getting to know them is considered a positive contribution to people's lives. Historically, peoples have always had mutual encounters, but unfortunately there are numerous examples of encounters between peoples that have not been mutually positive, and these encounters often take place between peoples of unequal powers. Imperialism and colonialism are closely connected with these encounters. In this thesis, I will analyse encounters between Native Americans and whites in James Welch's historical novels *Fools Crow* and *The Heartsong of Charging Elk*. How does James Welch use encounters between Native Americans and whites to provide both Natives' perspectives and whites' perspectives to illustrate the effects of imperialism and colonialism? My reading of Welch's novels shows that the encounters between whites and Natives tended to be forced, took place under conditions of unequal power, and resulted from the fact that Natives had something the whites wanted: land. The first novel shows this very clearly, while the second shows the effects of the whites' urge for land: dislocation and assimilation. *Fools Crow* is set on the Great Plains of Montana and *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* is set in France. The characters in the first novel are afraid of acculturation and displacement, and in the second novel all these processes have already occurred. Finally, I will propose that *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* shows that Native Americans can keep their identity in changing circumstances.

James Welch was Blackfeet on his father's side and Gros Ventre on his mother's side. In addition, two of his grandfathers were of Irish origin, which makes Welch mixedblood. According to Owens, a mixedblood is "a native American of both Indian and European ancestry" (*Mixed* 5). Welch is proud of his Indian background: "I have always considered myself an Indian," he declares in an interview (Lupton 3). Among Native Americans there is a discussion regarding what they are going to call themselves. There are several options including tribe names, "indigenous," "aboriginal," "Native American," "American Indian" and "Indian". Blanka Schortz claims that "all of these terms have slightly different meanings and connotations associated with them" (20). She writes further that the terms have marginally divergent definitions in different countries. In my thesis I will use both "Indian," because it is used in the novels and "Native American," because it is the term more

acknowledged by critics. Welch called himself “Indian” and “Blackfeet.” However, he has stated that Blackfeet or Blackfoot are English names for the tribe. According to one scholar, “Welch admitted that neither term is indigenous to the original people of the Northern Plains. But contemporary Indians adopted the word Blackfeet, a settler name signifying ashes on their feet, because the old language is disappearing” (Lupton 4). Welch goes on to say that today most young people speak only English, and that they have taken Blackfeet into their English language. Here Welch indicates that they have their own English language, which varies from standard English. Welch uses this English in his historical novels. For instance, in *Fools Crow*, he calls the whites “Napikwans,” and in *The Heartsong of Charging Elk*, he calls them “Wasichus,” both words originated from Native languages. Welch has also written the non-fiction book *Killing Custer*. The book depicts the Native American view on what happened at little Big Horn, the battle where Custer was killed by Indians. In white American history this battle and the killing of Custer have become a myth where Custer is the hero that the Indians killed. Welch claims that “Custer embodied the ideals of a young nation” (*Killing* 21). The Indians only play the part of the savages. How disastrous this event was for the Indians is thoroughly understated. In addition, Welch writes about the massacre on the Marias, and about this massacre he argues, “the Massacre on the Marias River was more representative of what happened to Indian people who resisted the white invasion than Custer’s Last Stand” (22-23). The main focus in *Killing Custer* is the battle at Little Big Horn and the Massacre at the Marias, but Welch also writes about reservation Indians, boarding schools and Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show. *Killing Custer* is therefore a valuable source in understanding *Fools Crow* and *The Heartsong of Charging Elk*.

The novels are set on different continents and in different periods, and therefore offer different views on encounters between Native Americans and whites. *Fools Crow* is set in the late nineteenth century on the Great Plains in Montana. The protagonist in *Fools Crow* lives a traditional life with his tribe. This a period of hostile encounters between Native Americans and whites. Trading among the peoples is common and appreciated, but many of the encounters end in wars and massacres. The massacre at the Marias is a crucial incident in the novel. *The Heartsong of Charging Elk*, on the other hand, is mostly set in Marseilles, France. The protagonist, Charging Elk, is a participant in Buffalo Bill’s Wild West show and is left behind in Marseilles after he falls ill and ends up in hospital. Still, his homeland plays a vital part in the novel. *Fools Crow* and *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* depict encounters between

Native Americans and whites, in addition to Native American history and culture, and show that imperialism and colonialism changed Native American lives thoroughly. The whites did not just colonize their land, but also their stories, their oral traditions. Through these historical novels, Welch reclaims Native American history and culture and thus contributes to decolonization. Tuck and Yang claims that “Decolonization brings about the repatriation of Indigenous land and rights; it’s not a metaphor for other things we want to do to improve our societies and schools” (1). This definition of decolonization is very narrow, and I will use decolonization in a wider sense as Ashcroft et al do: “Decolonization is the process of revealing and dismantling colonialist power in all its forms” (56). The Maori professor, Linda Thuiwai Smith also writes about decolonization in a wider sense in her book *Decolonizing Methodologies*. She emphasizes that “decolonization must offer a language of possibility, a way out of colonialism” (204). In *Fools Crow* and *The Heartsong of Charging Elk*, Welch provides the Native American view of the history of America, and therefore the novels contribute to decolonizing.

Theoretical Framework

Encounters between peoples and nations are often regarded as positive phenomena and are encouraged by authorities and people alike. These encounters are associated with mutual understanding and respect. On the contrary, the encounters between Native Americans and whites are associated with exploitation, genocide and forced removal. The main difference, though, between encounters that are considered positive and those which are not is the inequality in power between the parties. The whites that arrived in the Americas originated from countries in Europe where imperialism and colonialism were the present ideologies, and they were used to exercising power to achieve their goals. In addition, they looked upon themselves as superior to other peoples, in this case the Native Americans.

Edward Said is probably the best known author on encounters between Natives and imperialists. His main focus is imperialism in the Arabic world, but his views and writings are transferable to the situation in the Americas after the arrival of Columbus. Said claims regarding North America that “there were claims for North American territory to be made and fought over (with astonishing success); there were native peoples to be dominated, variously exterminated, variously dislodged” (8). Said argues that human history is very much about land and the urge for more land. Often, this urge for more land implies a conflict with

indigenous people as indigenous people living on the wanted land must either be annihilated or displaced. In *Fools Crow*, the whites' urge for land, and continually more land is a constantly present threat. *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* depicts the impact of this process of dislodging. Mary Louise Pratt writes that encounters between Natives and whites took place in the "contact zone," which she describes as "the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict" (8). Pratt claims, in addition, that "'contact zones' [are] social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination – such as colonialism" (7). Although, Welch does not use the term "contact zone," the encounters between Natives and whites in *Fools Crow* and *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* repeatedly fit Pratt's definition.

Imperialism and colonialism

Encounters between Native Americans and whites were profoundly influenced by imperialism and colonialism, which are related theories. Imperialism is closely connected with empire and frequently associated with foreign policy. According to *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, imperialism is "state policy, practice, or advocacy of extending power and dominion, especially by direct territorial acquisition or by gaining political and economic control of other areas" ("Imperialism"). The history of imperialism is long, and it is related to empires like the Roman Empire and the British Empire. Imperialism is always conducted by use of force and power where the stronger part controls the weaker part. Colonialism is related to imperialism and according to *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Western colonialism is a political-economic phenomenon whereby various European nations explored, conquered, settled, and exploited large areas of the world" ("Colonialism"). Both imperialism and colonialism are theories that are absolutely relevant to encounters between Native Americans and whites. The whites that arrived in America used power to gain dominion over both the Natives and their land, and they exploited resources and people. The process of settling Native land is also incorporated in colonialism. Smith claims that "the concepts of imperialism and colonialism are crucial ones which are used across a range of disciplines ... the two terms are interconnected and what is generally agreed upon is that colonialism is but one expression of imperialism" (22). Smith argues further that in imperialist literature,

discoverers, like Columbus and Cook are the “heroes,” while in indigenous literature, they are not appreciated, but are looked upon as conquerors who brought hardships and death.

Behind imperialism and colonialism there are ideologies that justify the theories. The ideologies give the imperialists and colonizers the right to dominate other people. In the nineteenth century, colonizers used words like “‘inferior’ or ‘subject races,’ ‘subordinate peoples,’ ‘dependency,’ ‘expansion,’ and ‘authority’” (Said 9). When you consider other peoples, and especially indigenous peoples inferior, imperialism and colonization are acceptable. From the whites’ point of view, the encounters with Native Americans are often described as encounters between unequal peoples, since the whites looked upon themselves as superior to the Native Americans. White encroachment and white urge for Indian land brought further complications to the encounters.

Imperialism and colonialism served as a justification of the whites’ view of Natives and their land. The first Europeans in North America and the government in Washington had an imperialistic attitude towards the Natives in their urge to win the west. According to Said, imperialism is almost always followed by colonialism, (9), and this was also the case in North America. Colonialism, in this context, meant settling of the area by white settlers. The government in Washington, like the British colonists, used treaties to negotiate land from the Natives. These treaties were often broken by the whites, who did not respect them. Native Americans felt betrayed by the whites and learned that they could not trust them: “By the mid-eighteenth century, treaty making was standard operating procedure for setting what one wanted from the Indians” (Nabokov 119). Peter Nabokov writes further that treaty making was looked upon as a cheaper way of seizing land without having to use military force. He also points out that through treaties, whites moved the Indians from their land and into reservations and forced Indian children to go to school in order to assimilate them. In this way, the government was able to both conquer their land and to start assimilating them. Nabokov claims that “over the centuries Native American attitudes toward treaties changed from bewilderment to indignation to outrage” (120). After the buffaloes, which had provided the Indians with among other things food and clothing were almost exterminated, the Indians were often dependent on the agencies to support them. However, they were often disappointed: “When the goods come they are not according to the treaty; they never fulfil the treaty” (194). In *Fools Crow*, we witness the way the whites used treaties to achieve their

goals, and we learn how easily they break the treaties. Welch also focuses on the goods that the Indians grew dependent on.

To Native Americans, the whites' craving for land and profit was one reason the encounters with the whites turned out to be disastrous. The imperialists lacked respect for nature and treated "mother earth" in a way that shocked the Natives. When gold was detected in the west, the whites showed no modesty, but pushed on and tried even harder to take over Native lands. The Black Hills, a sacred place for the Indians, contained a lot of gold, and the area was thus very attractive to the whites. Through negotiations and broken treaties, the Indians finally lost supremacy over the area. Said emphasizes the importance of land among the imperialists and colonizers: "To think about distant places, to colonize them, to populate or depopulate them; all of this occurs on, about, or because of land" (78). He goes on to say that to possess land is really what empire is about. This view collided with indigenous views regarding land in many ways since indigenous peoples lived in cooperation with land and nature. Said describes this brand of imperialism as "ecological imperialism" (225), and writes that Europeans always changed the local habitat after their arrival. They not only exploited the land, but they often transformed it to look like the landscape they had left behind. "This process was never-ending, as a huge number of plants, animals, and crops as well as new building methods gradually turned the colony into a new place" (225). These processes often changed the colonized areas into completely different places. For instance, the Blackfeet in *Fools Crow* experience the invasion of cattle on the grounds where the buffalo used to graze.

First Encounters

James Axtell describes the first encounters as peaceful and marked by curiosity and interest from both sides: "European encounters with the North American Indians at the very beginning were predominately peaceful and the natives generally welcomed the newcomers" (58). We have all heard the stories about the first settlers who were helped by the Natives to survive in the new country. The Native Americans taught them which plants they could eat, how to hunt animals and how to grow corn. This shows that the Indians were not originally hostile towards the whites. However, their experience with white imperialism and colonialism changed their attitudes. Axtell argues that the Europeans also showed hospitality towards the Natives, and claims that they were eager to get to know them. Unfortunately, their eagerness was due to interest in the land, and "knowing the American 'others' was the only way to beat

them in the competition for their continent” (67). The fight for land and resources caused the change in the peoples’ attitudes towards each other. To gain what they wanted, the whites were willing to use force, and their access to weapons gave them the power they needed. According to Colin Taylor, the first encounters between Plains Indians and whites “were generally friendly” (74), but the relationship soon worsened because of “the systematic slaughter of both beaver and buffalo, brought about by the demands of the fur trade together with the influx of white emigrants into and across the Plains region” (74). Especially in *Fools Crow*, but also in *The Heartsong of Charging Elk*, we find evidence that the Native Americans were overpowered by the whites, and that they had to give up most of their land.

How did the Native Americans view the whites? Nabokov has collected testimonies from Native Americans on their encounters with whites. He points out that several Indian leaders expressed visions of the coming of the whites: “In Ancient times it was prophesied by our forefathers that this land would be occupied by the Indian people and then from somewhere a White man would come” (6-7). The visions also involved predictions of the whites’ willingness to use power to get what they wanted: “We knew that the white man will search for the things that look good to him, that he will use many good ideas in order to obtain his heart’s desire, and we knew that if he had strayed from the Great Spirit he would use *any* means to get what he wants” (7). The white man’s greed and selfishness were astonishing to the Native Americans, and they had to witness the whites’ changing their land as they cultivated it, deforested it, and killed the game. In addition, they built gold and silver mines and created towns that looked like their towns in the Old World (70). The whites looked upon land as a commercial product that they could buy and sell. The Indians, on the other hand, “generally viewed themselves as the earth’s occupiers and custodians, not as its surveyors and engineers” (70). The testimonies also reveal that the Indians looked upon the whites as barbarians and that they thought they resembled animals because of their hairy bodies. “Nothing like that had ever been seen among the tribe, only animals were that way” (Nabokov 27). Both Indians and whites often looked upon the others as savages. Their different backgrounds and values made collisions unavoidable.

The arrival of the whites and, thus the encounters with them, had an enormous effect on the lives of the Native Americans. The landscape changed, Native Americans were often forcefully dislocated, and they were infected by diseases they could not resist. In other words,

they lost their lands and the opportunity to continue their traditional lives. Said argues that imperialism offered the victims these options: “serve or be destroyed” (168). In *Fools Crow*, Welch focuses on one white hunter who kills a lot of animals and leaves the meat behind. To the Plains Indians, this behaviour is unacceptable and cruel. The character Fools Crow feels obliged to kill a Napikwan man to preserve his people’s way of life. Garrard argues that Fools Crow had to perform the killing: “Shooting the stinking, rapacious Napikwan in a gripping struggle, the Indian is depicted as a fighter for both ecological and survival and the survival of his human kind” (122). Garrard sees the colonisation of North America as an ecological disaster as well as a human disaster. The scene with the hunter is a strong image of this ecological disaster and depicts the different views on nature in a captivating way.

The first Europeans arriving at the eastern coast of North America were mostly English. According to Pearce, renaissance Englishmen were genuinely preoccupied by the idea of order, and they wanted to add order to chaos. According to them, “America was such a chaos, a new-found chaos. Her natural wealth was there for taking because it was there for the ordering. So were her natural men” (3). Their first encounters with the Natives of America were thus marked by the Europeans’ belief that they had a God-given right to bring order to the continent and to civilize its inhabitants. Pearce writes further that the English looked upon the Indians as savages and hindrances to civilization who therefore had to be civilized. To civilize uncivilized people was supposed to be beneficial for the people involved. The uncivilized got an opportunity to reach higher levels of dignity and the people who conducted the civilization were regarded as heroes and benefactors. In addition, the English thought that since they were civilizing the Indians, they were to be given the riches of the new country in return. They also assumed that to create a civilized society in the new world, they had to copy the society they had left behind in England. This attitude caused profound changes and complications for the traditional lives of the Indians: “The Indian with his known hunting ways needed many square miles on which to live, whereas the white farmer needed only a few acres” (67). Pearce points out that the English thought their ways were not only more economical, but also more rational, and thus more civilized. Still, the most bizarre perspective was that “the Indian belonged in the American past and was socially and morally significant only as a part of the past” (160). In other words, the English thought that the Indians were a people without history. In the beginning, they tried to understand the Indians, but found it futile. According to Pearce, when they discovered that “they had to destroy or be destroyed,

they ceased trying to understand the Indian; for such understanding presumably would avail them little” (12). The first Europeans in America thought the Indians “lived like beasts; they were in the traditional terminology, more animal than rational” (Pearce 5). Pearce points out that since the Indians were not Christian and thus not civilized, they were savages according to the Europeans’ view. Therefore, the Europeans tried to civilize the Indians, but when the attempts proved futile, the final result was an image of the Indian as a man out of society and out of history. Thus the trope of the vanishing Indians is based on the ideology of savagism, and by describing the Indians as savages and as members of a vanishing race, the whites were able to remove the “Indian problem.” However, the whites did not succeed in removing the problem, and on the contrary, white America had to deal with the “Indian problem” for years to come and likewise the Indians had to deal with the “white problem” and they are still dealing with it.

The Frontier and Manifest Destiny

The frontier plays an important part in American history, both for Native Americans and white Americans. Pratt calls the frontier the “contact zone” where the encounters between the Natives and the whites took place. (8). The eastern parts of America were settled first, and the white Americans called the border of the settlements, the frontier. The frontier was not a set border, though, but kept moving as the whites moved westwards. The historian, Fredrick Jackson Turner’s famous 1890 account is often called “the frontier thesis,” and according to Turner, “the frontier is the outer edge of the wave – the meeting point between savagery and civilization” (2). White America looked upon Indian land as an area of free land, ready for them to conquer. Turner writes further that conquering the frontier was important in Americanization, and in creating distance from European influence. In other words, according to Turner, the closing of the frontier was important in creating a white American identity. He also admits that this identity is not only influenced by the wilderness of the frontier, but by the Indians that lived there as well. Still, Turner concludes that: “[m]oving westward, the frontier became more and more American” (3). *Fools Crow* is set on the Great Plains in Montana, and Turner points out that settlers founded ranches and mining camps in these areas. Turner further claims that these areas were won by conducting wars on the Indians. More recent commentators have questioned Turner’s assumptions. Patricia N. Limerick argues that “Turner was to put it mildly, ethnocentric and nationalistic. English-speaking

white men were the stars of his history; Indians ... were at best supporting actors and at worst invisible” (23). Limerick thus equates Turner’s views with imperialism and colonialism. The settlers arrived in steady numbers after the government had removed the frontier. These settlers brought cattle which replaced the important buffalo in many areas. To the Native Americans on the plains, the settlers caused considerable challenges. When the west was won, the frontier was closed or, in other words, removed. By the end of the nineteenth century, as Turner makes clear, white America regarded the frontier closed.

The closing of the frontier fits into a larger pattern of ideology. According to Nabokov, the whites believed that God had given them the right to conquer and rule Indian land: “In the nineteenth century, most white Americans came to believe that it was God’s will for them to rule from sea to shining sea” (71-72). The whites thought it was their destiny to settle Indian land, and “[i]n 1845 John L. O’Sullivan coined the term ‘manifest destiny’ in reference to a growing conviction that the United States was preordained by God to expand throughout North America” (“Manifest Destiny”). “Manifest Destiny” justified the white Americans’ conquering of the west. This attitude corresponds with what Said writes about superior and inferior people and with the idea that with God on their side, whites simply pursued their destiny. Manifest Destiny meant that there would never be a harmonious coexistence between Indians and whites since to the Indians it also meant that they would watch their land being conquered by the whites.

The whites’ belief in Manifest Destiny and their views on Native Americans made the encounters between Native Americans and whites challenging and disastrous for Native Americans. According to Nabokov an utterance made by Colonel J. M. Chivington, who led an assault against the Cheyenne Indians, depicts what many whites thought about the Indians: “kill and scalp all, big and little, nits make lice” (187). Accompanying Said’s theory about imperialism and the superiors’ views upon what they defined as inferior people, white Americans viewed the Natives as savages and a vanishing race. However, when the whites were about to succeed in exterminating the Natives, some started feeling nostalgic about the vanished race and culture. Renato Rosaldo argues that “nostalgia is a particularly appropriate emotion in attempting to establish one’s innocence and at the same time talk about what one has destroyed” (108). The imperialists ruined the Natives’ way of life, killed them or dislodged them, and only when it was too late, did they realize what was lost. Viewing

Natives as savages made conducting extermination easier, but when the savages had almost vanished some whites felt guilty and changed their views about them. We witness this nostalgic attitude towards Native Americans in *The Heartsong of Charging Elk*. Still, maybe the most common view was that they occupied the land wanted by the whites and therefore they had to either vanish by being killed or removed, or vanish by being assimilated into white American society. Both these views are illustrated in *Fools Crow* and in *The Heartsong of Charging Elk*.

Native American Literature

Traditionally, Native Americans passed on their stories orally and, of course, in their Native languages. Writing was first introduced after the whites arrived. Today, most Native American writers use English to impart their works. However, authors like James Welch translate Indian conceptions into English and in that way make the language their own. Assimilation extinguished many Native languages, and even though Indian communities initiate language immersion courses to revive Indian languages, most Indians today speak only English. (Lupton 4). There are abounding discussions and discourses concerning Native American literature. At universities in the USA, Native American literature is often taught as a separate subject, and not as a part of the English curriculum. In other words, Native American literature is not considered a part of the American literary canon, and this indicates that Native American literature is looked upon as exotic and not worthy of being a part of the mandatory curriculum. Most critics have also been non-Native, but today, there are Native critics as well, and in my work I will refer to both non-Native and Native critics.

Native American nations and tribes had rich oral traditions prior to the arrival of Columbus. Roemer writes that “before the arrival of Columbus, there were thousands of narratives, ceremonies, songs and speeches performed by experts trained in performance and interpretation” (Porter 4). Traditional Native American genres were numerous, but the white colonists overlooked the Natives’ stories and traditions, often because they were oral and not written. In addition, these oral genres were performed in the Native languages and thus were not accessible for non-Native speakers. Porter argues that “when Europeans first arrived in the Americas, they faced a new conceptual landscape expressed through oral tradition” (42), and she writes further that the Europeans failed to understand the traditions they met. She also points out that oral tradition plays an important part in contemporary Native American

literature. Both *Fools Crow* and *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* contain references to the oral tradition. According to Suzanne Lundquist, “the plural nature of Native American literatures stems from the plurality of Native American cultures and the multiplicity of types of oral and written (genres) that comprise the artistic expressions of Native peoples within the United States” (1). The plurality of nations and languages makes it challenging to look upon Native American literature as a single phenomenon. Lundquist further points out that there are numerous Native American nations with several hundred different languages belonging to eight different language families. Lundquist mentions that some authors, like James Welch, for instance, are incorporated in contemporary American Literary studies, however “often the mythological foundations of their writings are poorly understood” (2). Her argument thus underscores the necessity of Native critics. Lundquist argues that for non-Native readers, Native American literature is more challenging because we lack the historical and cultural understanding we would need to read it.

The colonization of North America concealed Native American literature for a long period. The Native American Renaissance, a period of revitalisation of Native American writers, changed the situation for this literature. In 1969, the English professor N. Scott Momaday earned the Pulitzer Prize for his novel *House Made of Dawn*. The recognition of the novel inspired Native American authors, and in the years to come, readers could encounter authors like James Welch, Leslie Marmon Silko, Paula Gunn Allen, Joy Harjo and Louise Erdrich, among others (Washburn 447-48). According to Velie and Vizenor, the Native American Renaissance also motivated criticism, mostly non-Native. Some Native American critics are thoroughly sceptical toward these non-Native critics and question both their motives and their knowledge of Native American life and traditions. Thus they ignite one of the contemporary debates concerning Native American literature (“Introduction”).

Another discussion concerns whether Native American literature is postcolonial or not. Thomas King writes that pre-colonial literature created before colonization belonged to the oral tradition and post-colonial literature is inspired by experiences of colonialization. In his view, the term post-colonial cuts Native American literature off from its traditions since there is no link to pre-colonial literature. “Post-colonial might be an excellent term to use to describe Canadian literature, but it will not do to describe Native literature” (“Godzilla”185). King argues that he would use terms like “tribal,” “interfusalional,” “polemical” and

“associational” to describe Native literature. He writes further that tribal literature is literature that is shared solely among tribe members and polemical literature is written in either a Native language or a European language and “concerns itself with the clash of Native and non-Native cultures or with the championing of Native values over non-Native values” (186). About interfusional literature, King says it is literature that is a combination of oral and written literature. Associational literature, according to King, depicts a Native community, but might also depict a non-Native community. Associational literature does not focus on conflicts between the two cultures, but focuses on daily life. Following King’s description and division of Native American literature using terms like “tribal,” “interfusional,” “polemical” and “associational” *Fools Crow* and *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* fit three of these categories interfusional, polemical and associational. However, I will argue that they also contain tribal elements since they depict the Sun Dance, a traditional ceremony normally not shared outside the tribes. Both *Fools Crow* and *Charging Elk* participate in the Sun Dance. *Charging Elk* remembers the ceremony in one of his flashbacks: “It was as though he could see himself dancing and blowing the eagle-bone whistle and, at the same time, entering the Great Mystery, where he saw the ancestors and the great herds of buffalo under the wind and sun and moon” (67). *Charging Elk* also remembers that the whites forbade the Sun Dance, but the Indians living in Stronghold are mostly left alone and they continue performing the rite in the old traditional way. Indians living in the Pine Ridge reservation attend the Sun Dances at the Stronghold. *Fools Crow* participates in the Sun Dance before the prohibition, and in *Fools Crow* Welch describes the ceremony in detail, and thus emphasizes the importance of the ritual for the Blackfeet. The Sun Dance is both a holy ceremony and a rite of passage. “Miki-api [the medicine man] rose and cut the bloody skewers from their rawhide tethers. Small strips of flesh hung from them. He carried them to the medicine pole and laid them at the base, ‘Here is the offering of White Man’s Dog,’ he said. ‘Now he is for certain a man, and the Sun Chief will light his way’” (119). Participating in the Sun Dance and carrying out the passage rite is important to *Fools Crow*, and he feels that he is honouring Sun Chief, but also the tribe’s traditions. Sun Chief, on the other hand, is giving him power to fulfil his duties as a Pikuni and later his task as a leader of the tribe. Welch took part in the Sun Dance with his father when he was a young boy, and the experience had a profound influence on him, and helped him understand his Blackfeet identity.

According to King, interfusial literature is a combination of oral and written genres and polemical literature, written either in a Native language or in English, and depicts clashes between natives and non-Natives, in addition to arguments over different values between the peoples. *Fools Crow* and *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* are based on oral traditions. The novels are written in English, but consist of numerous near-translations. *Fools Crow* experiences many clashes with white people: “the white ones steal our land, they give us trinkets, then they steal more” (61). Welch also points out differences in value between the whites and the Indians in *Fools Crow*. They disagree on religion, attitudes to nature and animals, in addition to how they take care of each other. When smallpox is threatening the tribe again, they are told by a white doctor to refuse the sick entrance to the camp, but “how can we turn away our relatives? ... ’That is not our ways,’ said Three bears” (310). *Charging Elk* also shows that his background values sharing and taking care of others: however, he senses that his values are challenged in Marseille and he feels ashamed of himself: “he had learned from his Oglala people to share with others ... Somewhere along the way, he had lost that desire to share” (243). *Charging Elk* spends his money on new clothes and comes to the Soulas family for Christmas, bringing rather poor gifts.

Before *Charging Elk* joins the Wild West show, he lives with his friend Strikes Plenty at the Stronghold, but the whites do not approve of the Stronghold and want to force the Indians to move to the reservations. *Charging Elk* does spend some time at the reservation and at school. However, at the white man’s school, he experiences how the cultures really clash: “He remembered the word ‘Indian.’ She had pointed directly at him, then at the board, and said ‘Indian.’ ... Then she showed them a picture of a man they could not recognize” (56). The whites’ notion of Indians does not make sense to *Charging Elk*, and after a few more humiliations, he leaves school and moves back to the Stronghold. The last category King mentions is associational, meaning literature describing daily life. King indicates that associational literature is not valued by literary critics. *Fools Crow* and *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* depict daily life among the Pikunis and the Lakotas, in addition to *Charging Elk*’s life in Marseille. These descriptions are valuable additions to the novels because they offer readers insights into unknown history and cultures.

Before the arrival of Columbus, transference of stories and myths between tribe members and between generations took place through storytelling. In *Fools Crow*, we

encounter traditional Blackfeet myths like Scarface's story and the myth of the beaver bundle. The Lone Eaters carry on the oral tradition when they gather and listen to stories: "White Man's Dog followed his father in and when he straightened up he was surprised to see so many people present ... He told them of Mountain Chief's flight to Canada" (103). White Man's Dog, or Fools Crow, is quite young at this time, but still he sits in the seat of honor and everybody is interested in his story. Charging Elk remembers stories and traditions from his homeland and they help him through his ordeals in France. Like Fools Crow, he shares his stories, first with the son in the Soulas family and later with his wife: "Nathalie listened to the stories, and often she would look at him in disbelief" (387). Charging Elk tells her about traditional Indian life on the plains, and even though he leaves out the violent details, Nathalie understands his childhood has been very different from hers. Traditional oral stories are circular in structure and often involve a journey made by the protagonist. According to Lupton, "the hero leaves the community to perform acts of bravery, then returns to claim a position of honor so that he can be suitable for tribal leadership" (132). Fools Crow leaves the tribe several times, either to take part in raids or to fulfil a vision quest. These journeys make him able to marry and later to be a leader of his people. Charging Elk, on the other hand, leaves both his tribe and the country altogether and he never returns. In the beginning of the novel, Charging Elk is performing in the Wild West show, and at the end, he meets up with the show again, so the structure is circular, but his decision to stay in France adds a new dimension. Fools Crow is a hero who displays bravery while Charging Elk never returns to his people. Still, Charging Elk is brave when he joins the Wild West show instead of becoming a reservation Indian, and keeping his Lakota identity in a foreign environment makes him a hero.

Considering King's views on Native literature, *Fools Crow* and *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* fit three of King's categories. The novels are polemical because they are both written in English and contain clashes between Native and white cultures and competition amid the different values of the cultures is implied. Even though both novels are written works, they are inspired by the oral tradition. *Fools Crow* and *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* are also associational literature because they contain descriptions of daily life. Especially *Fools Crow* depicts traditional Native life. King writes that associational literature has a flat narrative and is literature that is not valued, however, this is not the case with Welch's two novels.

In my thesis, I will focus on encounters between Native Americans and whites in *Fools Crow* and *The Heartsong of Charging Elk*, in addition to colonialism and Native American literature. I will also show how the novels are valuable contributions to decolonizing. In Chapter 1, I will analyse encounters between whites and Native Americans in *Fools Crow*. The encounters have profound impacts on the characters and their lives. The Blackfeet encounter the whites, mostly through trading and signing of treaties, but the results of these encounters are smallpox, lost land and the extermination of the buffalo. In Chapter 2, I will analyse encounters between Native Americans and whites in *The Heartsong of Charging Elk*. Charging Elk lives among white people in France and therefore he has to associate with them. *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* depicts the whites' views on Native Americans as savages belonging to a vanishing people. The protagonist is dislocated from his home and is struggling to keep his Native American identity. In Chapter 3, I will focus on comparing and contrasting encounters in *Fools Crow* and *The Heartsong of Charging Elk*. I will also discuss how Welch works on decolonizing. Both novels invite readers, especially non-Native readers into unknown cultures and traditions. Thus, *Fools Crow* and *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* trigger encounters between readers and Native Americans, and because non-Native readers initially might lack knowledge of Native American history and culture, the encounters happen between inferior and superior "groups."

Chapter 1

1.1 Encounters in *Fools Crow*

Fools Crow was first published in 1986, and received great acclaim from both critics and readers. Welch earned several prizes for the novel, among them the American Book Award. *Fools Crow* is a historical novel, and is set on the Great Plains right after the Civil War. The events in the novel lead up to the massacre at the Marias in 1870. In the novel Welch describes the traditional life of the Lone Eaters, a band of Pikuni Blackfoot Indians, on the Plains of Montana. I will use Lone Eaters, Pikunis and Blackfeet interchangeably, as Welch does in the novel. *Fools Crow* is a Bildungsroman, and we follow the protagonist White Man's Dog, later named Fools Crow, from youth to maturity. The Blackfeet face hardships and sufferings during the novel, and the encounters with the whites are the underlying causes of these hardships and sufferings. The encounters between the Blackfeet and the whites, as described in *Fools Crow*, reveal a different story about the winning of the west. Traditionally, the events were only presented from the whites' point of view. Welch, on the other hand, focuses on how the encroaching whites effected the lives of the Blackfeet. Neither groups are interested in contact, and the encounters bear evidence of fear on both sides. Furthermore, the encounters between Native Americans and whites in *Fools Crow* are characterized by features of colonialism and imperialism: the whites want Blackfeet land for settling and resources. They treat with the Indians, but they do not keep the treaties. The uneven power between whites and Natives enables the whites able to encroach on the Great Plains. Throughout the novel, we see examples of the ways the whites are willing to use power to obtain their goals. Welch's depiction of the encounters shows that the Blackfeet and the whites have different views of land, animals and social relations. We also learn that the whites feel superior compared to the Blackfeet, and that the whites are willing to use power to achieve their goals. The Blackfeet, on the contrary, feel outpowered by the whites and struggle to keep up their traditional life. The Blackfeet are not interested in encountering the whites, and the whites have no interest in the people living on the Great Plains, but simply their assets. Therefore, we can conclude that from the Pikunis' point of view, the encounters were forced.

Welch has spent considerable time studying traditional Blackfeet life, both by investigating sources and talking to relatives of people that remembered the original life on the plains. Welch's own grandmother is one of his sources, and he utilizes stories his father told him from his grandmother's life. Red Paint, one of the characters in *Fools Crow*, is based on his grandmother. Welch gives a vivid description of the Lone Eaters' life in Montana. He does not provide a romantic view of their lives, but describes everyday life, as well as hardships and troubles. The first time we meet White Man's Dog, he is a frustrated teenager without a real goal in life, but during the novel, he develops into one of the leaders of his band. He takes part in raids on enemy tribes, attacks on whites and journeys into the underworld to achieve guidance concerning the future of the band. The whites' encroachment and their greed for Indian land are important features in *Fools Crow*, and the whites' presence in Blackfeet territory has a vital impact on Fools Crow's band. We experience their fear and discouragement, but also their resistance and their belief in a future for the people despite the threat from the whites. Disagreements on how to react towards white intrusion affect relationships within the tribe. Some are in favour of signing agreements, while others choose to confront the whites in order to expel them from their lands. Miki-api, the medicine man, remembers when the first whites arrived on the plains and tells Fools Crow about the tribe's reaction to their arrival. Since then, the Lone Eaters have adopted some white ways and purchased white goods that have become a natural and important part of their daily life. Still, the most fatal encounters with whites in *Fools Crow* result in wars and massacres.

1.2 First Encounters in *Fools Crow*

The opening scene in *Fools Crow* establishes White Man's Dog as the main protagonist. White Man's Dog is named after a Pikuni called Victory Robe White Man. Still, the name insinuates encounters with whites. White Man's Dog gets the name Fools Crow after he fools a member of the Crows during a raid. In the course of the novel, we understand that White Man's Dog, later Fools Crow, does not meet with whites often. However, the subtle presence of whites in his neighbourhood has a profound and terrifying effect on his life. Whites are called "Napikwans" throughout the novel, and according to Ewers, "Napikwans" means "Old Man Person" (19). Lundquist writes that "the root of *Napikwans* is *Napi* the name for the Blackfeet creator and Trickster figure; therefore, calling Whites *Napikwans* is recognition of their collective and relentless power" (85). Owens points out that

giving the whites a Blackfeet name indicates that the Blackfeet were still the centre of their world, and the whites were the others (*Other* 158). However, naming the whites after the creator implies an early understanding of the whites' potential power.

Mik-api tells Fools Crow that “there were very few of the Napikwans – it was when I was a youth that the first white men appeared in this country. They came up the Two Medicine River not far from here, and first they tried to treat with our people, then they tried to kill us” (66). Miki-api does not describe the first encounter with the Napikwans as peaceful. They started signing treaties with the Indian people right away, and if they did not get what they wanted, they tried to kill them. The people on the plains of Montana were among the last tribes that encountered whites, and at this time, many tribes out east were already extinguished by white colonists. Miki-api goes on to describe their fear of the whites and especially how their weapons frightened them. “We grew frightened of their sticks-that-speak-from-afar and ran away, and then they ran away” (66). This encounter differs thoroughly from the encounters depicted by the historian Axtell in his book *Beyond 1492*, who describes the first encounters as peaceful and friendly as whites were often warmly welcomed by the Indians, who sometimes “bestowed Indian names upon them, the ultimate sign of acceptance” (102). Miki-api does not seem to remember that he was curious of the whites. On the contrary, he says that he never saw these first whites, but remembers that the Indians that did see them ran away. Another interesting observation is that the whites also ran away. Both the Indians and the whites were sceptical towards the other. Still, the most alarming feature of the encounter is the Blackfeet's first experience with “the stick that speaks from afar.” By expressing legitimate fear for the weapon, in addition to naming the whites Napikwans, the Indians presage what the encounters might bring about.

Miki-api continues his story: “Some winters later, more of these Napikwans came into our country” (66). He says that they mostly stayed in the mountains, where they trapped and hunted for fur. According to Miki-api, these first whites did not aggravate the Lone Eaters, and the band was able to endure having the trappers there. However, he provides a rather interesting view upon these first encounters. “At first we thought these Napikwans were animals and incapable of reproducing with human beings” (67). He says that many of the trappers looked more or less like the animals they trapped, because they were very furry. Before the arrival of the first whites, the Blackfeet did not expect to encounter other people

around their camps, and when out hunting, they normally only encountered animals. This might explain their initial reaction when meeting the first white trappers. Likewise, the whites considered America as nobody's land, terra nullius, and therefore might have looked upon the Natives as more animals than human beings. Nabokov writes about an incident where some Indians met a white man for the first time, and like Miki-api, they thought that he looked like an animal, because of all the hair. (27) These examples of initial contact between Native Americans and whites might suggest similar views of the others as some inhumane creatures. These white hunters and trappers did not stay in the mountains, but left after a while. Miki-api emphasizes that they were not like the Napikwans that later settle on the plains with their whitehorns. Implied in this is a very critical view upon the settlers and the way they have taken over their lands. The settlers were searching for a new start, and had usually left poverty in the western colonies, or in Europe. Compared to the hunters and trappers, who often chased adventure and wealth, the settlers were there to stay and consequently represented an extensive threat to the Blackfeet's lifestyle. The Blackfeet were nomads and thus needed vast areas to survive, while the settlers established, initially farms, but later towns right in the middle of their traditional homeland. Additionally, the settlers were deluded to believe that the land they settled was nobody's land. Consequently, both the Blackfeet and the settlers ended up as obstacles to each other's lives and intentions.

1.3 Trade and Smallpox

Trade is another form of contact that is important to consider. The Blackfeet had been trading with the Napikwans for a long time at the time when *Fools Crow* is set. Many Blackfeet encountered whites for the first time through trading. According to Ewers, the Blackfeet started trading with the Napikwans in the eighteenth century, and the traders brought with them "an assortment of useful weapons, tools, and utensils and a variety of attractive luxuries to exchange for the Indians' furs and foods" (19). When readers first encounter White Man's Dog, later Fools Crow, he is dreaming of the white man's goods: "Beneath the boiling clouds, beyond the Medicine Line, lay the country of the whiskey traders. He had not been there but he had heard of their skinned-tree houses, full of all those things a young man would need to make himself rich" (4). White Man's Dog is particularly interested in a many-shots-gun since he just has a musket. He believes that the white man's goods, in addition to a good horse, would make him happy and popular among the women.

Although he despises the Napikwans, he is obviously accustomed to the outcomes of trading with them. The Napikwans, on the other hand, used trading to stop conflicts between the tribes: “Not far downstream stood a Napikwan trading fort ... Many Crows were trading there, along with Spotted Horse People and Parted Hairs. Yellow Kidney is surprised because the Crows and Parted Hairs had never gotten along, but he also knew that the white traders made the tribes behave before they would trade” (21). This indicates that trade was an important feature in the relationship between the Pikunis and the Napikwans. Normally, the Indians went to the trading forts, but later in *Fools Crow*, the Napikwans even come to the camps with their goods, which shows that the whites are encroaching ever-farther into Blackfeet land. Yellow Kidney also points out that the Napikwans use trade to control the tribes’ behaviour. The importance of trade as a way to get hold of weapons and alcohol is obvious in *Fools Crow*: “From the boisterous nature of the camp, Eagle Ribs knew there was much of the white man’s water around. That would be good. The bad part was there would be many rifles in camp” (26). Eagle Ribs likes the fact that there will be alcohol available, but he fears the number of rifles. Welch depicts the negative sides of alcohol among the Blackfeet, and has made the main characters sceptical towards the white man’s water. Although the Napikwans occasionally come to the camps to trade, most trade takes place at the trading house: “whole families were going to the trading house, their packhorses laden with robes, and coming back with the goods that would make their lives easier” (100). Trading established a relationship between the Native and the whites, but it was not an even relationship since the whites had the goods the Natives wanted. Except for trading in furs, trading was mostly one-sided. By establishing trading houses on Native land, the whites could justify their presence, and at the same time enact a subtle control of the Natives. As Welch writes in *Fools Crow* the traders normally demanded order before the Natives could start trading. Therefore, it is appropriate to assume that one of the purposes of establishing trading houses was to gain influence and control over the Natives. The whites understood that their goods would interest the tribes and tempt them to visit the trading houses. Unfortunately, trading most likely exposed the Blackfeet to smallpox.

Smallpox, or white scab, as the Indians called the disease, was, along with treaties and massacres, one of the most devastating results of the Blackfeet’s encounters with whites. According to Page Smith, “the downfall of the Blackfeet came with the terrible smallpox epidemic in 1836, which reduced some camps by two-thirds of their numbers and, overall,

cost them more than half their population” (196). Indians had no resistance towards the epidemics the Europeans brought. The outcome of the massacre at the Marias could have been different had the band not been weakened by yet another outbreak of smallpox. Furthermore, the Blackfeet might have been able to resist encroachment more thoroughly. Robertson writes that smallpox was a serious problem in Europe for a long period between 1660 and 1880, and like the Indians in *Fools Crow*, the Europeans had no treatment of the disease. Later vaccination was introduced, but Native people were not the priority. Robertson also claims that the diseases probably helped the Europeans defeat the Natives: “It is doubtful the Europeans could have so easily defeated the native people of North and South America without the help of Old World diseases” (xi).

How did the Blackfeet encounter smallpox? Irene S. Vernon writes that “smallpox was introduced in different ways to tribes. Some tribes were exposed inadvertently through trade. The Blackfeet were devastated by the disease in the 1830s as a result of trade” (182). Some Europeans, but very few Indians, understood how contagious the unknown disease was, and Vernon writes further that the Blackfeet were probably exposed to smallpox by clothes used by sick people. However, she also insinuates that the Europeans might have infected the Blackfeet with smallpox deliberately in order to subdue Natives. Helen Jaskovski has analysed the story of the Blackfeet and smallpox, and refers to a story told by the elders: “[t]his smallpox sold to them shut up in a tin box, with the strict injunction not to open the box on their way homeward, but only when they should reach their country; and that this box contained something that would do them great good, and their people!” (qtd. in Vernon 183). According to Vernon, it has not been possible to find proof that the Blackfeet were deliberately contaminated with smallpox, but there exist some letters that could imply the truth of the insinuations (183). Keeping in mind the way the whites treated the Indians and their attitudes towards them, we could be inclined to believe they did it on purpose.

Fools Crow expresses scepticism towards the Napikwan who visits their camp and warns them against white scab. “He did not bring the Napikwan medicine and he knew the Pikuni medicine was weak. Perhaps he brought the sickness instead?” (309). *Fools Crow* understands that the Napikwans have effective medicine against white scab, but the Blackfeet do not get any. His scepticism is understandable since the Napikwan tells them about the medicine that helps against smallpox, but does not bring the medicine. The whites have the

“power” to cure the sickness, but they keep it for themselves. Implicit in Fools Crow’s question is a suspicion that the Napikwans deliberately infected the Blackfeet with smallpox, just like Vernon suggests. Robertson writes about vaccination that “no one rushed to send the miracle drug to those who needed it most – the Indians of North and South America” (57). Fools Crow also wonders why the Napikwan tells the Pikunis to avoid contact with traders and sick band members. Robertson points out that in Indian culture it is important to stay together and take care of each other, therefore quarantining band members was a foreign thought. The whites do not understand the Pikunis’ feeling of community and the importance of taking care of each other. The Napikwan doctor’s visit to the camp during the outbreak of small-pox is an example of Pratt’s “contact zone,” and can be described as a “temporal compresence of subjects previously separated by geographic and historical disjunctures, and whose trajectories now intersect” (7). The doctor has a white background, but has lived among the Pikunis and knows some of their traditions, still the two groups cannot agree on how to react to the disease. The Doctor wants to help the band, but he is tied by the whites’ reluctance to provide the medicine to the Indians.

Encountering smallpox, or white scab, was more disastrous to the Blackfeet than anything else introduced to them by the Napikwans. They felt totally at a loss as to what to do when the disease struck over and over again, and they acknowledged that their traditional medicine could not stand up against the disease. Welch describes outbreaks of smallpox or white scab in *Fools Crow*, and he depicts how ruinous the disease is for the Pikunis: “‘There are thirty-seven dead ones,’ said Fools Crow. ‘There will be more’” (374). Smallpox changes the living conditions for the Lone Eaters profoundly, mainly because the disease is an enemy they cannot fight. Whether the whites infected the Indians intentionally or not, smallpox proved to be an efficient weapon in the whites’ war against the Indians. By not keeping the promises of goods, the whites have the power to make the Blackfeet more vulnerable towards smallpox as Heavy Runners points out to general Sully: “‘The white-scabs catch us when we are weak,’ ... ‘We must have food and blankets if we are to survive’” (284-85). Even though the Blackfeet are weak and need the supplies, the general uses the supplies as means of pressure to obtain the whites’ goals. The Blackfeet must fulfil the demand before they will get the much needed supplies, and in this particular situation they are asked to kill one of their own.

1.4 Treaties

Treaties between Native American tribes and whites were initiated by the whites to secure the whites' need for land. The Native Americans, on the other hand, inhabited the land and looked upon it as their homeland. Signing treaties was therefore something the Natives were forced to do in order to keep part of their land. The Blackfeet in *Fools Crow* know that they cannot afford to refuse signing because the whites have the power to force them. Simultaneously, the whites could argue that they did not steal land from the Native Americans because the tribes had signed treaties even though they were forced to sign. For the whites, signing treaties thus became a clever way of obtaining what they wanted without having to go to war. The Blackfeet hoped that signing treaties, and giving up parts of their land would make the tribe able to continue their traditional life, however, the whites continuously wanted more land. Said argues that human history is very much about land and the urge for more land and that this urge for more land often implies conflicts with indigenous peoples (7). Said also claims that "imperialism means thinking about, settling on, controlling land that you do not possess" (79). In *Fools Crow*, we see how the whites use treaties to obtain Blackfeet land, which is imperialism put into practice.

Both the British colonists and the American authorities used treaties to control and regulate Native American land, but also Native American peoples. Encounters between Native Americans and whites often led to the signing of treaties. According to Williams, making treaties with Native Americans started right after the first English settlers arrived in the seventeenth century (Williams qtd. in Sperling 5). He argues further that about two million square miles of Indian land was conveyed to the United States in the period between the War of Independence and the turn of the twentieth century. Since the British treated with the Native Americans, we can conclude that the British considered that the land really belonged to the Native Americans (Banner 2005). After the War of Independence, the new state carried on the British tradition of signing treaties with the Indian tribes. According to Deloria Jr., "the original import of the treaties was allegedly to guarantee peace on the frontier and the tribes generally held to their promises, discontinued the fighting, and accepted the protection of the United States over their remaining lands" (31). However, Deloria Jr. claims that the Americans' intentions with treaties were to acquire Indian land, something the Indian tribes painfully experienced. Deloria Jr. writes further that the Indians were told that the

Americans had given them land through the treaties, but Deloria Jr., on the other hand, argues that they were never given any land but, on the contrary, the Americans were given their land. He also points out that the only reason Indian tribes gave up parts of their land was “to be able to keep the remaining land” (35). To Native Americans, signing treaties meant loosing land and dislocation. Deloria Jr. argues that “discovery negated the rights of the Indian tribes to sovereignty and equality among the nations of the world. It took away their title to their land and gave them the right only to sell. And they had to sell to the European nation that had discovered their land” (30).

The Blackfeet, as described in *Fools Crow*, are accustomed to signing treaties, and treaties with the Napikwans play an important role in the Blackfeet tribe’s encounters with the whites. Since *Fools Crow* is set around 1870, most of the treaties between the Blackfeet and the whites were already signed. Still, treaties, and especially broken treaties, mark their lives. According to Rides-at-the-door, Fools Crow’s father: “It has been almost thirteen years since the big treaty with the bosses from the east” (177). Rides-at-the-door says to the younger ones that they are too young to remember the conflicts the band has had with the Napikwans. The Blackfeet signed the treaty thirteen years ago because they had experienced the power of the Napikwans, and therefore their long-ago-chiefs understood that they had to sign treaties with them if they were going to avoid being exterminated. The Fort Laramie Treaty of 1851 formed borders between the tribes on the Plains and gave the US government permission to build roads and posts. The Indians, on the other hand, promised not to attack other tribes. The US government also granted them protection against white robbery (*Killing* 11). Even though the Treaty of 1851 set the boundaries for the Blackfeet tribe as well, (“Indian Affairs” 595) Rides-at-the-door is probably pointing to the Treaty of 1855, regarding the indication of time. This treaty was more far-reaching than the other, and granted the white Americans a much larger access to Blackfeet territory. They could, for instance, build agencies, farms, missions and schools, among other buildings. (“Indian Affairs” 737). Rides-at-the door says that they gave the Napikwans some of their land and they promised to leave each other alone. The Pikunis were satisfied but the Napikwans wanted more, and

four winters ago, we signed a new paper with the Napikwans, giving them our land that lies south of the Milk River. Again, we promised to let them alone. We thought that would put an end to their greed. Last year they brought us a new paper and our

chiefs marked it. We were to get commodities to make up for our reduced ranges and our promise to live in peace with them. Our chiefs were to receive some of the white man's money. These things never came to pass. And so we have every reason to hate the Napikwans. (177)

Rides-at-the-door, along with some other chiefs, is attending a council to discuss their reactions towards the encroaching Napikwans. They are also discussing whether or not they will sign yet another treaty. Their history of signing treaties or papers with the Napikwans has not gone in their favour. The Blackfeet have signed treaties to be left alone, and they have promised to leave the Napikwans alone, and they hoped that signing the treaties would let them keep their ranges, but on the contrary, it has been their experience that the Napikwans constantly wanted more of their land. Keeping in mind their former encounters with the Napikwans, they feel obliged to repeatedly sign new papers. The government has also promised to pay compensation for their land loss, but they never receive any payment. When they sum up their experiences with signing treaties with the Napikwans, they conclude that it is not strange that they hate them. The Napikwans do not keep their promises, but they expect the Indians to keep theirs. What follows next in the novel is an expressive example of how powerful the Napikwans are compared to the Pikunis: "We will counsel with the whites, and if they do not want too much, we will make a new treaty. My heart is not in this, but I will accede to the wishes of my people" (124).

The chiefs decide to sign yet another paper, not because they want to, but because they do not have a choice. The government has been preoccupied with the Civil War, and has let the Blackfeet alone for a period, but the Civil War is now over, and the chiefs experience that more and more of the soldiers who fought for the president are moving into their country and the urge for land has increased. The chiefs do not agree as to whether or not they should sign another treaty. Some agree with Rides-at-the-door, who argues that they have no choice, while others express "contempt for the leaders and the people for trying to appease the Napikwans, for trying to live in peace with them even if they treated the Pikunis like insects to be stepped on, just as Young Bird Chief had said" (178). Especially the young chiefs are eager to go to war against the Napikwans instead of signing a new treaty. The old chiefs, though, even if they understand their frustration, speak against war, mostly because they are afraid the Napikwans will use a war as an excuse to exterminate them totally. In their

experience, the Napikwans are too powerful while they, on the other hand, do not have the strength to stand against them and the elders argue that “we must fend for ourselves, for our survival. That is why we must treat with the Napikwans” (180). To survive, the Pikunis have to treat with the Napikwans, and it is evident that in their experience, the Napikwans are willing to use force if they do not get what they want. Their whitehorns are already grazing on Indian land and the chiefs realize that they will lose that part as well.

Rides-at-the-door has participated in meetings and negotiations with the Napikwans on several occasions, and he speaks the English language. He is experienced in dealing with the Napikwans, and he probably understands them better than many of his fellow chiefs. “It was clear to Rides-at-the-door that this would be the last of the friendly meetings with the Napikwans, the last chance to reach an agreement that would prevent the seizers from taking control of the Pikuni lands and fates” (271). Rides-at-the-door realizes that they have reached a decisive point in their negotiations with the Napikwans. On the way to the meeting, the party is obviously anxious and the members “rode alertly, their eyes sweeping the country which they passed, as though every tree, every stand of willow concealed fierce eyes that watched them ride into a trap” (272). The Pikunis have a holistic view of nature, their lives and nature are interwoven. Now it is taken over by enemies and they don’t feel safe, they are watched and it is not their country anymore. The Pikunis are close to Many Houses, or Fort Benton, so there are Napikwan homesteads in the area. This is the result of colonisation, feeling alienated in your own country. The trap is as an image of the new treaty they are forced to sign at Fort Benton.

The meeting takes place at the agency buildings, and when the chiefs arrive outside the gate, they acknowledge that the agency is guarded by soldiers carrying weapons. The power of the Napikwans is demonstrated right away. However, Welch indicates that the soldiers feel uneasy: “The Young Napikwans looked tense and held their weapons tight” (274). In this situation, the young soldiers are on top of the situation only because of their weapons. One of the soldiers is a newcomer and meets Indians for the first time. In his opinion, the Indians look courageous and much larger than the whites, so he “was not about to let his guard down” (274). Rides-at-the-door does not fear the Napikwans, per se, but he is well aware of the power the Napikwans have. Outside the building, Rides-at-the-door notices the American flag, which he recognizes as a symbol of the Napikwans’ conquering of Indian

land. He was once told that the “white sharp-pointed designs on the blue represented the many territories conquered by the Napikwans” (276). It is interesting to notice that to him the white designs have no resemblance with stars. According to Blackfeet religion, the stars are a part of the above world and they worshipped especially the Morning Star. As opposed to other meetings Rides-at-the-door remembers, the atmosphere at this meeting is tense, and he has every reason to fear the outcome. The signing of the treaty at Many Houses or Fort Benton, where the Pikunis and the Napikwans meet is an example of Pratt’s “contact zone,” and according to Pratt, the “contact zone” refers “to the space of colonial encounters” (6). Pratt argues further that the groups that meet are disconnected by incompatible differences and inequality in power.

General Sully has been in charge of the Indian policy in the territory, but he is obviously not well liked by the other Napikwans: “Sully’s moderate stance had already earned him a reputation as an ‘Indian lover’ with the territorial politicians, the press, and his fellow officers” (279). Sully is an experienced negotiator and knows that it is important to be patient. He is also aware of the fact that preparations are made to punish the Pikunis if they do not agree to their terms. He wants to be remembered for bringing peace to the territory, but he realizes that his fellow people do not want peace, but “they wanted to run these red Indians right off the face of the map, push them into Canada, or, failing that, kill them like wild animals” (279). Blackfeet territory is wanted for settlement and both he, with his moderate views, and the Pikunis are hindrances towards this goal. General Sully understands that his plan has failed and he wonders who will be exterminated first: him or the Pikunis. Again, we notice that the Napikwans’ urge for land is the most predominant value, and they are willing to do whatever it takes to achieve their goal.

The whites’ urge for land is closely linked to their belief in Manifest Destiny, the whites’ belief that God had given them the right to the land. This belief is also linked to the doctrine of discovery, and the whites view of America as one of their discoveries. “The Doctrine provided that newly arrived Europeans immediately and automatically acquired legally recognized property rights in native lands and also gained governmental, political, and commercial rights over the inhabitants without the knowledge or the consent of the Indigenous people” (Miller et al 2). The Blackfeet considered land sacred and not owned by anybody, and they strove not to exploit the land, but to protect it. In *Fools Crow*, we see

evidence that both agriculture and mining opposed this view. According to Eric Cheyfitz, “it was characteristic of kinship-based cultures, of which Native American cultures form various kinds, that they did hold their ‘land in common’” (112). He argues further that private property, in the western understanding, was unfamiliar in the Native American world.

Many of the treaties signed with Indian tribes included promises of payment and deliveries of goods to the tribes involved. In the novel, *Three Bears* describes how they are promised deliveries by the president, the great Grandfather in the east: “He has promised us that we would be treated fairly and we would be rewarded for the lands we have given up. He has promised us rations. But so far the Pikunis see nothing. His agents give us nothing, though we have knocked on the door many times. Is this how he would have us treated?” (160). Unfortunately, they do not receive what they are promised, and therefore they feel misled and mistreated by the great grandfather. By promising goods and rations, the treaty makers created a system where Indian tribes gradually became dependent on deliveries from the agencies. Creating dependency made relocation to reservations easier, and might have been an intended part of treaty making. Another aspect of signing treaties was the dependency it created. As a service in return for signing treaties, the Blackfeet and other tribes were promised goods and benefits from the whites. Unfortunately, the whites often break the promises and when the goods show up, they are not in accordance with the agreement. Still, the promises created dependency and were the first step towards wardship. From Pearce’s *Savagism and Civilization*, we learn that the government in Washington looked upon the Indians as wards of the state (242). Giving up land through signing treaties often meant relocating, and tribes frequently experienced that the new land they were appointed was barren and not fit for people or animals. Making people dependent on benefits deprives them of their dignity and pride, and might cause tensions between tribe members, for instance. In *Fools Crow*, we witness frictions among the older and younger members of the tribe. The young ones want to kill off the whites as soon as possible, while the elders understand that it is not possible to fight the whites, because the tribe is outpowered by the whites’ weapons.

According to Nabokov, treaty making at this time had “degenerated into a hollow formality for inexpensively obtaining what would otherwise have cost a military expedition to seize” (119). Military expeditions were obviously more expensive than signing treaties with Indian tribes. Nabokov writes further that Native American reaction to the treaties changed over the

centuries, going from confusion to resentment and finally rage. Nabokov also points out that gifts were generally involved in treating; however, these gifts were often bribes, instead of real payment as we see in the novel: “The white ones steal our land, they give us trinkets, then they steal more” (*Fools* 61). The Pikunis experience these customs, which make some of the young warriors furious. Nabokov argues that Native Americans were given gifts at treaty ceremonies, but officials “often neglected to explain that presents lavished upon their native American guests during treaty negotiations were actually partial payment for lands soon to be gone forever” (Nabokov 120). By violating treaties and tricking Indian tribes, the American officials formed the basis of Native American resistance, as I will explain later.

1.5 Nature, Land and Animals

The initial encounters between Native Americans and whites happened because the whites wanted Native land, and the differences in how the two groups relate to land influences their interactions. The most profound differences between Euro-Americans and Native Americans are their views concerning nature, land and animals. The Blackfeet view nature, land, animals and people as a whole. Accordingly, nature plays an important part in *Fools Crow*, and Welch has set much of the story in nature. He does not just describe nature, but he implies nature as a vital component in the novel, for instance when he writes, “now that the weather had changed, the moon of the falling leaves turned white in the blackening sky” (3). This is the very first sentence of *Fools Crow* and it reveals that nature will be a significant part of the story. The second part of the sentence says, “and White Man’s Dog was restless” (3). Welch implies a symbiosis between White Man’s Dog and nature. The Native names of the moths are also strongly connected to nature. The opening scene is set in “the moon of the falling leaves,” which indicates that it is autumn and this is another example of how interwoven nature and life are among Native Americans. The white whiskey runner, on the other hand, feels “overwhelmed by the country ... The rolling prairies were as vast and empty as a pale ocean” (291). He is dreaming about isolation and the dream makes him uneasy. The feeling of being out of place, an alien in the landscape, is noticeable.

The whites have a hunger for nature, but mostly as a provider or source that could make them rich. They do not look upon nature as sacred. The Euro-Americans believe that God has given them a right or more a duty, to cultivate and exploit the earth’s resources. As Pearce points out: “The English, as Christians knowing God’s will, have an obligation to work that

land; for it is almost bare of inhabitants and it is rich in all those things which make for ‘merchandise’” (7). I will come back to the different religious views of nature in chapter 3. Cultivating to Indians is like opening Mother Earth’s breast, it is like injuring her, but that is exactly what the whites want the Indians to do as Mad Plume tells Fools Crow: “One day the white chiefs came to our camp and showed us a new trick. It was during the new-grass moon. They scratched at our Mother Earth’s breast and buried seeds and pieces of plant flesh beneath her skin” (97). The white chiefs want the Indians to copy their ways and start cultivating the earth, and some do, but they fail, and the Indians conclude: “We thought the Napikwans would leave us alone, for we have tried their way and it was no good” (97). This does not mean that Native Americans did not cultivate the earth. As Joni Adamson points out, Native peoples have planted corn for ages, and corn was looked upon as sacred by Native peoples. She argues further that according to the Puebloan writer Simon Ortiz, there is a “sacred relationship between the earth and the people: the people respectfully care for and till the earth, and the earth regenerates the human body when people eat corn” (qtd in Adamson 54). The episode in *Fools Crow*, on the other hand, indicates that the actual area was not suitable for cultivating: “it took a long time for these plants to come up, and when they did they were scrawny things” (97). Mad Plume says further that he cannot understand why they should grow these bony plants when there are plenty of berries and roots that grow naturally around them. His wish to be left alone by the Napikwans is not fulfilled, though, since the whites’ urge for land is overriding. The Napikwans’ urge for land is an appropriate illustration of an imperialistic view of land. As Said points out, imperialism is always about land: “At some very basic level, imperialism means thinking about, settling on, controlling land you do not possess, that is distant, that is lived on and owned by others” (7). This attitude very much sums up what happens to Blackfeet land in *Fools Crow*. The whites settle on Blackfeet land, use treaties to take control of large areas of Blackfeet land, and they do not consider the Blackfeet as the legitimate owners of the land.

To keep peace with the Napikwans, the Lone Eaters are willing to give up part of their land, but they learn that the Napikwans’ urge for land never ends: “At that time the Pikunis gave the Napikwans some land in return for promises that we would be left alone to hunt on our ranges” (177). They give up part of their land and hope to be left alone and they also hope that this will put a stop to the whites’ hunger for more land. Unfortunately, it does not happen. Fools Crow’s father, Rides-at-the-door, states that “soon the Napikwans will take the land

from us” (177-78). The settlers want land for cultivating and for their whitehorns. Miki-api explains to Fools Crow that the first Napikwans who arrived they could tolerate, but the arrival of settlers and their craving for land causes tensions and insecurity among the Pikunis. The settlers are coming closer, and they represent a threat to their traditional life. When Fools Crow is on one of his journeys, the novel’s narrator expresses the insecurity the encroaching settlers cause: “Fools Crow had taken to travel cautiously now, for he was in the country of the Napikwans. There were ranches along the Big River and others scattered on the bluffs above. Each year there were more, and they became harder to avoid” (229). He takes care to stay away from the buildings, but he is not able to avoid the whitehorns. The incident illustrates how difficult it has turned out to be for the Pikunis to travel in their own country. In the future, there will not be enough land left for them to conduct the traditional life-style. On the same journey, Fools Crow comes across an abandoned Napikwan ranch, and when he enters the buildings he realises that the settlers who lived there were probably killed because of “blood on the soft white headrest at the end of the platform” (230). We do not get to know how they are killed, but we might assume they are killed by Indians since conflicts between Indians and settlers are quite common. It is obvious that Fools Crow feels tense while travelling in “Napikwan country,” and he is constantly on guard. The abandoned homestead makes him feel haunted by Napikwans, and the experience makes him freeze and become unable to move. Fools Crow understands that what has happened at the farm is alarming and it will probably cause trouble for his people.

On his journeys, Fools Crow is always riding a horse, and the encounters with the whites introduced the Blackfeet to horses. The first horses were bought to North America by the whites, and the arrival of horses is thus an example of a positive effect of the encounter between Native Americans and whites. Still, the arrival of horses underlines the inequality in power between the peoples. In addition, horses and weapons enabled the whites to conquer the west. In *Killing Custer*, Welch points out the importance of horses to the Indians, and he claims that the horse had a profound impact on the lives of the Plains Indians, both socially and economically. They were wandering people, nomads, and the horse made moving much easier. Before the introduction of horses, the Indians used dogs to carry burdens. “Then the horse, large and fast and frightening, galloped out into the plains, offering promise but initially acting as an agent for hostility” (*Killing* 136). According to Welch, the first tribes that had access to horses, gained power against their former enemies, but it did not last long before

their enemies also acquired horses. Welch writes further that “the Blackfeet, who saw their first horses in about 1730, called them ‘elk-dogs’ which is a pretty good description. The horse looked something like an elk and could be domesticated to carry or drag things like a dog” (136). In addition to other benefits, the introduction of horses made life for the Plains Indians more exciting: “perhaps more than anything, the horse brought new excitement into the lives of the Plains Indians. Suddenly they could move as fast as the wind, they could chase down enemies and game, which before the arrival of the horse would have been only an empty wish” (*Killing* 139). The Indians were very qualified on horseback, and their riding abilities were often better than the soldiers’. Still, according to Welch, the most important change was their ability to follow the buffaloes more closely, and thus bring more meat back to camp. In the *Fools Crow*, horses play an important role. At the beginning of the novel, Fools Crow is not satisfied with his horses. He owns three horses, but “his animals were puny, not a blackhorn runner among them” (4). If he is going to get a wife, he has to get hold of better horses.

The introduction of horses made the division between rich and poor more visible. More horses meant more wives and more wives meant more children, and since having many children is a symbol of wealth, men with many horses were admired. Welch underscores the status of horses in *Fools Crow*: “How many horses will I get?” (7). Fast Horse is most interested in how many horses he will get if he takes part in the ride on the Crows. Indeed, for the Lone Eaters, the ride on the crows is mostly about stealing horses, especially buffalo runners. Fast Horse says to White Man’s Dog (later Fools Crow): “I will make you wealthy in horses, Crow horses” (8). As Welch points out, horses also lead to conflicts between tribes, and rides on neighbour tribes to obtain more horses. The settlers bring horses as well, and to Owl Child and his gang, stealing horses from the whites is an important part of the conflict with the settlers: “Owl Child and his gang had been causing trouble with the Napikwans, driving away horses” (16). Even Yellow Kidney, who has participated in many rides and has good horses, is feeling the excitement of capturing another horse: “[h]e knew that once they were near the Crow camp, he would be as eager as any of the others to capture a prize horse” (20). Horses constitute a measure of wealth among the Blackfeet, and make both hunting and moving from place to place easier. The whites, on the other hand, seem to measure wealth through owning land. Here, we notice another important difference between the Blackfeet and the Napikwans.

The Blackfeet are dependent on buffaloes to survive. The buffalo is all important, and they use every part of it. The only part of the buffalo the whites value is the hide. After the arrival of the whites, the number of buffaloes on the Great Plains decreased dramatically due to the whites' efficient hunting strategies. In addition to losing land, losing the buffalo, or the blackhorn, as the animal is called in *Fools Crow*, was devastating: "Honor is all we have, thought Rides-at-the-door, that and the blackhorns. Take away one or the other and we have nothing. One feeds us, the other nourishes us" (343). This is a vivid example of the importance of the buffalo. Honour is important to the Indians, but Rides-at-the-door juxtaposes honour and buffaloes. He says that the buffalo feeds them, and he is of course right, but as Welch points out in *Killing Custer*, the buffalo provided the Indians with tools, clothes and numerous other devices:

They used virtually all the parts of the buffalo: hoofs and phallus for glue, tails for flyswatters or ornaments, horns for spoons, cups or gunpowder flaks, tanned hides for clothes and lodge covers, raw hides for parflidges and bowstrings and saddle covers, beard hair for lariats, halters, bridles, and saddles paddling, intestines for making sausage, dewclaws and scrotums for rattles, skulls for religious ceremonies, tongues for the same purpose or as a delicacy, unborn calves for bags to carry pemmican, berries and tobacco, bones for sled runners, dice, even paintbrushes, dung for fire fuel, and finally meat as the staple of their diet. (*Killing* 134)

The buffalo was so important to them that according to Welch, they looked upon the buffalo as sacred and made generous offerings to the buffalo. In *Fools Crow*, hunting buffaloes, or blackhorns is an important part of the Lone Eaters' traditional life. We experience their fears of losing the blackhorns and their hopes for the future concerning the return of the blackhorns. The whites, on the other hand, do not seem to have the same attitude, but look upon buffaloes as just sources for hides and wealth. In a quote from the *New York Herald*, printed in 1877, Sitting Bull says that he finds it strange that white Americans criticize Indians for killing buffaloes while white hunters often kill them for amusement. Sitting Bull points out that they kill because they need the buffalo for clothing and food, while the white hunter only takes part of the animal and leaves the rest (qtd. in Taylor 75). To an Indian, it was a sacrilege to kill animals and not utilize every part of the prey. Taylor also refers to an English observer, William Blackmore, who describes the tremendous change in the number of buffaloes on the

Plains between 1868 and 1873. When he toured the Plains in 1868, he observed large numbers of buffaloes, but when he returned in 1873, he observed large numbers of rotting buffalo carcasses. However, the Indians' view of buffalo hunting also changed after the whites introduced a money economy. The possibility of making money on hides, many hides, made some Indians reject the old ways of utilizing every part of the buffalo. According to Robertson: "Indian hunters of the 1830's through 1850's slaughtered tens of thousands of buffalo, taking nothing but their skins and tongues" (245). Robertson writes further that when the supply of buffaloes was limited, the women used everything from the animal, but when there were sufficient supplies, they only took the hides and the best part of the meat. Welch indicates, in *Fools Crow*, that traditionally, the Indians utilized every part of the animal, while Robinson questions this assumption. The encountering of the whites' money economy seems to have upset the ecological balance on the Plains.

The encroachment of the whites and their attitudes towards buffaloes had a devastating effect on traditional Indian life on the Plains. Therefore, it is not hard to understand Fools Crow's dismay when he learns about one Napikwan who kills animals, but leaves the meat. To Fools Crow, this Napikwan's hunting practice is a mutilation of the tribe's traditional life, and Fools Crow feels obliged to do something to prevent the Napikwan from going on. Even though he knows killing whites might cause troubles for his band in the future, he knows that he has to kill off the Napikwan. He understands that he does this for the future of his people and to re-establish balance in nature. To fulfil his plan, he is willing to use his wife, Red Paint, as bait to get the Napikwan: "when he watched her bathe in the stream, Fools Crow knew he was married to a woman who turned other men's heads. Now he felt ashamed that this beauty would spring the trap" (171). The plan almost fails, but in the end Fools Crow is able to kill the Napikwan. The episode stands out in *Fools Crow* as a descriptive illustration of contrasting values concerning views on animals between the Indians and the whites.

1.6 Resistance

In *Fools Crow*, Owl Child and his gang perform violent actions against the whites. Acts of resistance presented in the novel are not glorified or celebrated. The actions of Owl Child's gang cause fear instead of celebration. Fear of revenge from the whites, and in *Fools Crow* the worst act of revenge on behalf of the whites is the massacre at the Maria's. The elders express doubts concerning resistance, since the power of the Napikwans is too great, therefore

they do not support organized resistance. They have experienced bloodshed and humiliations and find signing treaties the only option. In the novel, the continuous encroachment of the whites causes tensions among the Pikunis themselves. The elders, who have experienced former conflicts with the whites, realize that they have to negotiate, while some young Pikunis choose a confrontational approach. Rides-at-the-door warns the young ones against raiding on the Napikwans: “My own father, Fools Crow’s grandfather, was killed many winters ago in a pointless raid on one of the forts on the Big River east of here” (177). When the Pikunis first encountered the Napikwans, they thought they could resist them, and force them to leave their land, but in those days, the Pikunis were not familiar with the capacity of the whites’ weapons, and when the Pikunis tried to fight the whites with traditional weapons, they had no chance: “They thought to drive out these strange creatures, rode into battle with axes and knives, and were killed mercilessly by these new sticks-that-speak-from-afar” (177).

The imbalance in power between the Pikunis and the Napikwans makes the chiefs choose treaties instead of fighting, not because they want to, but because they understand it is the only way since the Napikwans are too powerful to fight, and if they choose to fight, they are afraid they will lose everything. However, the chiefs point out that “if the Napikwans mistake our desire for weakness, let them beware, for the Pikunis will fight them to death” (180). Weakness was not acceptable, but Owl Child and his gang think that the chiefs lack courage and honour and are weak when they sign treaties, therefore they have chosen to fight the Napikwans, kill them and steal their horses and their goods.

He had been hearing around the camps of the Pikunis that Owl Child and his gang had been causing trouble with the Napikwans, driving away horses and cattle, and had recently killed a party of woodcutters near Many Houses fort. It would be only a matter of time before the Napikwans sent seizers to make war on the Pikunis. The people would suffer greatly. (16)

The actions of Owl Child and his gang cause troubles with the Napikwans on several occasions throughout *Fools Crow*. They continue their rides on the white settlers and white traders. Owl Child is considered an outcast and just occasionally visits the camps. He has admirers among the young Pikunis because he is not afraid of the Napikwans and has the power to “make them cry.” When he visits the camps, he makes fun of those who do not want

to resist the Napikwans. Unfortunately, Owl Child and his gang's raids and killings have devastating effects on the Pikunis, since the Napikwans blame the whole tribe for their actions. The chiefs understand that the Napikwans will let the people suffer for their actions and Sun Chief warns Owl Child: "If these foolish young men continue their raiding and killing of the Napikwans, we will all suffer. The seizers will kill us, and the Pikuni people will be as the shadows on the land. This must not happen" (61-62). Owl Child does not like the chief's answer and tells him that soon a Napikwan will own the land he is standing on and he will be nothing but dust. He says further that he has chosen his way, and that is to kill the white men. In his opinion, the young Pikunis will drive the Napikwans off their land.

Fast Horse, a young Pikuni and Fools Crow's friend, admires Owl Child: "Fast Horse looked upon him with awe, for of all the Pikunis, Owl Child had made the Napikwans cry the most" (61). After a conflict with his band, he joins Owl Child's gang, but he does not realize that the gang's actions will be fatal for the Pikunis. Fools Crow would never join Owl Child's gang because his loyalty to the band is too strong, but when he meets up with Fast Horse on one occasion, he suddenly understands why Fast Horse joined the gang: "It was this freedom from responsibility, from accountability to the group, that was so alluring" (213). The responsibility of being part of a group is binding, and Owl Child and his gang have cut the connection with the band and are therefore free. According to Owens: "Ironically, the renegades who fight most vehemently against the intrusion of the whites are already the most displaced Indians in the world Welch describes, and in their alienation they come to resemble the displaced whites whom they kill" (*Other* 161). Owl Child and his gang kill whites and desperately want them out of Pikuni land, but on the other hand, they adopt the Napikwans' ways more thoroughly than any others in *Fools Crow*.

Owens also argues that the outcasts were dangerous to the Pikunis: "So dangerous to the Pikunis are the outcasts – that Rides-at-the-door and the other chiefs agree to kill Owl Child's renegades" (*Other* 161). The background for this agreement is Owl Child's killing of Malcolm Clark. He is a settler who is married to a Pikuni woman, but he was not well liked among the Pikunis, since he was known for his brutal ways and his anger. In addition, he was able to influence the white leaders. Killing Malcolm Clark was a huge mistake and the Pikunis paid the price. Even fast Horse understands that they had made a mistake. Fools Crow's wife, Red Paint, expresses the fear the Pikunis feel. "She did not want her husband to

see her fear ... Owl Child and fast Horse were still killing Napikwans, and now the Napikwans would come after the Lone Eaters before the many-drums moon” (253). Red paint was right, the Napikwans would come after the Pikunis, and this time they would strike them profoundly.

1.7 The Massacre

“Something has happened, something bad!” (379). Fools Crow is hunting, along with other Lone Eaters, when they discover a group of people approaching on foot. First, they think they are enemies, but soon they notice children among them. They are a miserable group of youngsters, children and old people, and Fools Crow understands that something bad has happened: “it was the seizers. They sneaked up on us while we were asleep. There was only a little light, just enough to see by, and they shot us in our lodges” (380). The hunting party has met the survivors of the massacre at the Marias, in which 173 Blackfeet were slaughtered by the soldiers, many of them children and old people. Custer’s Last Stand is among the best known conflicts between Indians and whites, but according to Welch, “the Massacre at the Marias River was more representative of what happened to Indian people who resisted the white invasion than Custer’s Last Stand” (*Killing* 23). Welch writes further that to know the Massacre at the Marias, is important to understand how the US treated Native Americans. When Welch and his co-writer Stekler were researching for *Killing Custer*, they had problems finding the site of the massacre, which proves that by Americans, the massacre is not recognized as important. In America, the killing of Custer at Little Bighorn “may be the most depicted event in our nation’s history” (22). Custer represented the values of the new nation, and his killing created the Custer Myth. But for Indians, and especially the Blackfeet, the Massacre at the Marias River had a more devastating impact. The Blackfeet realized after the massacre at the Marias that they were defeated by the whites, and according to Welch “they never raised arms against the United States again” (37).

At the time of the Massacre, the Lone Eaters are weakened by smallpox and people are starving, and therefore the men have gone hunting to get meat, and only women, children and old people are left in the camp. “Where are the men? ... ’Where are the warriors?’” (385). Fools Crow asks where the men and the warriors are, and he is shocked when he realizes that there are no warriors in the camp. The soldiers attack women and children sick with small pox. The massacre is a demonstration of the whites’ willingness to use power, even towards

innocent, powerless people. There are no men or warriors left in camp when the soldiers strike. In addition, the soldiers attack the camp at night, when the people are sleeping in their lodges. They do not stand a chance, and the massacre is an example of encounters between peoples of unequal powers. “The seizers walked among the lodges, at first quietly; then they became bolder and began to talk and laugh. Whenever they saw a movement from under one of the lodge covers they shot at it until it moved no more” (386). When the soldiers have shot them, they burn the bodies on the fires, and they are laughing while they are killing the Indians. The band’s chief is Heavy Runner, and he has signed a paper with the white chiefs, saying that his band is friendly towards the whites and want to live in peace with them. However, the paper is worthless: “Heavy Runner was among the first to fall” (385). Fools Crow is shocked at what he hears and sees, and he realizes that the Pikunis can never match the Napikwans and their power. He must also admit to himself that his father is right, that they have to negotiate with the Napikwans. He says to the survivors: “It is good that you are alive. You will have much to teach the young ones about the Napikwans. Many of them will come into this world and growing up thinking that the Napikwans are their friends because they will be given a blanket or a tin of the white man’s water. But here, you see, this is the Napikwans’ real gift” (387). Fools Crow refers to the Pikunis that believe the Napikwans’ will fulfil the promises, and bring the goods they have agreed on. Fools Crow indicates that the real gift from the Napikwans is revenge and killing. In spite of the hardships and the sufferings the Blackfeet experience through the encounters with the whites, Welch indicates survivance at the end of *Fools Crow*. I will discuss this further in chapter 3.

1.8 Conclusion

In *Fools Crow*, the encounters between Native Americans and whites are depicted as encounters between peoples of unequal powers and irreconcilable values and worldviews. Welch provides a description of traditional Blackfeet life utterly disturbed and ruined by the encroaching whites: “We are nothing to them. It is this ground we stand on they seek” (179). The novel depicts conflicts between the Blackfeet and the Napikwans concerning land. The imperialistic whites want their land, either for resources or for settlement. This is imperialism and colonialism in action. In order to get what they want, the whites seem willing to use power to extinct the Blackfeet. The Blackfeet are the obstacles and the whites are empowered to carry out their goals.

Chapter 2

2.1 *Encounters in The Heartsong of Charging Elk*

The Heartsong of Charging Elk is James Welch's last novel, and was first published in 2000, three years before Welch passed away. *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* is, like *Fools Crow*, a historical novel, and is set after the events in *Fools Crow*. The protagonist, Charging Elk, witnesses the surrender of Crazy Horse, a formerly powerful chief, at an American army fort, and he experiences the dissolution of traditional Native American life and culture. Charging Elk is Lakota Sioux, and his band, the Oglalas, live on the Great plains of North America. The buffalo are gone and most Indians are living on reservations, yet Charging Elk and his friend Strikes Plenty are trying to live a traditional life outside the reservation. However, they find that it is almost impossible to avoid starvation, and finally they have to surrender and move to the reservation. Life at the reservation is hard and meaningless and makes them disillusioned. When they are offered the opportunity to join Buffalo Bill's Wild West show on a tour in Europe, they consider it an opportunity to get away from their dull lives. Only Charging Elk is accepted, though, since the white leaders find Strikes Plenty "not Indian enough" (38). Charging Elk travels with the show to Europe, but in France, he falls sick and is left behind in Marseille. He wakes up in a hospital surrounded by people he cannot communicate with. In *The Heartsong of Charging Elk*, Welch depicts the experiences of a dislocated Indian. Most of the novel is set in Marseille, but Charging Elk thinks of, and dreams of, his childhood and youth back home. *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* is a bildungsroman, and we follow Charging Elk from his youth on the plains to maturity in a foreign country.

The Heartsong of Charging Elk describes encounters between Native Americans and whites, both in the US and in Europe. The novel depicts encounters between Native Americans and whites as forced encounters between peoples of uneven power against the backdrop of imperialism. Charging Elk cannot choose whether or not he wants to encounter white people, because he is forced to live among them. In the novel, Welch portrays encounters between different cultures and different views: the whites look upon Charging Elk as a savage from a vanishing people while Charging Elk finds the whites strange and incomprehensible. According to circumstances, he has to adjust to a new life among these

strangers, while he simultaneously struggles to keep his Lakota identity. Charging Elk is gradually accustomed to living in France and the wish to return home fades, but a fatal incident at a brothel makes Charging Elk a murderer, and he serves a long sentence in prison. Finally, he is released from prison, marries a French woman, and moves back to Marseille. In the last scene, Charging Elk meets up with the Wild West show again and faces the opportunity of going home.

In *Fools Crow*, the Native Americans are obstacles to the conquering of the west, while in *The Heartsong of Charging Elk*, they are presented as a defeated people, but still useful tools in the history of the conquest: the Indians no longer stand in the way of Manifest Destiny, and in the show they are the vanishing savages and cultural exotics on display. The Wild West show provides America's official story of how the west was won, and the show has a great influence on the French view of Native Americans. Like the Americans, the French have an imperialistic view of the other, but the show evokes feelings of imperialist nostalgia in the French audience. Buffalo Bill and his represent only the Anglo-American side of the story, and they conceal the Indians' history. By portraying the Indians as savages, the show justifies the whites' encroachment and even their killing of the Natives. In the show, the settlers are the innocent actors attacked by the savage Indians. Still, the show implies that the Indians are the original Americans. The French welcome the show Indians and show enthusiasm when the Indians parade through the city; however, Charging Elk, the authentic Indian, causes opposite reactions. He is definitely an outcast and does not belong. The French, like the Americans, as Charging Elk points out, are hostile towards him when they encounter him without his Indian costume. The Wild West show exports American attitudes towards Native American to the Europeans: in *The Heartsong of Charging Elk*, we witness that the French have adopted the Americans' view of the Indians. They certainly feel superior to Charging Elk, and look upon him as a child they have to take care of. They have no confidence in him and do not think he is able to take care of himself. In *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* this attitude of cultural superiority and power is demonstrated on several levels throughout the novel. Just as the Americans in *Fools Crow* want to extinct the Indians, the French authorities consider Charging Elk dead, even if he is very much alive. Show Indians are interesting, real Indians are threatening and unwanted.

2.2 Assimilation, Reservations and the White Man's School

Encounters between Native Americans and whites resulted in assimilation, and the whites used their power to assimilate the Native Americans by relocating them to reservations, and sending Native children to schools. *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* illustrates what has happened to Charging Elk and his tribe after encountering the whites. The prologue depicts Crazy Horse and his band's surrender at Fort Robinson in 1877. The official American solution to the Indian problem was to dislocate the tribes and finally move the Indians to reservations and assimilate them into the white American culture. Gary D. Sandefur writes that "the isolation and concentration of American Indians began very early, but it received its first legal justification in the Indian Removal Act of 1830" (37). Sandefur argues further that Indians were usually just given land that was not attractive to the whites. Indian land was also located far away from transportation routes. The government's intention was to keep Indians in remote areas, areas with scarce natural resources. This policy resulted in Indian dependency on the agencies' rations. Charging Elk's memories of life at the reservation are not positive compared to his memories from his life in the Stronghold, "a place in the Badlands ... a long tall grassy butte with sheer cliffs on three sides" (14). The Stronghold is outside the reservation, and it is an area where some Oglalas flee to get away from the whites, and where they try to live a traditional life. Charging Elk says that the whites fear the Stronghold, and that the Indians living there are not recognized by the reservation Indians, thus the Stronghold causes tensions both among the Indians and between the Indians and the whites. Charging Elk and his companions at the Stronghold "had laughed and mocked those Indians who had given up and lived in wooden houses at the agency, collecting their meagre commodities, their spoiled meat, learning to worship the white man's god, learning to talk the strange tongue" (20). In *Fools Crow*, we witness that the supplies the Blackfeet are promised, in exchange for land, are insufficient or missing. Commodities are obviously used by the whites to keep the Indians down. The Blackfeet fear Christianising and dislocation while the Lakotas in *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* are living on reservations and worshipping the white man's God. Even though Charging Elk does not speak English, more and more Lakotas do.

Contrasted to life at the reservation, Charging Elk feels free and powerful while living in the Stronghold. There they can hunt, dress in traditional clothes and practice their own religion. Life is not easy, though, and the last winter he spends there, several of the Indians, especially children, die of starvation. Yet, the fact that they still choose to live there, is a vivid example of Indians' resistance to living on reservations. Charging Elk's view on reservation life is particularly well illustrated in his description of his father:

But he couldn't figure out his father. Scrub had been a shirtwearer, one of the bravest and wisest of the Oglalas. He had fought hard at Little Bighorn and provided meat when the people were running from the soldiers. But that winter when the people were starving and sick, he had become a peacemaker, just like the reservation Indians who were sent out by their white bosses to try to talk the band into surrendering. Charging Elk had been ashamed of his father that winter. (17)

Charging Elk does not understand why his father surrenders and moves into the reservation. He remembers his father's life at the reservation as passive and idling, and his father's fate is one of the reasons he keeps going back to the Stronghold. However, the situation for the Indians outside the reservation is devastating, and therefore even proud Indian leaders, like Charging Elk's father, choose to cooperate with the white bosses and also negotiate with their people to make them surrender and move to the reservation. To Charging Elk, this is an act of treason. On the other hand, Charging Elk is probably not experienced enough to understand the power of the white man. Both in *Fools Crow* and in *The Heartsong of Charging Elk*, the elders acknowledge the power of the whites, while the young ones do not. Still, Charging Elk knows that the Indians at the Stronghold are considered bad Indians, and that they risk being captured by the whites if they visit the reservation. If they are taken, the children are sent to boarding school, the women are brought under detention, and the men are sent to the nearby fort. To resist the white authorities seems futile.

Welch points out in *Killing Custer* that reservation Indians were treated badly, and that they were "turned on one another" (254). Welch also describes Crazy Horse's reservation life: "Nothing to do but sit around waiting for rations" (245). Crazy Horse is not happy with the conditions at the reservation, since they have no sanitary conveniences, no horses and actually nothing to do. The reservation system pacified the Indians and made them wards of the

government. Another ulterior motive with reservations was assimilation, as Sandefur points out: “Toward the end of the nineteenth century, the federal government revised its principal approach to the ‘Indian problem’ to one of forced assimilation rather than forced isolation” (38). Sandefur also argues that life at reservations often meant a life in poverty. *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* describes life in reservations toward the end of nineteenth century in similar ways. The government wanted to assimilate the Indians into white culture and life, but they made sure they did not achieve equal opportunities. In addition to reservations, the white man’s schools contributed to the assimilation of Native Americans.

The goal of the assimilation scheme was to assimilate Native Americans into the white American culture, and thus make their own culture vanish. The imperialistic ideology of superior and inferior races pervaded the assimilation policy. When Charging Elk later meets Indians from the new Wild West show, he is told that “everybody goes away to school now” (432). Andrew Little Ring tells him about Joseph’s experiences at school and he provides a very negative and degrading picture of the boarding schools: ““You see – they treated Joseph and the other children very badly. They were forbidden to speak Lakota, even to each other. If they made a prayer to Wakan Tanka at night, they were put in a dark room by themselves. If they sang one of our songs, they were beaten”” (432). He goes on and says that Joseph spent eight years at the boarding school and lost most of his mother tongue. Still, the school was not happy with his progress and made him stay during the summer holidays to prevent him from being too influenced by his own culture. Boarding schools were often run by churches, and Christianising Indians was considered a good tool in civilizing and assimilating them. Therefore, it was forbidden to practice the old religion and children were punished if they did not follow the rules. Not only school children, but the people in general were neither allowed to speak their language nor practice their religion: “Now the people were forbidden to hold the Sun Dance, just as they were forbidden to speak Lakota” (67).

Charging Elk spends some time at the white man’s school, and his experience confirms Andrew Little Ring’s story. Also he feels degraded and inferior at school: “All the things they had learned out in the buffalo country were of no use here, and their smaller classmates had to help them spell, and add and subtract the red apples” (56). His knowledge does not count at all, and he has to be helped by the smaller children. Charging Elk leaves school and goes back to the Stronghold, but according to Andrew Little Ring, leaving school

is not an option these days. Charging Elk wonders whether the schools have changed since he attended and asks if they are taught “the old ways.” Andrew Little Ring answers: ““They taught me many things – how to cut off my hair, how to wear clothes just like them, how to use my knife and fork properly, how to say ‘Yes, sir, ma’am.’ Oh yes, they taught me many things so that I could be smart – just like them”” (432). Andrew Little Ring is making fun of what he learned at school, but his statement illustrates the tragic impact of schooling on Native American children. They did not learn anything about their traditional culture, but were taught how to be good Americans by cutting their hair, changing their clothes and behaving properly. Behaving properly meant showing their white teachers respect and courtesy. According to Andrew Little Ring, the white man’s school is supposed to make them as smart as the whites. He is obviously not satisfied with his schooling because instead of providing knowledge, the school has removed his Native identity and made him feel inferior.

Womack indicates that the boarding schools still might have contributed to strengthening Indian identity since students from different tribes met, and “such contact between Indian students may have strengthened Indian identity, one of the factors that may have caused residential schools to have the opposite of their intended effects” (226). Although boarding schools could have unintended effects, the overall effect was assimilation. To Native Americans, being dislocated from their families and their traditional lives had traumatizing effects. Welch argues that the effects of boarding schools were alienation and maladjustment of those who experienced them, both in the white culture and the tribal culture: “They were strangers in their own culture – strangers to the white culture, strangers to their culture” (*Killing* 228). Welch argues further that the most devastating effect was that they did not know how to be parents because they were separated from their own parents at a very early age. Finally, Welch points out that the effects of this policy still trouble Indian societies today and that many of the present social problems are associated with the boarding school policy. Boarding schools were useful assimilation tools, and under the pretence of civilizing Native Americans, few whites questioned the practice. “The U.S. policy concerning the education of Indian children in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was guided by a single statement: ““Our goal is to kill the Indian in order to save the Man,”” this policy was designed to assimilate Indian people into society, beginning with teaching them how to think and act” (Edmo et al. 79). The American authorities had no respect for Indian people, but initially they probably found it wrong to kill the Indians, but teaching them white values and behaviour

seemed appropriate. White America's attitude in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was that Indian culture was not worth preserving, and Americanising the Indians was looked upon as beneficial to the Indians. Boarding schools were useful assimilation tools, and under the pretence of civilizing Native Americans, few whites questioned the practice. By focusing on civilizing Indians, the authorities were able to justify the assaults on Indian culture; we do not want to kill the people, just their inferior culture. Edmo et al argue further that the boarding schools were located far away from the reservations to prevent students from close contact with their families. Edmo et al also point out that the schools forbade students to speak their own languages, and made the students cut their hair and dress as white Americans. Boarding schools are thus examples of how the colonizers treated Native Americans and humiliated their culture, religion and language. Boarding schools were often Native children's first real encounter with the white world and the experience must have been frightening. The effects on the colonized were therefore devastating, and even today, many Natives suffer from the aftermaths of boarding schools.

2.3 Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show

World's Fairs and Buffalo Bill's Wild West shows were many Europeans' first encounter with Native Americans and their culture. Actually many white Americans also encountered Indians only through Fairs and Wild West shows. Buffalo Bill travelled with his Wild West show, both in America and in Europe, and the show substantiated the western view on Indians as savages and belonging to a vanishing people. Bill Cody established his show in 1883, and even though it gained popularity in America, the show achieved much more success in Europe. Richard Slotkin points out that the show constituted "exercises in public education" (166), since the show intended to educate the audiences, both in America and Europe, on the conquering of the west. The show is presented as an authentic and true picture of American history, and tells the audience that the west is finally civilized and settled by English-speaking people. Christina Welch argues that "Cody's misrepresentations were in his live shows, their accompanying brochures, and in his advertising material" (344). C. Welch indicates further that Cody had an agreement with the United States government, and according to the agreement, The Wild West show would help assimilating Indians. Slotkin claims that it was believed that the Indian participants travelling with the show would see the welfare of the west and influence their fellow people, after returning home, to give up their

traditional ways. Buffalo Bill points out to Charging Elk that he will see a lot of wonders while travelling with the show, indicating that he will learn new ways, but he also points out that on the show, he is supposed to play the part of a wild Indian. An assimilated Indian is of no use to Buffalo Bill, but still one of the show's goals is to assimilate Indians.

Slotkin also claims that “the management of Cody’s enterprise declared it improper to speak of their performance as a “Wild West Show”, “From its inception in 1882 it was called “The Wild West,” a name which identified it as a ‘place’ rather than a mere display or entertainment” (165). Welch calls it a show in *The Heartsong of Charging Elk*, and by doing so he underscores that it is a show, not an authentic story of a place. There is a duplicity in Charging Elk’s participation in the show, because of the way history is presented. Welch depicts this duplicity by letting Charging Elk state that he knows the show tells a fake story of the winning of the west, but still expresses delight in showing the audience the “old ways”. Phillip J. Deloria argues that “the combination of expectation, authenticity, and theatrical mimicry proved unstoppable, and, for over thirty years, the formula captivated audiences across Europe and the United States” (60). As Deloria points out the show was a real success both in America and in Europe. The Wild West show used Indians to authenticate the story in the show, but he also points out that the Indians were used to elucidate the Euro-American history of annexation and settlement.

In *The Heartsong of Charging Elk*, Charging Elk describes the scenes in the show and the Indians’ roles:

Wearing only breechcloths and moccasins and headdresses, they chased the buffalo, then the Deadwood stage, attempted to burn down a settler’s cabin, performed a scalp dance, and charged the 7th cavalry at the Greasy Grass. Buffalo Bill always rescued the *wasichus* – the settlers, the woman and children, the people who rode in the stagecoach – from the Indians, but he couldn’t rescue the longknives. They died every time before Buffalo Bill got there. (70)

Part of the show depicts Indians in their traditional clothes, horse-riding and chasing the buffalo. However, the main part portrays Indians as savages, scalping whites, burning down their houses and attacking the soldiers. In addition, they perform scalp dances and celebrate their savagery. In the nineteenth century, this was the stereotypical Euro-American image of

Indians. The Euro-Americans expected Indians to behave in a certain way and to dress and look like these stereotypes. Both St-Cyr and Madame Soulas expect a savage when they encounter Charging Elk for the first time. They are both disappointed, though, and have to adjust their opinion of him. In the show, the Indians are stars since they portray the stereotypical Indians, but the real star is, of course, Buffalo Bill, who always rescues the settlers from the Indians. The soldiers die, but the audience can probably accept the loss of some soldiers, since it is a state of war. The white bosses picked the Indian participants very carefully, choosing only Indians that fit the whites' image of Indians. Charging Elk is selected because he is dark and tall and looks wild enough. Strikes Plenty, his friend, is not picked, though, because he does not look like a real Indian. According to Charging Elk, Strikes Plenty is more real than he is, but "these bosses think they know what an Indian should look like" (38). The Wild West show influences both Madeleine and Rene Soulas' views on Charging Elk. The family attends the show, and especially Madeleine is shocked by the Indians in the show and feels sorry for the settlers: "painted, screaming savages chasing the monstrous bison, or worse, the brave pioneers" (151). What frightened her even more was the way the audience behaved at the show when they copied the Indians' war cries. In her opinion, the Indians are the savages and the settlers are the civilized. Buffalo Bill's Wild West show thus depicted the United States government's official perspective of Indians. In France, the show Indians were welcomed, but the real Indians were not.

Why did Native Americans join Buffalo Bill's Wild West show? Many Indians joined for adventure and wealth. According to Amanda Cobb-Greetham, "Welch succeeds where many critics have failed by using common sense to explain why American Indians would have wanted to participate in the Wild West show, the show represented freedom" (159). In *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* it is quite obvious that this is the case for Charging Elk. He does not want to stay at the reservation and he cannot go back to the Stronghold, so the show represents freedom from starvation and a dull life on the reservation. Charging Elk reaches a state in his life where he has to make a decision about his future. He can no longer live the traditional life in the Stronghold, and he despises being a reservation Indian. Going to Europe with the show is a way of avoiding moving to the reservation, and "they were very excited because the show would take them to a land beyond the big water. It was the favored land to the east where the white men came from. They had never seen Indians and they would treat Indians like big chiefs" (32). The Indians' expectations are high, and it seems like the Indians

are fairly treated, even if they are not as well treated as the white performers. The elders at home do not approve of the young Indians' participation in the show because the show represents a fictitious image of their people.

Although Charging Elk knows the show depicts a fake image of Indians and their history, he expresses pride and contentment regarding participating in the show. His role is important: he is allowed to show that he is a good rider and, in a way, he feels that he is giving the audience a glimpse of the "old ways." Another interesting concept is that he indicates that the only time that he ever felt safe among white people was when he participated in the show. Both in America and in France, white people make him feel inferior and threatening. Charging Elk's part in the show is similar to white people's stereotypical image of Indians as vanishing savages. Buffalo Bill reminds Charging Elk of his role in the show: "You are going to see a lot of things on this trip. Enjoy it all – just remember, when you're in that arena you're a wild Indian from hell's fire" (125). It is important that Charging Elk plays the role of a wild Indian in the show and not a civilized Indian. Yet, civilization of Indians was the goal of the American government, and therefore by portraying Indians as savages, the show justifies the vanishing of the Indians. Buffalo Bill points out at the beginning of the show that "they are disappearing – like the bison. He says their culture is dying and soon they will be gone too" (137). The Wild West show portrays the whites' view, or in other words, the imperialistic view on how the west was won, and it also justifies the whites' superiority.

2.4 The Setting in France

The setting in France is an interesting move by Welch. By locating Charging Elk in France, away from his people, Welch, according to Donahue, "avoids any discussion of the historical trends or the historical patterns that are working themselves out in America" (71). The situation for Native Americans in America was reaching a turning point. The Indian wars were over and most tribes were dislocated to reservations. The government conducted forced assimilation of Native Americans through reservations, schooling and farming. The discourse on whether the Indians should be granted citizenship or not was also ongoing, and by locating Charging Elk in France, Welch avoids these discussions. The first time Welch visited France "he got his first taste of culture shock, European style. He didn't know the language, couldn't read the menus, the signs. Couldn't talk, couldn't understand what people said to him. He

didn't know the customs, the gestures even" (L. Welch 44). Lois Welch, his wife, says that Welch wanted to set the novel in a completely strange environment because that was how he experienced his first visit to France. During one of his visits in France, Welch encountered Pierre Falaise, who claimed that his grandmother was Lakota and came to France with Buffalo Bill's Wild West show, fell in love with a Frenchman and stayed in France. Welch did not find the man trustworthy at first, but later he used the story as an inspiration for *The Heartsong of Charging Elk*. Suzanne Ferguson argues that Welch, by setting the novel in France and letting Charging Elk stay on in France, "bestows on his character the freedom *not* to have to confront the oppression of tribal life, a lonely freedom to find his individual destiny" (38). Charging Elk leaves America, and even if he feels his traditional life is over, it is his decision, not the government's. By leaving, he avoids the humiliation of living on a reservation. Charging Elk finds his own destiny, and in the end, he can decide whether or not he wants to go home. Donahoe points out that the novel "makes a more general statement about the possibility for a Native American to live his own life, according to his own individual and cultural values, while assimilating into a non-Native culture. For this reason, the novel could not have been set in America" (73). In France, Charging Elk can evolve as an individual independent of American views on Native Americans. Welch indicates that he becomes French, but still keeps his Lakota identity. In America, though, the official view was that Native Americans had to assimilate into the white American culture, or vanish. Also French people, to a certain degree, looked upon Indians as a vanishing people, but to them, Indians were not a cultural threat, and therefore he was able to both assimilate into French culture and stay Lakota. Welch implies a critique of America in making Charging Elk consider France home, while simultaneously maintaining his Lakota culture.

The opening scene in *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* sets the protagonist in an unfamiliar and strange environment. Charging Elk wakes up in a dark place he does not recognize, and the people around him speak a language he cannot understand. After some time, he realizes where he is: "Charging Elk knew now that he was in a white man's healing house" (7). Charging Elk has had an accident performing in the Wild West show and is hospitalized in Marseilles, but he does not remember anything when he wakes up, and he is not sure where he is and how long he has been there. However, he understands he is not at home: "He was not of these people. He was a different color and he couldn't speak their tongue. He was from somewhere a long way off. And he was here, alone, in this house of

sickness. He tried to fight off the panic by remembering something about himself” (9). Charging Elk is bewildered and alienated in the hospital in Marseille, and when he starts remembering, he thinks of his home and his family back home. Later, he remembers that he is in France, and that he came to France with Buffalo Bill. Franklin Bell, an American working at the American consulate, and a French official are visiting him at the hospital, but Charging Elk is not able to communicate with either of them. He knows no French and the few English words he learned at school are not enough, and “for the first time in his life, he wished he had stayed in school and learned the brown suit’s language” (14). He names the American “brown suit” because of his clothes. If he had been able to communicate with the men, he could have told them who he is and why he is in hospital. Being able to communicate would probably not have granted him passage home, but it certainly would have made his situation less frustrating and unsure.

Although Charging Elk has travelled Europe with the show, he is not accustomed to white accommodation and sleeping in beds, for instance, is unfamiliar to him. The Indians on the show do not have beds in their lodges, and they “used to make fun of the soft white men who needed to sleep in feathers on a platform of wood or iron” (18). The Indians look upon themselves as stronger than the soft white men. This is actually the first time, ever, that he has slept in a bed, and sleeping in a bed makes him feel vulnerable and weak. He is weak after his accident, but he still decides that he has to leave the hospital, because he realizes the hospital is not a healing house, but a deathhouse. He loses his friend Featherman there and he sees other patients die. Charging Elk escapes one night: “he turned a corner, stood tall, and walked quickly out of the deathhouse into the cold night” (26). After escaping from the hospital, Charging Elk finds himself alone, hungry and cold in the streets of Marseille, and he really experiences his status as an outcast. As Cobb-Greetham points out: “Alone, stripped of his own Oglala clothes and wearing hospital slippers and someone else’s ill-fitted coat, trousers and hat, Charging Elk appears ridiculous out of place, even frightening. His dark skin, long hair, and height quickly become liabilities rather than assets” (161). Charging Elk remembers how the French used to welcome the Indians from the show and how they felt like celebrities, but his present appearance makes people frightened of him, and he understands that he is not welcome anymore. He escapes from hospital at Christmas, and that contributes to his isolation and loneliness. Everybody is inside celebrating the holiday with their families, while he is roaming the streets of the city. Cobb-Greetham argues that France welcomed the show with

enthusiasm, but “there is no place for a show Indian without a show” (161). Charging Elk is fooled by the way the show is welcomed in France, and he thinks the French are genuinely interested in the Indians and their fate, but “Charging Elk had entered this city in triumph and the people had welcomed him. Now they looked at him with suspicion, even with hostility, just as the Americans did” (52). Charging Elk will, in the years to come, experience that also the people of France look upon him as a savage and part of a vanishing people, at least when they first encounter him.

The ideology of savagism has been present in white people’s views on Indians since they settled in America. As Pearce points out, the English that first arrived in America were really preoccupied with order, and according to them, the New World and its inhabitants were representatives of chaos. The English looked upon themselves as civilized, and Pearce points out that “aware to the point of self-consciousness of their specially civilized heritage, they found in America not only an uncivilized environment, but uncivilized natural-men” (3). This attitude towards Native Americans was present in America, brought there by the Europeans, and now Charging Elk is encountering the same attitude, but this time in Europe. Welch describes Charging Elk’s encounters with different French people, but what they all have in common is their notion of Charging Elk as a savage. After escaping from hospital, Charging Elk is arrested by a policeman and taken to prison. In prison, he is an alien and a curiosity: “Many policemen came to look at him, in twos and threes, chatting among themselves, gesturing towards him, then going away” (69). He is an oddity, and since none of them come to look at him alone, they are probably a bit frightened by him. Bell pays him a visit in prison, but he is not really interested in solving Charging Elk’s problems: “it was all too much” (83). Bell remembers from his youth in America, that he wanted to go west and fight Indians, and now “he had finally met an Indian, but not in the heat of battle” (83). Bell is utterly disappointed with this Indian who does not fit his notions of a savage, but looks like a wretch and is alone in a country where he does not speak the language. He does not even speak the official language of his own country. Bell is struck by imperialist nostalgia when he encounters Charging Elk. According to Renato Rosaldo, “people mourn the passing of what they themselves have transformed” (108). By assimilating the Indians and depriving them of their culture, the Americans transformed the Indians. However, many Americans, like Bell, later mourn the original Indian. Bell’s thinks that “this Indian was thoroughly defeated” (83). Compared to Fools Crow, despite all the hardships, Fools Crow is not thoroughly defeated. In

Bell's eyes, Charging Elk is thoroughly defeated. Bell wanted to fight Indians when he was young, but this Indian is not fit for fight. The quote does not imply that he is really interested in Indian culture, but just in fighting Indians. He is not sorry that the Indian is defeated, but he is sorry that that he missed the opportunity to fight him. According to Bell, Charging Elk will probably die in a short time, and the only problem with that is: "How does one notify the relatives of a savage?" (83). Charging Elk is not recognized as an equal human being by Bell, and it seems impossible for him to acknowledge him as one. Bell is an American and is used to looking upon Indians as savages. But, when Charging Elk later recovers and Bell finds him a French family he can stay with, and work with, is it obvious that also they think Indians are savages.

Before Charging Elk leaves prison, he is also visited by St-Cyr, a French journalist, who thinks before he meets him: "Would he have a fierce scowl? More important, would he be dangerous, a wild savage from the American frontier?" (93). He anticipates a savage and almost a wild creature, and he even thinks Charging Elk will be painted and dressed in feathers. When he sees him, he too, realizes that Charging Elk is not dangerous, but rather miserable. Like, Charging Elk, St-Cyr regrets that he did not learn English, and therefore they do not have a lingua franca. St-Cyr feels sorry for him and wants to help him, even though he does not understand why, but "he was a man, a human being, and he would likely die if St-Cyr didn't do something" (96). St-Cyr feels sorry for Charging Elk and is liable to recognize him as a fellow human being, but he looks upon Charging Elk as a savage, not a human being, and it confuses him, when he starts thinking of him as a human being, meaning that he has to show consideration for him and he does not seem ready to do that. Welch names this character St-Cyr, and Womack points out that "we might note, as a beginning point, the pun on his name, which is somewhat reminiscent of "sincere" in terms of its English pronunciation" ("The Fatal" 221). Womack argues further that St-Cyr's was only sincere about his own career and wanted to use Charging Elk's story to promote himself as a serious journalist. However, St-Cyr is not sincere, but rather ignorant towards Charging Elk. His attitude might be compared to the whites' in *Fools Crow*, as expressed by General Sully. Their only interest in the Natives is restricted to their land, while St-Cyr sees an opportunity to boost his career as a serious journalist, and we learn later that St-Cyr's motives are more selfish than caring.

St-Cyr's attitude resembles the attitudes of the colonizers since they were only interested in getting to know the Indians if it could benefit their cause. Still, it is quite obvious that St-Cyr has been influenced by Charging Elk: "St-Cyr was not aware, at this moment, of this war going on inside him between the cynical young reporter and the human being who feared for the welfare of a fellow creature. That he had come to think of Charging Elk as a somewhat lesser animal did not enter his consciousness" (103), but he is obviously struggling with his attitude towards Charging Elk. His original view of Indians resembles the European and white American view indicating that they are lesser humans and inferior creatures. St-Cyr spends time with Charging Elk and gets to know him, and that upsets St-Cyr's view of him. In *The Heartsong of Charging Elk*, Welch demolishes traditional views of Indians by creating close encounters between Charging Elk and the French. The first encounters between Charging Elk and different French people are described as encounters between superior and inferior people, where the French consider themselves superior compared to Charging Elk: however, most of them change their attitudes when they get to know him. The encounters in *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* differ from the encounters in *Fools Crow*, because at this stage the Native Americans are not obstacles anymore, but more curiosities. Still, they are definitely not considered equals. The parts of the novel that are set in America show quite clearly that the Indians are defeated, living meaningless lives at the reservations. In France, we see numerous examples that Charging Elk is not really considered an equal human being, but rather a curiosity. Neither the French officials nor the American consulate understand what to do with "the Indian Problem" but they all consider Charging Elk a creature unable to take care of himself, and therefore they need someone to take care of him.

"But this was a savage!" (110). Madame Soulas's first reaction when she hears that Charging Elk is going to live with her family is quite clear: she cannot have a savage in her home. She has been to the Wild West show and has witnessed the Indians behaving like savages. Her husband, Rene Soulas, thinks it is their obligation as Christians to help Charging Elk, while she thinks: "[s]urely God didn't intend for Christians and savages to live together!" (110). This was a common attitude among Christians: that the Indians were savages and had to be civilized and assimilated. Madame Soulas also wonders: "How did they think a savage would respond to living in a civilized neighborhood?" (110). She does not think Charging Elk is used to living in a civilized world and worries about his reactions. She is most concerned about the children, though, and their reaction to having a savage living in their house. "To

have a savage sit down at their table, to sleep in their home, it was too much” (112). The intentions of her husband, Rene Soulas, are based on Christian charity, but his attitude is also rooted in savagism. He looks upon Charging Elk as a child that needs protection and says he is like a whelp that needs looking after. Cobb-Greetham points out that “both Rene and Madeleine unselfconsciously view Charging Elk through the lens of the ideology of savagism” (152). She argues further that Rene is influenced by the Wild West show, and sees Charging Elk as a noble savage, while Madeleine, on the other hand, sees him as a brutal savage. She compares Charging Elk to what she thinks is normal, and his dark skin makes him abnormal in her eyes. “Madeleine expects to see a savage, and that is what she sees. For her, a savage is not a ‘normal’ man and is as much a beast as person” (152). Although Madeleine, Rene, and their children develop a good relationship with Charging Elk during his stay with them, they still consider Charging Elk innocent and primitive. Rene looks upon Charging Elk as a “child” that needs protection, his protection. His attitude resembles the American government’s attitude towards Indians since they considered Indians their wards and unable to take care of themselves. One aspect of contact that occurs under uneven power relations is a patronizing desire of the whites to “save” the Indians. This is a way of justifying what the whites did to the Indians, but also an example of imperialist nostalgia.

The idea of savagism, on the other hand, saves Charging Elk from ending his life in the gallows. During the trial after the murder, both the judge and the defence build their arguments on savagism. The prosecutor describes him as “not only an illegal immigrant but a savage who could never comprehend the necessary rules and obligations of a civilized society” (315). He goes on to characterize the civilized French society with its poets, politicians, priests and great chefs, and according to him, Charging Elk is anything but civilized. In addition, doctors testify that he is a savage who cannot understand how a civilized society works, and that “it was common knowledge that savages’ brains were smaller on average and therefore less developed, less capable of making sound decisions” (320). The prosecutor, the defence, and the witnesses depict Charging Elk as a savage who is not able to understand a civilized society. The court is convinced that with his ignorance and his wild nature, it is impossible for him to understand the consequences of his actions: “Before passing sentence I feel compelled to point out that the man who now stands convicted of murder is not of a civilized race of people” (341). If Charging Elk had been white and civilized, he would have been sentenced to death, but since he is considered a savage, he is

imprisoned for life. It is a contradiction that the court thinks he is a savage and thus able of committing savagery, but still excuses him due to savagism. Even though Charging Elk is a grown-up, he is considered immature, and not capable of making sane decisions. The trial is an example of encounters between peoples of unequal powers. Charging Elk murders a member of the French bourgeoisie, an influential man with means. In spite of being homosexual, a disrespected sexual preference in France at that time, Breteuil is considered to be on a higher social ladder and thus superior to Charging Elk. I will discuss the rape and the murder later.

However, the most outstanding feature of the trial is the fact that Charging Elk is not really given the opportunity to defend himself. His French is not good enough and when he turns to Lakota language instead, he is not understood by the court, and the court reacts by laughing at him: “I hope the jurors understood the accused’s statement better than I did,” he said, and the whole courtroom burst into laughter” (339). The judge, and the audience alike, find Charging Elk’s speech entertaining, but not understandable. In this particular moment, Charging Elk is totally outpowered by the court, and nobody seems to question the unequal power relation. The trial can be described as a “contact zone” where dissimilar people meet “often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination” (Pratt 4). The French do not understand Charging Elk and they treat him like a subordinate, by calling him savage and stating that he is not able to take care of himself. At the same time, the judge prices the superiority of the French people. The court finds Charging Elk guilty and, according to juridical practice, he should be sentenced to death, but because of his presumed immaturity, he is sentenced to prison for life instead. Again, we witness the whites’ attitudes towards him since they do not reckon he understands what he has done. On the other hand, Charging Elk understands perfectly well what he has done, murdered a *sioyka*, the evil, as he explains the court in Lakota.

2.5 Charging Elk as Belonging to a Vanishing People

My reading of *The Heartsong of Charging Elk*, shows that the trope of the “vanishing Indian” is a recurring feature in the novel, and the text recodes the trope by focusing on Charging Elk’s experiences in France. During the novel Charging Elk wants to disappear, or vanish on several occasions, and he uses his death song to achieve his wish. Charging Elk feels invisible and not seen by the French society, and due the mix-up with the death

certificate and his missing citizenship, he actually vanishes in the eyes of the French and American officials. The opinion of American authorities and American people alike was that Indians would vanish as David Beck points out: “American Indian nations and people were largely viewed... as a vanishing race” (1). This view was reinforced by their belief in the success of “Manifest Destiny” and Social Darwinism. In addition, as Cheyfitz argues: “Western imperialism forms its program on the disappearance of the ‘other’” (109). The extinction of the “other” is incorporated in imperialism, and by designating Indians as savages, the whites could justify the assimilation and the extinction of Indians. The Anglo-American view was that the Indians’ time was gone and the Indians were now vanishing. This attitude is also present in nineteenth-century France. Charging Elk experiences encounters and incidents that make him want to vanish, and also circumstances indicating that the French think he belongs to a vanishing people. Welch challenges the ideas of the vanishing Indian on several levels in *The Heartsong of Charging Elk*. When Charging Elk remembers his home, the memories make him sad because “those times are gone” (37). The traditional life he used to live with Strikes Plenty has vanished, and the two of them realize that they have to move on. Still, Charging Elk feels that it is an end to their friendship and the traditional life he and Strikes Plenty used to live: “It was the end of nine winters of brotherness and he felt a great emptiness, as though Strikes Plenty had taken away half of him” (37). The coming of the whites has made traditional life at the Stronghold impossible, and even Strikes Plenty dreams of growing potatoes, marrying and settling down. He has given in to the whites’ plan for the Indians, and that is civilization.

Charging Elk’s first encounter with Marseille makes him wish “with all his being that he could step out of his body, leave the useless husk behind, and fly to the country of his people” (43). He feels so different and out of place that he wants to vanish. Later we see that he uses his death song to escape uncomfortable encounters with white people, either French or American: “He had no power. But that wasn’t true – he had his death song” (23). Charging Elk finds comfort when he “vanishes” into his death song. He came to France as a member of the Wild West show, and his role was to play a wild Indian, but now he feels that his wildness has disappeared and what he sees in the mirror is not himself anymore: “Now, this creature that looked back at him in the mirror didn’t look like the Oglala from the Stronghold” (133). Charging Elk understands that the French think he belongs to a vanishing people, and in the current situation he feels he is about to vanish as an Oglala.

My reading of the novel shows that ironically, Charging Elk vanishes as a living person twice. The first time occurs when Vice-consul Bell discovers that he does not exist because he is not an American citizen: “It occurred to Bell that Charging Elk wasn’t a citizen of the United States” (80). The treaties with the American government had made the Indians citizens of their own nations, not the United States. Since Charging Elk is not an American citizen, he cannot get a passport, and without a passport he cannot go home or travel to reunite with the Wild West show. Native Americans were not considered worth Americanizing, and were therefore not found worthy of American citizenship. Native Americans did not gain American citizenship until the Citizenship Act of 1924, and at that time Charging Elk has long gone to France. Later, the same Bell discovers that Charging Elk, according to the authorities, is actually dead due to a mix-up of death certificates. When he falls ill and ends up in hospital, he is not the only Indian there. Featherman dies at the hospital, but the doctor makes a mistake and writes the name ‘Charging Elk’ on the death certificate: “So as far as the good doctor, and the city of Marseille, and of course, the Republic of France, Charging Elk is dead, plain and simple” (157-158). Charging Elk does not have a birth certificate or a passport, but now a death certificate with his name on it states that he is dead and vanished. He does not really exist, since as opposed to the Americans, the French have succeeded in exterminating Charging Elk totally, if only on paper. Still, this functions as an image of how both the Americans and the French considered the Indians as being, out of history, non-existent.

Like many of the Blackfeet in *Fools Crow*, Charging Elk is now officially dead and vanished. Assimilation was the goal for white America, but here we see that Charging Elk was not assimilated, but has instead totally vanished, and is now non-existent. Bell, the representative of the American government, has no problems letting Charging Elk disappear in Marseille by imagining that he does not exist anymore. And when it comes to the French authorities, they are no better than the American authorities: “I don’t think the French care which Indian lived and which died. I hate to say this, but one Indian is as good as another Indian to them – no insult intended” (160). The French authorities do not care about the Indians, and neither do the American consul and vice-consul. They just hope that the problem, “the Indian problem,” will disappear. The contradiction is that the American consulate has to prove Charging Elk’s existence to be able to send him out of the country, and they have to do it without offending the French. Vice-Consul Bell has to tell the Soulas family that Charging Elk “is nonexistent, a ghost you might say” (178). However, Charging Elk is very much alive,

but he experiences being out of place in France and he has a notion of disappearance: “He had no one to identify with, no group that he belonged to, and so he thought of himself as one who had no color, was in fact almost a ghost even though his large dark presence always attracted attention from both light and dark people. But now he felt he was in a place where he did not belong” (198).

However, Charging Elk continues living in Marseille, and finally moves out of the Soulas’s house. Later he frequents a brothel where he meets the prostitute Marie, and when he introduces himself to her he says: “I am Francois” (221). Again, we notice that Welch is playing with names, and by calling Charging Elk “Francois,” he indicates that he is no longer Indian, but French. Changing names is a part of the assimilation process, and as we will see later, when Charging Elk meets up with the Wild West show again, that in America, Indians adopt English names after they attend white education. Theda Perdue and Michael D. Green point out that “the names of Indian students posed a problem for their teachers” (82). They write further that Indians often changed names during their lives, like Fools Crow, for instance, and that teachers and other officials often gave the Indians English names. Charging Elk learns that when he tells people his real name, they look at him with surprise. However, he does not succeed in disguising his difference, and when he enters the brothel Olivier, one of the owners says: “This man is not of our culture” (222). Olivier is not familiar with Indians and calls Charging Elk an Oriental prince. Still, Welch reveals the owner’s attitude towards Indians: “A most disagreeable race of savages” (223). The French people’s overall view of Charging Elk resembles white Americans’ views of Indians. They assume Indians are savages, who need to be civilized, and if they do not civilize, they should vanish. However, Charging Elk perceives a small difference between the Americans and the French: “these people on this side of the big water called the Indians ‘the Americans who would vanish,’ that they thought the defeated Indians would soon disappear and they were very sad about it and wanted to see the Indians before they went up in thin air – unlike the real Americans, who would only be too happy to help the Indians disappear” (52). The French are sorry that the Indians are disappearing, while the Americans are eager to help them disappear. On the other hand, in reality, their attitudes did not differ considerably. Still, the French attending the Wild West show express a kind of imperialist nostalgia. Cobb-Greetham argues that “France, after all, joined Great Britain and Spain in the rush to colonize the “New World” (147). The show

shows the French what imperialism has done to Indian people and culture, and they regret it and express mourning for what is lost.

2.6 Identity

Charging Elk's dislocation and encounter with the white world make him question his identity. When he arrives in France, he is proud of his background, and proud of being different from the reservation Indians. Rocky Bear, the interpreter on the show, says: "He is a wild Indian from the Badlands. He never surrendered" (125). Charging Elk is also proud of his part in the show, although, he knows it depicts a fake image of his former traditional life. Living in France challenges his identity, though: "He had gone from a wild Indian to this creature ... What had happened to him?" (133). Part of Charging Elk's identity is attached to his physical appearance and to some artefacts he brought with him from home. The breastplate his father had given him is lost, just like his badger-claw necklace. His moccasins and skin clothing are gone as well. Moreover, his hair is cut, and he feels powerless and wonders "would he always look like this – a weak, frightened coward?" (133). Womack points out that Indians who ignore popular stereotypes, quickly turn out to be less Indian in the eyes of white people. Charging Elk does not ignore Indian stereotypes, but they are taken away from him by the French. Womack says further that Indians are often thought of as "cultural artefacts" (*Red* 141). At this point in the novel, Welch connects Charging Elk's Indian identity to artefacts and clothes; however, later in the novel, he reveals that his identity is persistent and has not really anything to do with the way he looks or the clothes he wears. Charging Elk's feeling of lost identity is profoundly contradicted when he encounters the American sailor at the bar: "I said are you a goddamn bloody Indian" (199). Charging Elk does not understand why they hate him since there are many different people in Marseille, and he has tried to make himself imperceptible, but nevertheless, they recognize him immediately. Although he has lost his Indian artefacts, his appearance is still Indian. Hence, Welch shows that identity does not depend on exterior objects. However, Charging Elk's identity changes during his years in France, but his memories play an important role and contributes to keeping his identity. After sixteen years in France, as Bak argues "his tribal memories alternately become a source of sustenance and identity and a source of religious doubt and existential disorientation" (120).

Lupton, on the other hand, claims that “Charging Elk loses his identity, just as his generation of reservation Indians had lost theirs” (128), but Charging Elk does not lose his identity, he keeps it in his heart. In similar fashion, the Sami artist, poet and musician Nils-Aslak Valkeapää claimed that: “My home is (in) my heart and it migrates with me” (Krupat, “Issues” 205). Charging Elk chooses to stay in France, because France is home now and, he realizes that he does not have to go back to America to be Lakota. Andrew Little Ring tells Charging Elk that he can see he is different, but still Lakota and he says “you are Lakota, wherever you might go. You are one of us always” (436). Charging Elk feels reassured by Andrew Little Ring’s assurance concerning his identity as a Lakota. During his years in France, he has encounters whites that think he is a savage from a vanishing people and learns that, even though, the French express imperialist nostalgia, they often meet him with hostility. Still, he is able to create a life for himself and his family in France. This is an act of survivance, and I will discuss this further in chapter 3.

2.7 The Murder

Encounters between Native Americans and whites, both in *Fools Crow* and *The Heartsong of Charging Elk*, often have disastrous outcomes. The murder scene is the climax in *The Heartsong of Charging Elk*, and also the climax concerning Charging Elk’s interaction with whites. Charging Elk’s encounter with Breteuil proves fatal for both him and Breteuil. At their first meeting at the fish market, Breteuil asks Mr. Soulas “what’s this?” (140). Rene Soulas does not understand the question at first because he thought Breteuil is asking about an object, not Charging Elk. It is obvious that the homosexual Breteuil finds Charging Elk interesting, and he compares him to the beautiful Africans in Marseille. But does he see him as a person or as an object? (Bak 154). Breteuil seems to consider Charging Elk an exotic sexual object, not a human being, and as “master” or colonizer, he needs to possess this exotic other. This view is in accordance with what Diana Fuss claims: “When subjectivity becomes the exclusive property of the ‘master,’ the colonizer can claim a sovereign right to personhood by purchasing interiority over and against the representation of the colonial other as pure exteriority” (145). Fernandez also argues that Charging Elk represents a sexual fetish to Breteuil, and we acknowledge that Breteuil looks upon African men in the same way. Both Africans and Charging Elk belong to colonized peoples, and this supports the claim that Breteuil is behaving like a colonizer.

Rene warns Charging Elk about him: ““You must stay away from that creature. He is an evil one”” (144). Breteuil later bribes the prostitute Marie into drugging Charging Elk so he can perform a blow job on him, and Charging Elk reacts by killing Breteuil. Rene’s reluctance to accept Breteuil is due to his scepticism towards homosexuals whom he considers representatives of evil. In this case his attitude is similar to Charging Elk’s attitude. Rene bases his view on Christianity while Charging Elk refers to Lakota traditions: “I killed it because it was evil. One always kills evil” (303). Kathryn W. Shanley, contrarily, suggests that Welch might have been mistaken when it comes to Lakotas’ views on homosexuality because “Lakota gender terms do not translate well into English-speakers’ words or thought worlds” (“Looking” 188). She indicates further that Welch’s knowledge of Lakota culture and language could have been insufficient. “An important part of the subjugation of Indigenous nations involves domesticating its citizens into Christian ideals of womanhood and manhood, without a place for alternatively gendered people” (189). Shanley implies that it was not Charging Elk’s Lakota background which made him kill Breteuil, but the colonizers’ Christianising of his people.

Scholars suggest conflicting interpretations of the scene. Womack claims that the scene holds homophobic attitudes and is an example of injustice done towards homosexuals (“The Fatal” 229). However, the murder scene might also function as an image of white people’s exploitation of Native Americans. Fernandez claims that “Breteuil’s desire for Charging Elk has to be read in colonial, rather than in homosexual terms” (265), and it is legitimate to interpret the murder scene in accordance to Fernandez’ views. Who was actually the savage, Charging Elk who killed Breteuil after he abused him, or Breteuil, who abused him? Womack argues that it was not really rape, and that we cannot know for sure whether or not Charging Elk likes what Breteuil is doing to him: “We know Charging Elk first enjoys the ‘new’ sex act, but does he know at that point that the other person is a man? Does Charging Elk kill Breteuil because he hates what Breteuil did to him or because he likes it?” (“The Fatal” 229). The scene is problematic because it involves crimes committed against two marginalised groups, Native Americans and homosexuals. In addition, the treatment of homosexuals in the nineteenth century is a disgrace in history, and thus Womack’s criticism is equitable. Lydia R Cooper, on the other hand, argues that “the novel’s rape scene symbolizes racialized colonial violence” (98). Cooper asserts that Breteuil’s rape of Charging Elk was a violent act

performed by a colonizer and that Charging Elk's killing was an understandable reaction to colonial violence.

If we follow Fernandez's and Cooper's argumentations, the scene describes rape and exploitation, and Charging Elk's killing of Breteuil can illustrate a confrontation with the white man who colonized and assimilated his people. There is no doubt that Breteuil has, and uses, his power and his financial resources to bribe Marie. The amount of money she is offered to drug Charging Elk is too tempting to decline. The inequality in power and finances between Breteuil on one side and Marie and Charging Elk on the other side is overwhelming and comparable to the differences in power and economy between the colonizers and the colonized. In this way, the murder scene is an example of an imperialistic act between unequal opponents. Breteuil had the power to seduce Charging Elk and to make Marie help him in his plan and, like the imperialists, he was willing to use his power. In addition, as a well-known chef in Marseille, he felt superior compared to Charging Elk. The disastrous encounter between Charging Elk and Breteuil at the brothel can be described in terms of "social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other" (Pratt 4). Pratt argues also that these "contact zones" are characterized by uneven relations where one of the parts is dominant, and Pratt compares this to colonialism.

2.8 Conclusion

Encounters between Native Americans and whites in *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* are conducted on two continents, North America and Europe. While living in America, Charging Elk tries to avoid contact with whites, but when he is left behind in France, he is forced to live among white people. As in *Fools Crow*, the encounters are characterized by features from colonialism and imperialism. The French look upon Charging Elk as a vanishing savage. They express notions of imperialist nostalgia, but still consider Charging Elk a ward that needs looking after. Like the Americans, the French feel superior compared to him and they do not expect him to understand civilized society. The rape and the following murder illustrate encounters between peoples of unequal powers. Charging Elk, on the other hand, is a dislocated Indian and feels lost in France. Both the French language and French culture make him confused. He is afraid that he will lose his Lakota identity, and that Wakan Tanka will not be able to bring his soul back home if he dies in France. However, when Charging

Elk faces the opportunity of going home, he chooses to stay in France, reassured that his Lakota identity is persistent wherever he is.

Chapter 3

3.1 *Fools Crow* and *The Heartsong of Charging Elk*

In this chapter, I compare and contrast encounters between Native Americans and whites in *Fools Crow* and *The Heartsong of Charging Elk*. The encounters in both novels indicate the inequality in power between the peoples. The encroaching whites have the power to change both the Lone Eaters' and the Oglalas' traditional lives. In *Fools Crow*, we witness a culture on the edge of changing, while in *The Heartsong of Charging Elk*, we see a culture already changed and devastated by the whites. Native Americans and whites in *Fools Crow* and *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* come from totally different cultures, and the novels provide examples of encounters, conflicts and confrontations between the peoples. Most conflicts are in disfavour of the Native Americans, but we also see examples of positive interactions between the peoples. In *Fools Crow*, there are just a few, while *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* provides several. Still, most encounters are forced, and happen against the backdrop of imperialism and colonialism. In this chapter, I will focus on religious encounters, intermarriages and encounters between the novels and readers, in addition to how Welch works on decolonization. *Fools Crow* and *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* are historical novels with Native American protagonists and Native American themes. Compared to many historical novels on Indians written by non-Native writers, these differ, because they are written by a Native American. Most Native American writers avoid writing novels set in the nineteenth century, because as King points out: "The literary stereotypes and clichés for which the period is famous have been, I think, a deterrent to many of us" (*All My*, xi). Welch is thus one of the few Native American writers, who write historical novels. Welch writes about his own background, and holds information and experiences unknown to non-Natives.

Both *Fools Crow* and *Charging Elk* are portrayed as full human beings, in contrast to stereotypical Indians. We encounter their thoughts, worries and joys, for instance when Welch describes *Fools Crow*'s reaction to being able to marry Red Paint: "He had never been this happy-or exhausted. His feet ached, he was weary in his bones, but being near Red Paint made even his weariness seem a thing of joy" (*Fools* 105). *Fools Crow* has been on a raid against the Crows, and now he has good horses and is rich enough to marry Red Paint. He has just been on another journey, or mission, and now he is telling Red Paint and other band

members about his journey. He is particularly happy, because he has made his mother and Red Paint happy as well. Coulombe argues that Welch has created characters that are full human beings, “unlike works that shroud Native people and customs in mystery” (15). He writes further that Welch has not created perfect characters. Even though they perform heroic deeds, they are presented as human beings with both positive and negative sides. An illustrating example is White Man’s Dog’s reaction to killing a Crow: “he leaned over the side of the black horse and vomited” (150). In this scene, Welch depicts the protagonist as both a hero and a full human being. Coulombe emphasizes that by “refusing to romanticize Native culture or people, Welch instead creates a range of characters that includes the negative” (110). Coulombe mentions characters like the self-centred Fast Horse, the resentful Running Fisher and the revengeful Owl Child.

In *The Heartsong of Charging Elk*, the protagonist is also portrayed as full human being. Admittedly, Charging Elk presents a stereotypical view of Indians while performing on the Wild West show, but he appears as a whole human being outside the show: “He wanted to be with these people, inside where it was warm and holy. But he knew as soon as he entered, the people would stare at him, or maybe they would throw him out because he wasn’t one of them. Or worse, they might think he was an enemy” (*Heartsong* 67). Charging Elk is walking the streets at Christmas after escaping from the hospital and he wants to enter a church. He knows, however, he cannot because he looks so different from the French. Being different and acting like an enemy of white settlers have been parts of his character in the Wild West show, but outside the show, he really wants to fit despite his vow to only take part in Lakota rites. Later, we acknowledge that Charging Elk both keeps his vows and integrates into French culture. Welch depicts Charging Elk predominately in positive terms, but the killing of Breteuil shows the negative side of him, and collides with the image of Charging Elk as a loving husband and caring father to be: “My wife is one of them and my heart is her heart. She is my life now and soon we will have another life and the same heart will sing in all of us” (437). Welch explains the killing by pointing to Lakota belief and culture, but it is still disturbing. On the other hand, the killing depicts the negative sides of Lakota culture as well.

3.2 Traditional Life and Traditional Values

In *Fools Crow* and *The Heartsong of Charging Elk*, Welch describes traditional life on the plains of North America and illustrates the changes brought about by the coming of the whites. Encounters between Native Americans and whites generate irreversible damage to traditional Native American tribes. Welch gives a realistic, and not romantic, description of life among the Blackfeet in *Fools Crow* and the Lakota people in *The Heartsong of Charging Elk*. *Fools Crow* describes everyday life among the Lone Eaters: “White Man’s Dog had settled down into the routine of the winter camp but there were days when he longed to travel, to experience the excitement of entering enemy country” (47). The Lone Eaters are nomads and move between summer and winter camps. They hunt the buffalo and share the meat between themselves. But they also raid other tribes, especially the Crows, steal their horses, and kill some of their members. Welch describes violence, killings and mutilations in *Fools Crow*, and a culture where warriors are respected. Fools Crow underlines this when he tells his wife, Red Paint, that “I have chosen the way of the warrior and so I must take that trail, wherever it leads. If I were to stay behind, the others would lose respect for me” (138).

The Blackfeet in *Fools Crow* struggle to keep up their traditions due to the encroaching whites. The band is still living a traditional life, but their lifestyle is constantly challenged by white demands for more land. We understand through the novel that some chiefs think it would be best to give in and accept the Napikwan life style, and “they say that Napikwan is a way of life now. Some even suggest that we go to his schools” (124). Most band members understand that the inequality in power between the Blackfeet and the whites will cause changes, but they are not willing to surrender yet. The Blackfeet are used to fighting, they have fought their enemies for ages, but the fight with the Napikwans is different because they are not fighting on equal terms. The Napikwans’ weapons make the fight unjust, and the Blackfeet are doomed to lose. However, Fools Crow never lives on a reservation, nor does he attend the white man’s school. In *The Heartsong of Charging Elk*, circumstances are totally changed. The time of signing treaties is over, and living on reservations and going to the white man’s schools are parts of everyday life for the Lakota people.

Both the Blackfeet and the Oglalas cherish solidarity with other band members: “This is how we Pikunis live. We help each other, we depend on each other. There is no room for the man who despises his fellows” (190). They take care of each other and respect each other.

Charging Elk also values solidarity and sharing, however he almost loses his values in Marseille: “He had learned from his Oglala people to share with others ... Somewhere along the way, he had lost that desire to share, replaced by an attention only to himself and his own desires” (243). Encounters with whites, both in *Fools Crow* and in *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* seem to upset this traditional values. Fast Horse in *Fools Crow* does not believe in the Blackfeet values anymore, but is more interested in personal achievements available in the white community. In *The Heartsong of Charging Elk*, Black Elk gives his view of the white community when he re-joins the Wild West show: “Men do not listen to each other, they fight, their greed prevents them from being generous to less fortunate” (59). He thinks that Indians can teach the whites the knowledge of simple life. According to Black Elk, the Europeans are too preoccupied with the modern life and their machines and big buildings, and have forgotten where they came from. The whites in *Fools Crow* are also too preoccupied with progress and exploitation of the land, and lose respect for nature and other human beings. Black Elk is both a character in *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* and a real historical person, who told his life story in *Black Elk Speaks* written by John G. Neihardt. In the book, Black Elk says about the white people he meets while travelling with Buffalo Bill: “I could see that the *Wasichus* did not care for each other the way our people did before the nation’s hoop was broken” (135). The historical Black Elk describes the white community as cold and not caring for others.

In *Fools Crow*, traditional life and culture is alive. Welch says in an interview that *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* is “kind of a counter to *Fools Crow* because *Fools Crow* was within his own culture and everybody around him was of that culture” (Krupat, “Remembering” 7). *The Heartsong of Charging Elk*, on the other hand, describes a culture in decline. The white influence is so powerful that the Oglalas are about to lose the traditional lifestyle, and to become assimilated into the white culture. The “old ways” in *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* are on display on the Wild West show, but the show does not give a full picture of the Indians’ traditional life, but tells their story from the white Americans’ point of view. The show always ends with Buffalo Bill rescuing the settlers and killing the Indians, which is a vivid description of the encounters between Native Americans and whites. The whites are the powerful, the civilized people that should live on, while the Native Americans are defeated.

3.3 Religious Encounters

Encounters between Native Americans and whites also involve encounters between different religious beliefs. The religious encounters in *Fools Crow* and *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* are very different since the Blackfeet practice their traditional religion, but fear the white man's religion, while Charging Elk lives among Christians in France. In addition, we learn that many of Charging Elk's people back home have converted to Christianity. In *Fools Crow*, irreconcilable religious beliefs are reflected in different world views and different views of nature. The Blackfeet in *Fools Crow* have a holistic view of nature and they believe nature is animated, and therefore they respect it and treasure it as a part of themselves. The whites on the other hand, look upon nature as a resource ready for them to exploit. Traditional Blackfeet religion is described by Ewers as a belief in "supernatural powers much stronger than human ones" (162). Ewers writes further that the Blackfeet could ask these powers for protection and guidance. The powers were in the skies, in water and on land. Ewers also points out that the Blackfeet believed in many powers, or Gods: "hear, Sun; hear, Old man; Above people, listen; Underwater people, listen" (163). Christianity, on the other hand, does not allow more than one God, and therefore the whites consider traditional religion as heathen and superstitious. However, even though Christians looked upon their religion as superior to the Indians', neither *Fools Crow* nor *Charging Elk*, despise their doubts, indicates that their religion is inferior: "Miki-api said a prayer of thanks to Thunder Chief for coming once more to the country of the Pikunis" (390). Miki-api says this prayer at the end of *Fools Crow*, and thus indicates that, in spite of all the hardships, the Pikunis still have faith in their religion. *Charging Elk* does also keep his traditional belief in France, and keeping Manifest Destiny in mind, it is interesting that Welch describes encounters, between *Charging Elk* and Christians as almost harmonious. *Fools Crow*, on the contrary does not indicate any understanding between the religions. However, both in *Fools Crow* and *The Heartsong of Charging Elk*, Christianity is synonymous with assimilation. *Charging Elk* mocks the Indians living at the agency and "learning to worship the white man's god" (20), and Fast Horse, in *Fools Crow*, points out that even many chiefs think that the tribe should live like the Napikwan and go to "his churches" (124).

The Euro-Americans who colonized the American west were Christians, and believed in Manifest Destiny, implicating that God had given them the right to the land and to the

resources. “Many colonial leaders adopted time-honored expansion imagery from the Bible, portraying northern European Protestant colonists as the new Israelites and North America as the new Promised land to justify conquering new lands and dominating other cultures” (“Manifest Destiny”). The Euro-Americans thought that there was no doubt that their God was superior, and that the Indians’ religious beliefs were superstitious and heathen. In *Fools Crow*, traditional religion plays the most important part, while Christianity is only present in the background, yet we understand that there have been missionaries working among the Blackfeet, and some Indians have already converted to Christianity. Rides-at-the-door has, for instance, learned English from a missionary, who stayed with the Pikunis a couple of years. Fools Crow and his band are safe in their belief, even though, they sometimes fear that Sun Chief “favors the Napikwans” (180). The sun rises in the east, and that is where the whites came from, and the situation makes Fools Crow ask: “Why had Sun Chief deserted its people?” (183). The Blackfeet feel thoroughly defeated by the superior whites, and now Fools Crow fears that even Sun Chief favours the whites. According to Lupton, “of the Pikuni Gods and goddesses, the most important is Sun Chief” (103), therefore feeling abandoned by Sun Chief is an utterly dreadful emotion. Being outpowered by people is devastating, but losing Sun Chief’s confidence is a fundamental upheaval. The whites’ belief in Manifest Destiny and their deliberate use of Christianity to achieve their goals made the Blackfeet uncertain of Sun Chief’s protection. Welch does not provide close encounters between Christianity and traditional Blackfeet religion in *Fools Crow*. However, the encounters between the Blackfeet and the whites are marked by irreconcilable religious beliefs. The whites’ Manifest Destiny opposes the Blackfeet tribe’s view of land as sacred and inhabited by “other-than-human-persons.” Jay H. Vest argues that the Blackfeet consider all parts of nature their relatives, and these relatives are called “other-than-human-persons” and according to Vest, “the Blackfeet hold sacred the ‘other-than-human-persons’ living in these wildlands” (483). The resistance toward signing treaties is therefore based on different religious beliefs because according to Blackfeet belief they cannot to sell sacred land.

Charging Elk does also have his traditional belief, but contrary to Fools Crow, he lives right among Christians and observes Christianity from outside. When we encounter Charging Elk for the first time in Marseille, it is Christmas, and as he leaves the hospital, he sees people watching window displays: “The baby lay on some straw that filled a wooden box” (41). To Charging Elk this is an unfamiliar setting, and he does not understand until later that it is baby

Jesus in the wooden box. However, he knows that “it was the season of the white man’s holiest of days and they worshiped this tree as though it were the sun” (45). Charging Elk is familiar with the Christmas tree, which he calls “the-dressed-up-tree,” and he compares the whites’ relationship with the tree to his relationship with the sun. Charging Elk meets a Christian girl, Sandrine, in Paris when he is there with the show. Sandrine gives him a picture of Jesus, but as Coulombe points out: “Charging Elk does not initially understand the spiritual message likely intended by Sandrine” (105). Coulombe writes further that when he understands that there is a spiritual message in the picture, he integrates it into his own belief and places it together with his badger claw necklace: “It had become part of her *nagi* that he must carry always, just as he always wore his badger necklace” (*Fools* 76). Later, he understands that Sandrine is a Christian, and that the picture she has given him is of Jesus. Charging Elk also lives with two different families in Marseille, both Christian, but he never gives up his belief. However, like Fools Crow, he experiences doubts concerning Wakan Tanka’s power compared to the Christian God: “He had saved them by telling them to worship his father, who was named God Almighty and who Sees Twice had said was even stronger than Wakan Tanka. Although he hadn’t believed it then, now he wasn’t too sure. After all, the *wasicuns* ruled the world” (212).

In spite of Charging Elk’s occasional doubts, Welch describes Charging Elk’s religious encounters in France as encounters between equal beliefs, at least from Charging Elk’s point of view. Coulombe supports this claim, and writes that Charging Elk “had almost acknowledged the equality of their differing definitions of God” (109). Madam Soulas, though, expresses the Christian attitude of that period when she says: “surely God didn’t intend for Christians and savages to live together” (110), and she feels quite noble when she offers to pray for the savage. Charging Elk is curious about the Christian ceremonies and wants to attend one just to experience it, but “he could not go in, for he feared that Wakan Tanka would abandon him for good” (188). He never converts to Christianity, but after marrying Nathalie, he accompanies her to church. Charging Elk compares and adjusts, for instance, Christian ceremonies to Lakota ceremonies, and in this way makes them understandable. Just as Madam Soulas offers to pray for him, he offers to pray to Wakan Tanka for Mr Gazier’s sick wife: “I will pray to Wakan Tanka. He is the great spirit who can accomplish all things” (376). Mr Gazier is grateful and thinks maybe Wakan Tanka can help. However, later he understands he is almost guilty of blasphemy. Still, in *The Heartsong of*

Charging Elk, Welch indicates a cross-cultural understanding between traditional belief and Christianity. Coulombe points out that Charging Elk, instead of becoming a Christian, “simply demonstrates his open-mindedness to others’ beliefs” (108). Charging Elk is more open-minded than the Christians he lives among, and except for Mr Grazier and later Nathalie, they demonstrate the view that Christians are superior to others: “Ah! He finds the true Frenchmen, the God-fearing natives of this soil, not to his liking?” (329). During the trial, the French cannot understand why Charging Elk leaves the Christian Soulas family to live among the heathens in the worst part of Marseille. The French bourgeois place the people living around the docks in Marseille on the lower ladder in society.

3.4 Intermarriages

Encounters between peoples occasionally lead to intermarriages. Both *Fools Crow* and *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* describe such marriages. According to Andrew R. Graybill, intermarriages were common among Indians and whites. In his book, *The Red and the White* Graybill writes: “Such marriages were in fact quite common throughout fur country and had occurred wherever the trade in animal skins flourished in North America” (9). Graybill writes further that white Americans, especially in the east, did not approve of these marriages, partly because they were interracial and partly because they thought they were business arrangements. *Fools Crow* depicts both approval and disapproval of relationships between Indians and whites. Most intermarriages are between white men and Indian women. In *Fools Crow*, Indian men meet white women, but they do not marry them. In the novel, Malcolm Clark is a fur trader and married to a Pikuni woman: “You know this man as Four Bears, husband of the Pikuni Cutting-off-head Woman” (158). Malcolm Clark is not well regarded among the Pikunis, and even though he is married to one of their women, he does not respect them. Sturgis, the white doctor, was also married to a Pikuni woman, Blue Grass Woman, but she has died of smallpox. Sturgis expresses a quite different view of the Pikunis compared to Clark, and wants to make his woman happy by taking part in traditional Pikuni life: “I had killed enough meat to satisfy myself and, I hoped, Blue Grass Woman ... if I seem to go on about that hunt, you must forgive me, for that was the last happy day in my life.” (305). Blue Grass Woman dies soon after the hunt, and for Sturgis that is a great loss.

Fast Horse, who fights the Napikwans, but ignores Pikuni traditions, is fascinated by white girls, not for marriage, but for excitement: “Didn’t his father know he no longer

believed in the Beaver Medicine or in anything Pikuni. He had been to the whiskey forts and had lain with a girl with yellow hair, with skin as white as snow” (189). Fast Horse’s fascination for white girls is here connected with his rejection of Pikuni traditions, and the particular focus on the girls very white skin indicates that being with white girls is not acknowledged by the Pikunis. When Fast Horse spends time in the camp after an injury, he admits that he misses the white girls he has met at the forts. Also some Indian girls used to go to the forts to meet white men, but according to Fools Crow, they are considered bad girls. Although interracial marriages and relationships are rather common in *Fools Crow*, the Pikunis prefer to marry within the Blackfeet tribe, and according to Ewers “the socially approved marriage was an important family function” (99).

Charging Elk lives outside his tribe, and if he is going to get married, he has to marry a white woman. Intermarriage is quite natural for Charging Elk, but in *The Heartsong of Charging Elk*, we learn that the French find it hard to accept a marriage between Charging Elk and a French woman. Charging Elk wants to ask Marie, the prostitute, to marry him: “You come with me. I have a good job. I have plenty of friends” (272). Charging Elk really likes Marie, but he probably also wants to rescue her from prostitution. Marie is not unwilling to marry him, although she does not love him, but instead, she ends up betraying him for money. Charging Elk later meets Nathalie, the young French woman he finally marries. Nathalie is a bit worried about his being an Indian, a savage, but she still wants to marry him. However, her father, Mr Gazier, is shocked when Charging Elk asks to marry his daughter: “He wasn’t angry; he was too dumbfounded to be angry. He saw the impossibility of such a request ... Surely the savage would understand that” (394). Nathalie’s father misinterprets the situation and thinks Charging Elk wants him to arrange a marriage between him and Nathalie. To him it is impossible to think that his daughter will consent to such a marriage, and he wonders whether this is the way Indians in America arrange marriages. Mr Gazier says no: “Charging Elk was a savage! And the idea of the two of them together was absurd. She was only a girl. And a devout Catholic” (395). Still, he gives his consent later and they marry, and in the end Nathalie and the coming baby are the reasons Charging Elk stays in France.

3.5 Assimilation the Other Way Round

As I discussed in chapter 2, Charging Elk is assimilated into French culture and life, but he still keeps his Lakota identity, and he will transfer the identity to his child. Assimilation of

Indians was a goal for white Americans, however, encounters between whites and Native Americans, not only effected the Native Americans, but the whites also. Womack asks: “Why is it always assumed, furthermore, that Native is assimilated by white, not the other way round?” (*Red* 143). When Charging Elk lives with the Soulas family, he develops a good relationship with Mathias, the son in the family. Mathias shows genuine interest in Oglala culture and plans on going to America with Charging Elk to learn more, and “Charging Elk had assured him that one day he could go to land of the Oglala and become a brother by ceremony” (197). Mathias thinks of becoming an Indian, and Charging Elk teels him that the Oglalas have ceremonies to initiate new brothers. Charging Elk’s comment indicates that the Oglalas are used to welcome outsiders into the band. After Charging Elk meets Nathalie, his future wife, we learn that she shows interest in his culture, and “wanted to know all about his life before he came to France” (387). Charging Elk has a great influence on her. Nathalie is not acquainted with city life and has to rely on Charging Elk to adjust to living in Marseille: “He had tried to prepare her on the long trip by pointing out the differences in tongue and custom” (410). Admittedly, this last example is not about assimilating into Indian culture, still Nathalie getting accustomed to living in France is dependent on Charging Elk’s help.

In *Fools Crow*, we notice that the Blackfeet influence the whites. Sturgis, for instance, takes part in traditional hunting and wants to adjust to Pikuni life style in order to fulfil his wife’s wishes. When he arrives in camp he is dressed like a Native and he tells the Pikunis that “it was my wife who taught me the Pikuni language” (304). Assimilation always works one way, but still there is plenty of evidence that it would be an advantage for whites to adopt to some Native ways. Turner’s influential text on the Frontier indicates that the people on the frontiers adopted Native customs, because it was the only way to survive: “the environment is at first too strong for the man. He must accept the conditions ... or perish, and so he fits himself into the Indian clearings and follows the Indian trails” (2). Turner also argues that the experiences of the frontiers were important features in constructing a special American identity, contrary to European identities. In the process towards creating an American identity, influences by the frontiers, and especially encounters with Native Americans, were crucial features. Turner claims that the national American identity would not have been the way it is today without the Native American elements. In *Fools Crow* we see this influence: “he wore nothing but the winter moccasins and blackhorn robe that would mark him as a Pikuni. But many of the Napikwans wore these things” (308). Clothes are of course just

artefacts, but the quote implies an acceptance of Blackfeet clothing and probably acknowledgement of the clothes fitness for use on the plains.

3.6 Encounters Between the Novels and Readers

Fools Crow and *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* describe encounters between Native Americans and whites, but in addition, the novels encourage encounters between readers, especially non-Native readers and Native American culture. Coulombe argues that Welch “initially places most readers in the role of the outsider, but he ultimately invites them into distinct tribal cultures to deepen their understanding and expand their awareness of similarities between ostensibly different peoples” (96). He argues further that Welch wants readers to reconsider the white American interpretations of US history. The white version of the “winning of the west” is a heroic story of civilization versus savagery where civilization won and the Indian tribes vanished or were dislocated. Turners points out that the west was “the meeting point between savagery and civilization” (2). According to this version, the whites had a God-given right to the west and the Indian cultures and traditions were not worth preserving. *Fools Crow* and *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* contradict this version and give readers insight into cultures and traditions that are rich and worth of preserving. Welch said in an interview: “I feel the need to present Indians in a way that would be educational to readers, and I hope it would be entertaining to bring some sort of understanding to the outside community of what life is like for Indians on reservations and Indians in historical times” (Bellinelli qtd. in Coulombe 97) This is exactly what Welch does in the novels. *Fools Crow* educates readers on historical Indians and their encounters with the whites and the disastrous effects and changes these encounters led to for the Indians. He also invites the readers to acquaint themselves with cultures and traditions most likely unknown to them, and this can be described as an epistemological border crossing. According to Rosello and Wolfe, the epistemological border “splits the known and the unknown” (Schimanski and Wolfe 14). *Fools Crow* and *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* generate epistemological border crossings concerning American history from a Native American point of view, but also in terms of religion and world views. As readers, we are invited to cross these borders from known to unknown, and question our views of American history and native American beliefs and worldviews.

Both novels are entertaining and interesting encounters for readers. However, to fully understand the novels, it is crucial that readers are open-minded and willing to learn. Owens argues that “Native American writers have begun to expect, even demand, that readers learn something about the mythology and oral history of Indian America” (*Mixed* 10). He also writes that crossreading, reading across cultures, is feasible and advantageous. Welch invites readers in, but he does not reveal all aspects of the cultures he describes right away, but rather little by little. Native American writers are the superiors in these encounters, and the readers must accept the inferior part, but through the novels, they are educated and gain insight into unknown cultures. Owens has observed that some Native American writers claim “that ‘outsiders’ (i.e. non-Indians) have no business reading or studying Native American literature” (11). However, Owens argues that this attitude is illogical, because by reading Native American literature, non-Natives gain knowledge, but he underscores that for non-Native readers, it takes an effort. Owens claims that Native American writers “are offering a way of looking at the world that is new to Western culture. It is a holistic, ecological perspective, one that places essential value upon the totality of existence, making humanity equal to all elements but superior to none and giving humankind crucial responsibility for the care of the world” (*Other* 29). Owens indicates that readers, especially non-Native readers, learn about Native American cultures by reading works by Native Americans, but in addition to that, they might obtain a different view of the world, a holistic view that underlines human beings’ responsibility to take care of the world. As we face a steadily approaching ecological disaster, the traditional Native American view of the world seems more and more sensible. When white America colonized the west, its attitude was that civilization and exploitation of natural resources were the means to progress, while the Indians’ traditional view on nature was primitive and belonged to the past. However, history has shown that maybe they should have adopted some of the Indians’ world views.

Welch also shares the Sun Dance ceremony with the readers. Coulombe claims that Welch by sharing this ceremony with the readers “trusts them with the knowledge of the ceremony. In doing so, he offers some level of connection or even belonging” (104). What Welch actually is doing is revealing sacred tribal ceremonies to outsiders, and his reason for doing it must be his intention to move non-Natives towards a better understanding of Native American traditions. Some Native critics have criticized writers for revealing too much to the outside world, among them Paula Gunn Allen who writes: “we don’t tell these things outside”

(383). Allen is mostly concerned about Leslie Marmon Silko's novel *Ceremony*, but she mentions also *Fools Crow* and she states that she has mixed feelings about Native authors who reveal band secrets. Her concern is understandable, but as a non-Native reader I am grateful that Welch shows his readers this confidence.

The encounters between the Welch's novels and non-Native readers are examples of Pratt's "contact zones" (7). Non-Native readers meet totally different cultures and values in *Fools Crow* and *The Heartsong of Charging Elk*, and the encounters between readers and these novels bear the marks of contact zones. Non-Native readers might find that their opinions on American history and Native Americans are challenged by the novels. Owens argues that "in addition to some basic knowledge of the tribal histories and mythologies of the Indian cultures at the heart of these novels, readers should be aware of crucial moments in Native American history of the last two centuries" (*Other* 30). Owens points especially at the Indian Removal Act of 1830 and the General Allotment Act of 1887. *Fools Crow* and *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* problematize the massacre at the Marias and dislocation, among other historical events that effected the Blackfeet and the Lakotas. Both Pratt and Owens focus on indigenous views on history and culture which contradict Euro-American views.

3.7 The Endings

Fools Crow and *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* describe tragic, but also interesting encounters between Native Americans and whites. The effects of colonialism are profound and result in illnesses, massacres and dislocation. Still, both novels have rather optimistic endings. In *Fools Crow*, Welch writes at the end: "The blackhorns had returned, and, all around, it was as it should be" (393), while *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* ends with Charging Elk saying "this is my home now" (437). *Fools Crow* feels optimistic about the future and Charging Elk finally understands that France is now his home. If we consider *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* a sequel to *Fools Crow*, we might have problems understanding the optimism at the end since the Indians are relocated to reservations, the children go to schools where they are not allowed to speak their mothertongue and are punished if they perform the old religion, and the Sun Dance ceremonies are banned by the authorities. *Fools Crow* thinks at the end of the novel of the Pikunis that "he knew they would survive, for they were the chosen ones" (392). Although he is weighed down by the awareness of their lives and of what has happened to them, he still believes that they will survive. McFarland,

however, claims that “the optimism is in fact, painfully compromised by the reader’s awareness of history” (324). McFarland is right when he points out that the readers will know what happened to Native Americans after the period of *Fools Crow*. Welch knows, of course, that is he confusing the readers with his endings, but if we look at the endings in a broader perspective, maybe Welch wants to show that white Americans were not able to make the Native Americans disappear, and that they are still around. Their conditions have altered profoundly, but today they are working on decolonization and revitalization of history, cultures and languages. *Fools Crow* itself is an example of returning of, for instance, lost history since the novel depicts the winning of the west from a Native American point of view, contrary to the official white American version. Coulombe reminds us that “the people, not the individuals, will survive and Welch complete the novels by pointing to the future rather than the past and thus offering hope to all readers who value community and connection” (114). Welch implies hope for the future because he knows the Blackfeet value community more than individuality. Charging Elk does not take the opportunity to go back to his people at the end of the novel, but still, he is aware of his Lakota identity and will keep it, also in France. Thus, Welch indicates that Native American identity is a part of him that does not have to disappear. Although he lives outside the Lakota community he can still keep the connection to his original identity. At the same time, Charging Elk develops a connection to France as Coulombe points out: “His love for and marriage to the Frenchwoman Nathalie suggests the depth of his connection to his new world” (114). Coulombe also suggests that their coming child is a symbol of blending of the two cultures and a hope for the future.

The endings of *Fools Crow* and *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* indicate what Gerald Vizenor calls “survivance”: “an active sense of presence over absence, deracination, and oblivion; survivance is the continuance of stories” (*Survivance* 1). The whites did not succeed in exterminating the Native Americans, although the novels describe hardships, diseases, massacre and dislocation. The Blackfeet are still present in America today, and Native Americans living off reservations preserve their cultural identity. According to Vizenor, “Native American Indians have resisted empires, negotiated treaties, and as strategies of survivance, participated by stealth and cultural irony in the simulations of absence in order to secure the chance of a decisive presence in national literature, history, and canonry” (17). The Blackfeet in *Fools Crow* resist the representatives of the empire, they negotiate treaties in order to survive and, in spite of severe difficulties, they never give in. Charging Elk

participates in the Wild West show to present “the old ways” to the French spectators, even though he knows the show depicts a fake image of Native Americans. Vizenor writes about simulations of absence, and the show might be an example of such simulations since it presents Native Americans as a vanishing people. Vizenor claims, though, that Native American “resistance of dominance ... Native American Indians have resisted empires, negotiated treaties, and as strategies of survivance, participated by stealth and cultural irony in the simulations of absence in order to secure the chance of a decisive presence in national literature, history, and canonry (17). The Blackfeet did not deracinate; they are still around. The Blackfeet, James Welch, wrote the story about Fools Crow and in spite of the results of imperialism and colonisation, so the Blackfeet continue their stories. *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* shows that Native Americans outside reservations can still keep their Native American identity and transfer it to the next generation. Although Charging Elk lives in Marseille outside his community, I feel certain as a reader that he will teach his child the Oglala ways. We also know that Welch was planning on a sequel to *The Heartsong of Charging Elk*, and there are some indications that he wanted to bring Charging Elk and his child back to America. Unfortunately, Welch did not live to carry out this project.

3.8 Decolonization

The endings of *Fools Crow* and *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* imply hope for the future, but also hope for the decolonizing of Native Americans. Welch was a Native American himself, and he was thus representing his own people. Self-representation is an important step towards decolonization. Deloria writes about representation that “for most of five centuries whites have had unrestricted power to describe Indians in any way they choose” (398). In *Fools Crow*, Welch is reclaiming Blackfeet history and in *The Heartsong of Charging Elk*, he shows that Native Americans are still Native Americans even if they are dislocated. Wilkinson states that Welch in *Fools Crow* “decolonizes in at least three distinct ways: 1) he presents traditional Blackfoot stories ... 2) he uses real historical figures ... and 3) he peoples his novel with realistic, human characters” (47). She writes further that Welch presents authentic settings and authentic Indian history.

Europeans and Euromericans colonized not only the people and their land, but also their history and their stories. As Deloria argues, whites have assumed exclusive rights to Indian history and stories and have, in addition, created an image of Indians that fits their

description. Therefore, novels like *Fools Crow* and *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* are crucial contradictions to this myth and contributions to the decolonization of Native American literature. How does Welch work on decolonization in his historical novels? We have to go back to Welch's claim that he writes from the inside out. He writes about his own background and his own people. His sources are his father and his grandmother, but Welch admits that he must rely on Euroamerican sources as well. According to Thiong'o, language plays an important part in decolonization, and Thiong'o chooses to write in his Native language (*Decolonizing*), while Welch writes in English, but not standard English. Owens argues that "Welch attempts the nearly impossible feat of conveying a feeling of one language through another, while simultaneously avoiding the clichéd formal pidgin of Hollywood Indians" (*Other* 162). Welch does this by using near translations like white-scabs for smallpox in *Fools Crow*, and white man's healing house for hospital in *The Heartsong of Charging Elk*. Welch also uses traditional Indian names for his protagonists, such as Fools Crow and Charging Elk, but translates them into English. In this way, Welch avoids using the colonists' standard English, and he invites readers to acknowledge a language unfamiliar to most of them. In *Fools Crow*, there is an interesting shift in language style, because Welch uses standard English when white characters are in focus. In chapter 25, for instance, Welch writes about the whites on the whiskey trails: "He'd had to sell off his horse at Fort Benton" (294). The Blackfeet, on the contrary, never name the forts, but call them "Many Houses." The Indian characters in *Fools Crow* still speak their Native language, and only a few of them know English. In *The Heartsong of Charging Elk*, though, we witness that Native languages are profoundly challenged by English: "Charging Elk was taken aback by the English tongue, 'Are you Lakota'" (429). When Charging Elk meets up with the Wild West show again, he is surprised by the wide use of English among the Indians on the show. He also notices that most of them have English names like Joseph and Sara. Colonization of North America eliminated most native languages, but Welch's interesting blending of English and near translations of Indian terms creates an English different from standard English. Instead of adopting standard English, Welch has created a unique Indian version of the language.

Owens claims about *Fools Crow* that "Welch has accomplished the most profound act of recovery in American literature" (*Other* 166). As I pointed out in my introduction, I intended to use decolonization in a wider sense in my thesis, and therefore I will claim that Welch works on decolonization in *Fools Crow* and *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* when he

recovers Native American history. Encounters between Native Americans and whites resulted in colonization of Native land and culture, thus *Fools Crow* and *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* can be valuable contributions to decolonization.

3.9 Conclusion

Fools Crow and *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* are set in different locations and in different periods. The latter provides examples of life on reservation after the encroaching whites have taken the Indian land and dislocated the people. We learn that the fears of Blackfeet in *Fools Crow* have become reality for Charging Elk and his family. The novels depict traditional life as hard, but still the life both protagonists would choose to live were they given the opportunity. The encounters with the whites bring about changes neither *Fools Crow* nor *Charging Elk* appreciate. In *Fools Crow* the Blackfeet are in focus while the whites are present in the background as a constant threat. *The Heartsong of Charging Elk*, on the other hand, depicts reservation Indians and dislocation of Indians. However, the endings of both novels imply hope for the future and survival instead of absence. In addition, *Fools Crow* and *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* are contributions to decolonization of Native Americans.

Conclusion

Encounters between Native Americans and whites in James Welch's historical novel *Fools Crow* and *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* are described as encounters between peoples of unequal powers. The encounters happen against the background of imperialism and colonialism, and my reading shows that most of the encounters are forced. The theories of imperialism and colonialism justified the whites' belief that they were superior to the Native Americans, whom they looked upon as savages belonging to a vanishing people. The novels show that the whites believe themselves to be superior, and with a right to civilize and assimilate Native Americans, but there are examples of encounters where the whites are influenced by the Native Americans.

The encounters are forced, but we notice that there is a difference between *Fools Crow* and *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* because of the different situations the novels present. Fools Crow, the protagonist in *Fools Crow*, lives a traditional life with his family and his band, and he does not encounter whites often. Still, the encroaching Napikwans are a constant threat, and the Lone Eaters are forced to adjust to white settlers living on former tribal land. On the contrary, Charging Elk, the protagonist of *The Heartsong of Charging Elk*, lives among whites in France. *Fools Crow* provides the Native Americans' view of the winning of the west, in addition to their view of the massacre on the Marias. According to Welch, the massacre on the Marias is more important to the history of the Blackfeet than any other incident, but white America has more or less forgotten the massacre: "The massacre, as well as the site, has disappeared from public consciousness. It is dutifully noted in historical texts as a small paragraph or a footnote, then forgotten" (*Killing* 38). In *Fools Crow*, on the other hand, Welch reclaims the importance of the massacre as a disastrous result of the encounters with the whites. The massacre on the Marias demonstrates the Napikwans' willingness to use power to oppress the Blackfeet.

The circumstances where Fools Crow and his band encounter the Napikwans could be described as "contact zones" (Pratt 4), because they consist of encounters between dissimilar peoples. The Blackfeet and the Napikwans have incompatible worldviews and values. The whites are not interested in any close contact with the Indians, but look upon them as obstacles to civilization and improvement. The main reason behind the encounters is that the whites are interested in something the Indians have: land. In *Fools Crow*, we learn how the

whites use treaties to get hold of tribal land. To the Blackfeet, land is sacred and not sellable, according to traditional belief, but the Blackfeet understand that they do not have the power to resist the whites' constant urge for more land. The encroaching whites cause tensions among the Blackfeet, because they disagree on how to resist the whites. Some of the young tribe members, led by Owl Child believe in violent confrontations, while the elders want to negotiate in hope of keeping parts of their land. Ironically, Owl Child's gang is more interested in the Napikwans' ways than the other members of the band, and they approve of Napikwan clothes, goods and girls.

The Heartsong of Charging Elk is set after *Fools Crow* and the protagonist Charging Elk is dislocated to France. His band, the Oglalas, experience dislocation and assimilation, and most of the band members live on the reservation. The fears of the Blackfeet have become reality in *The Heartsong of Charging Elk*. Charging Elk gives up the traditional life and moves to the reservation, but life at the reservation is dull and meaningless, and therefore he accepts the opportunity to join Buffalo Bill's Wild West show on its tour in Europe. When he is left behind in Marseille, he is forced to encounter white people. In France, Charging Elk learns that the French look upon him as a savage belonging to a vanishing people. They welcome the show Indians and express feelings of imperialist nostalgia for the vanishing Indians, but Charging Elk without his show costume is met by scepticism. The European attitude towards Indians is similar to white America's attitude and is also coloured by imperialism and colonialism. In *The Heartsong of Charging Elk*, the "contact zones" are even more present than in *Fools Crow*, and Charging Elk lives in close contact with French people. The two cultures clash, but Charging Elk and the French also establish relationships across different religious beliefs, values and worldviews. In spite of Charging Elk's adjustment to life in France, the climax in *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* illustrates the battle between the colonizers and the colonized. The rape scene is problematic, because the men involved both belong to marginalized people, namely homosexuals and Indians: however, Charging Elk's killing of Breteuil can be read as a reaction towards imperialism and colonialism.

Fools Crow and *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* depict encounters between Native Americans and whites, but the novels also trigger encounters between readers and the novels. Especially non-Native readers in particular encounter cultures unknown to them. As Owens points out, the novels demand that readers are willing to learn about Native American culture

in order to fully understand them. In addition, Owens argues that it is important for the future of the world that we learn from other cultures: “To survive on this globe, it has become clear that we must achieve a transition from egocentrism to ecocentrism” (*Mixed* 11). Hopefully most readers will not just look upon the novels as interesting journeys which provoke imperialist nostalgic feelings, but as awakenings. Open minded readers will cross epistemological borders through the reading of *Fools Crow* and *The Heartsong of Charging Elk*. Welch describes encounters between Native Americans and whites as disastrous to traditional Native American lives and values: however, both novels end in hope for the future. *Fools Crow* expresses optimism for the future for the Blackfeet: “The blackhorns had returned, and, all around, it was as it should be” (393). *Fools Crow* feels happy, but he acknowledges that it is “a happiness that sleeps with sadness” (392). *Charging Elk* chooses to stay on in France, in spite of his longing for home, but he is assured that he is still a Lakota: “You are Lakota wherever you might go” (436). *Fools Crow* and *The Heartsong of Charging Elk* are thus examples of Vizenor’s survivance since they are written by a Native American, and prove that imperialists and colonists did not succeed in the annihilation of Native Americans.

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