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A Revolution in Rhetoric: Recycling the Language of Control through Rhetorical Activism

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through Rhetorical Activism

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to my

MOTHER and FATHER

with love

A Revolution in Rhetoric: Recycling the Language of Control
through Rhetorical Activism

by

JERIEN ELIZABETH RAUSCH

THESIS

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An Introduction: Laying the Ground

Words for Rhetorical Reform

It has been, is, and will be devastatingly important for people to describe and define the world they interpret around and beyond them, and their role in it. This description, conveyed through language, carries with it the responsibility of representation, possession, and authority over it. One way we express our interpretations of the world is through the imaginative power of story. Stories are “part of being human. People tell stories and discuss them in every culture...evaluating stories together is one of the central ways of learning” (Appiah 29). We must leave space to learn to appreciate differing worldviews, even if it begins with the sharing and valuing of stories. In writing this thesis, I am choosing to use the pronoun “we” to refer to all authors and readers alike in an effort to include readerships and to break the cycle of literary exclusion. We creates inclusion, where pronouns typically seen in exploration and colonial literatures assumes the us/ them relationship, where the us/ I is superior and the them/ they is subaltern.

From religious mythologies to reality television scripts, from depictions of history and law to songs, poetry, and commercial advertisements, humans define themselves and the world through language and story.

Almost everything that we do in our everyday lives depends on language...so much of what keeps people and societies together depends on language. We need language to make and enforce laws; get and distribute valued resources; create and maintain personal and public relationships; teach our children ways of 'being,' 'thinking,' and 'doing'; engage in scholarly inquiry; preserve our past and plan our future. (Schiffrin 170)

It is hard to imagine a single day without the involvement of language from road signs

that provide a context for direction, to speaking and listening, to something as simple as a wash-me sign fingered onto a dusty car; we are surrounded by language and depend on it to communicate every day. How we use language becomes all the more important, when we apply it to the ideas of transforming colonial and postcolonial language into decolonial discourse that actively resists abuses performed through rhetoric.

To produce effective language, language that makes a difference, users must critically think about what and why they are writing or saying something, and speakers/ writers must know that this critically- conscious language can make a difference. Every responsible user of rhetoric must critically evaluate the language used to make sure that it is not rhetoric that apathetically accepts racial, economical, cultural, or religious prejudices that uphold hierarchies of exclusion and inequality in everyday speech. While we will be examining colonial and postcolonial literatures, it is important to keep in mind that colonization takes many forms even in the present as we are conditioned through what Louis Althusser terms the “Ideological State Apparatus” (143-7). Anne Allison explains the concept of the Ideological State Apparatus as “a force that operates in ways that are subtle, disguised, and accepted as everyday social practice.that indoctrinate people into seeing the world a certain way and of accepting certain identities as their own within that world” (Allison 222). In this way, language is used to create and perpetuate perceptions of reality. We must learn to critically read beyond what is presented to regain control over our own powers of language and perception.

Language can be seen as paradoxically powerful. At the same time it serves to empower users, it may just as easily disempower peoples described and defined within. One example of the paradoxical powers of language is the creation and enforcement of law as mentioned in a quotation above. It is paradoxically as violent as it is constructive. Just as it has the power to unite peoples through communication and order, it also has the power to oppress peoples by creating and supporting a rhetoric that assumes dominance and inequality.

After asserting that all language is inherently political, George Orwell, in his essay, “Politics and the English Language,” posits some optimism for this hopeful revisionist-

representation I am calling rhetorical activism:

Our thoughts are foolish, but the slovenliness of our language makes it easier for us to have foolish thoughts. The point is that the process is reversible. Modern English, especially written English is full of bad habits which spread through imitation and which can be avoided if one is willing to take the necessary trouble. To think clearly is the first step towards regeneration. (Italics added for emphasis 221-2)

In this era of optimism, hope, and change let us consider paying specific attention to the ways that language has been, is, and will be used. We can all take part in a linguistic revolution by becoming rhetorical activists; in the spirit of George Orwell's theory of "regeneration," rhetorical activism is the conscious-criticism and redefinition of the rhetoric of exploration, colonial, and postcolonial literatures. By identifying, examining and redefining rhetoric that objectifies the peoples and places represented in single-sidedness through colonizing discourse, a sense of context and identity might be reclaimed, redefined, and restored. When speakers of a language shift, so does the power of definition. In other words, after colonizing efforts to inculcate Indigenous peoples with the colonizing language as to offset the power in ownership of identity, the colonizing language can be used by the colonized to redefine and reassert Indigenous identity.

Kamau Brathwaite argues in favor of what he calls a "nation language," which he differentiates from English as such

Nation Language is the language that is influenced very strongly by the African Model, the African aspect of our New World/ Caribbean heritage. English it may be in terms of lexicon, but it is not English in terms of its syntax. And English it certainly is not in terms of its rhythm and timbre, its own sound explosion. In its contours, it is not English to a greater or lesser degree. And this brings us back to the question that some of you have raised yesterday: can

English be a revolutionary language? (Brathwaite from lecture *History of the Voice*)

While Brathwaite firmly asserts “nation language” is not English, I would argue that it is through imagination and the courage to defy institutions of empire that English can be recycled and reused to resist colonial control. It may not be imperial English, but it is a re-imagined English that has the power to create communication between the colonized and the colonizer, and in that communication the power and authority of defining self and identity is reclaimed.

In this study, we will explore how language can be both empowering and simultaneously disempowering. While language links peoples and societies together, just as easily it destroys and separates them. The language of exploration and colonialism serves to sever people and societies as easily as it holds them together, while the language of post and de-colonial writers can recycle that destructive rhetoric of exploration and colonial literatures to reconstruct and reclaim the authority of representation and context. Yet, in between those two phases of disempowerment and (re)empowerment, there can be the careless perpetuation of the language that supports institutionalizing inequalities; so, to get to the point where language can be conceived of as decolonizing, we must start by revisiting and reclaiming the language that originally solidifies the objectification of so many Indigenous peoples and places in exploration and colonial narratives.

After we name and analyze some of the words and phrases used to create the conquered and the conqueror, as they are cemented in narrative form, we can move to the analysis of some of the language that can be used to reclaim and rewrite the ways that native peoples were underwritten and represented by and for foreign interests. Linda Tuhiwai Smith writes that decolonization is “a process which engages with imperialism and colonialism at multiple levels. For researchers, one of those levels is concerned with having a more critical understanding of the underlying assumptions, motivations and values which inform research practices” (20). This means we need to engage with literature on different levels including historical, political, and religious analyses. This thesis project engages with imperial and

colonial rhetoric on many different levels through different interdisciplinary approaches.

The methodology for this study relies upon interdisciplinary scholarship but remains a criticism of literature. First, this is a literary study of both fictions and non-fictions that illustrate imperial rhetoric and its ramifications. Second, literature is language hence the linguistic outlook, which helps readers and writers alike realize the importance of crafting every word in current and future speech and writings. In addition to being a literary and linguistic study, we will also find the incorporation of some historical, anthropological, and psycholinguistic approaches which serve to foster a context for further study. While these interdisciplinary approaches are helpful in providing a context for studying the past I am proficient in each but not comprehensively.

To illustrate the importance of the linguistic aspect of the study take the following example. The notion of meaning contingent upon context is called deixis (Saeed 182-92). The word “this,” can only be defined by a context, and using “this” allows for ownership of the representation of referents that symbolize the world to the speaker/ writer and the listener/reader. (Re)Naming a referent, as is a common exploratory and imperial practice, is only a partiality of an entire ontology that encompasses the associative meanings that create any context. In other words, when explorers draw upon their own interpretations of the familiar to represent the peoples and places they encounter, they are removing that native referent from its meaningful context, the context from which it derives its meaning, thus rendering the new approximation of importance illegitimate as the new representation does not coincide with its decontextualized context. This process of decontextualization was common practice during exploratory imperial missions, and the fragments gathered are incorporated into the practice of inequality in the self justifying system of empire.

Language is intimately linked to knowledge and memory, hence the psycholinguistic aspect to the study. As both knowledge and memory are verbally encoded, it is impassably important that we reconsider phrases and representations passed on through language and to reconstruct them, edit them, and make them over. Do whatever it takes to try and share words’ meanings with all users, instead of limiting words’ meanings to single interpretations

of communication and literacy excluding other users' interpretations, definitions, and world views. One might argue that this then is a generalizing mission, where any one word can come to mean anything. In response, the purpose is not to overgeneralize meaning, but instead to allow for the space for each writer or speaker to create meaning within his/her own context, where colonial associations can be redefined. As responsible and critical users of language we should seek to affectively include the possibility of difference in world views, values, and claims to knowledge by actively engaging in the production of meaning through language instead of passively accepting rhetoric that supports hierarchies.

In the next chapter, chapter one, "Words as Weapons," we will examine the historic and linguistic functions of language as we analyze an iconic narrative of exploration and conquest, The Chronicle of the Navarez Expedition. This narrative serves to highlight some of the major themes we will discuss including the role of religious rhetoric, the violence of literacy, and ownership of history. We will also examine the consequences of language after and during exploration. In this chapter, we will also investigate what happens when imperial rhetoric replaces existing native signs, and what happens when the assumed authority of Words clashes with the native words in the war of religious rhetoric. Exploration is historically supported by the assumed superiority of religious rhetoric. The linguistic examples of assumed dominance are then sadly re-asserted and codified in colonial rhetoric. The same language that seems to solidify objects of conquest as sub/ or lower than is then imposed as the prestige language, the assumed controlling language. In other words, the nave and religiously "superior" observations of early explorers cement impressions of peoples that will further be used as colonial justifications for assumed power and dominance.

In chapter two, "Language's Roles in Establishing a Context for Reclamation after Colonization," we will discuss how context is especially important, because what we learn from exploration and colonial rhetoric about Indigenous peoples and places is truncated, decontextualized-tidbits of information gathered and used for the purposes of control. In The Conquest of America, Tetzvan Todorov poses the question "Did the Spaniards defeat the Indians by means of signs?" which he answers with a resounding yes. Because much

of the language used to describe peoples and places depends upon context as the speaker must relay their interpretations to a reader, it was to the Spaniards' advantage that they could manipulate symbols meaningful to native world views. In addition to a historical, linguistic, and spatial context there is also a context for the relationship between reader/writer and listener/ speaker, which includes motivations for writing/ speaking, just as there is a context for what is being written/ spoken about.

This is only part of a whole. Where explorers' interpretations and representations of new people and places were limited to the terms they could identify as cognates or similitudes, all else outside the already known (so seemingly contrary to the label exploration literature) was purposefully unidentified, because it did not fit into the preconceived identifications of the already assumed. Explorers imaginations could not grow to include native world views as their interpretations of new peoples and places were already set by existing and demeaning rhetoric, the rhetoric of religious and imperial conquests. These are only a few of the violent ways language has been used for control by removing the power of peoples to define themselves.

Tzvetan Todorov asserts "we can discover the other in ourselves, realize that we are not a homogeneous substance, radically alien to whatever is not us...others are also 'I's: subjects just as I am..." (3). Here, we will further examine the boundaries created and upheld by the deceptively simple practice of assigning pronouns and the theories behind the differences between. Linguistically, peoples consumed by colonization were removed from the semantic and thematic category of subjects, which implies the ability to act; instead they were reduced to the thematic role of object which meant they were acted upon but denied the ability to act.

In chapter three, "Recycling the Rhetoric of Control," we will explore the more positive powers of language to restore the ownership of representation through imagination and story. On an optimistic note, we will discuss and apply Salman Rushdie's argument of the transformative power of English to be used by the colonized. What this means for our discussion of rhetorical activism is that it is possible, as Orwell suggests, to

regenerate language from colonial and post-colonial to de-colonial literature/language. Fictions written retrospectively that counter the colonial perspective can and do change the meanings of colonial rhetoric through the use of imagination and story. In this chapter, we will also explore how fiction can posit powerful counter-histories and perspectives to the single sided representation of colonial writing by imperial colonists.

There is a change in consciousness and a shift in power that creates the opportunity for those who have been forced into a colonizing language to start using it to meet new ends. This shift we might categorize as the difference between what is considered post and what is considered decolonial. In other words, the language of the colonizer that has been imposed upon those being colonized may be used to reclaim the power, identity, culture and religion that have been subsumed through the practices of decolonization and rhetorical activism. However, can what has been lost by forces of colonization ever be completely regained? Unfortunately, no, it is not entirely possible, because it is also a mistake to assume those cultures, identities, spaces and religions that were colonized are stagnant and unchanging. Just like language, they are constantly evolving. What can be reclaimed is the power and authority of voice, through the use of rhetorical activism, to re-define self by providing opposing images and counter stories to those that have been codified by explorers and colonizers.

Post and de- colonial literatures, theories, and rhetoric offer the proof to support rhetorical activism. Authors may write in the language of the colonizer, and yet use it to dismantle the assumptions of power and identity created by exploration and colonial rhetoric. Audre Lorde argues, “The master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house” (Smith 19). I would argue, however, that one writer, speaker, might change more impressions by using the language of the colonizer to create meaningful understanding by using language in a way colonizers could not, as dialogue. When Indigenous peoples of North America, New Zealand, and Africa were represented by the language of colonizers they were spoken of, but as Tzvetan Todorov points out, never spoken to, and never spoken with in a meaningful exchange. Language as it was used for exploration, colonial,

and imperial purposes seems to have departed from one of the main purposes of language, communication. It was used in a single sided way to represent peoples and places, but was not used to create a meaningful dialogue between or across cultures. Peoples and cultures became reduced to what the describer deemed important.

If we can, by reading between and beyond the lines written in periods of exploration, colonization, and post-colonization, recover and piece together the fragments left of peoples and places after colonization and decontextualization, we may be able to restore some power to define reality to those it was taken from. From Reliable Sources, Martha Howell and Walter Prevenier assert “historians are prisoners of sources that can never be made fully reliable, but if they are skilled readers of sources and always mindful of their capacity, they can make their sources yield meaningful *stories* about a past and our relationship to it” (3 italics added). We can through literary, linguistic, and historical analyses (re)value relationships with cultures and places that were alienated, dominated, and subsumed by the rhetoric of control. *This* must be used consciously and courteously for worlds are defined, upheld, destroyed, and regenerated therein. When we think about using this study, then, we might consider what contexts we are creating or perpetuating.

Rhetorical activism is a movement in language study and usage that will allow for the “regeneration” of so much through language. I cannot speak for those cultures and identities subsumed and consumed by colonizing languages, but I can identify the rhetorical motifs that must be (re)contextualized and redefined. Highlighting phrases or words for the reclamation and re-definition of physical places and meaningful spaces of culture, religion, world views, and value systems of others helps to define self. If we can accept that we all share this existence, and that we need not assimilate to the same standards of religion, culture, or identity, we might instead appreciate and celebrate diversity, by blurring the distinctions between I/ you us/ them. Then, we can open these chapters to a new interpretation of reality that includes myth, religion, and values that may be different but which are still part of this rich and valued shared-existence. Yet, to value others as we value ourselves we must evaluate and change the language we have used, use now, and

will use to enter into a dialogue with those considered different. Dialogue may be the key, as previously those who have been considered different were spoken of in description but never spoken with.

Anthony Appiah would argue that dialogue creates understanding. Colonial language was not concerned with understanding other peoples and places further than was useful for the purposes of control. In the following chapters, we will explore the ways in which language was used to colonize, control, and objectify Indigenous populations around the globe. We will map the ways in which language was used to perpetuate existing misconceptions about those people, and finally we will remap the ways language can be used to combat those representative fallacies created and disseminated through careless rhetoric. Through rhetorical activism, the carefully-crafted and consciously-critical use of language that rejects traditional biases passed through generations of language evolution, some sense of power, context, and identity might be restored to those it was taken from.

Laura Micciche addresses teachers specifically, in terms of language and social change, and the classroom is certainly one place we can address what rhetoric has to do with social change, but we might all benefit from the critical thinking about our writing and speaking that she advocates:

I believe that the examination of language made possible through rhetorical grammar pedagogy encourages students to view writing as material social practice in which meaning is actively made rather than passively relayed or effortlessly produced...instruction can demonstrate to students that language does purposeful, consequential work in the world... (Micciche 719)

On that note, let us use rhetoric to create change. Change in the ways we have been taught to perceive and conceive of those considered different, change in the ways we create policies that deal with each other. From the private, to public, and to global scales we can (re)conceptualize the ways we interpret and represent each other with a little more care paid to the language of difference.

Chapter One: Re-Imagining Language's Legacy of Dominance: Words as Weapons

“Language has always been the companion of empire” (Todorov 221). It was violently used as a tool by the explorer and then the colonizer to capture, create, and codify peoples and places encountered during exploration and then colonization. Through this process, explorers like Cabeza de Vaca defined the hierarchy that illustrates the differences which assume and uphold the presumed superiority of the imperial rhetoric of history, law, and religion. This violent literacy names and proclaims authority over already inhabited spaces and it redefines Indigenous people's histories by imposing myths, narratives, and stories in places where they are far removed from a meaningful context. Can we conceive of a context being large enough to encompass connections across and between cultures?

In an effort to revalue Indigenous people's perspectives, and grow a perspective large enough to appreciate differing notions of knowing, we might learn to re-appreciate Native American practices, such as storytelling, that were alienated, subjugated, and almost erased due to the religious biases and justifications of colonizers. Leslie Silko reminds us of the beneficial elements storytelling contributes to the English language. Silko delivered a speech entitled “Language and Literature from a Pueblo Indian Perspective” without written notes to simulate the way in which Pueblo Indians might speak because, as she asserts, anything written is suspect for a disconnect between sincerity and the written words. This disconnect between words and what they signify is expressed by Friedrich Nietzsche, and he argues, much like Silko, that there is a gap that cannot be bridged between words and their referents.

In “On Truth and Lying in a Non-Moral Sense,” Nietzsche argues that humans do not

have the capacity to communicate honestly as all words are metaphors that have ultimately been codified inaccurately to rigidly represent an abstraction mistaken for itself. If this is true, than Cabeza de Vaca is not alone in misrepresenting those alienated by imperial discourse, as we are all victims of language's ambiguity. Nietzsche asserts, "where words are concerned, what matters is never truth, never the full and adequate expression. with language we believe when we speak...we have knowledge of things themselves, and yet possess only metaphors of things which in no way correspond to their original entities" (Nietzsche 876-7). How can we hope, then, as Orwell hopes for regeneration of the language that represents the peoples and places encountered by colonial efforts, if any attempt to linguistically represent them is dishonest? Todorov might argue that we need to value other forms of communication, as other sign systems may hold more truth than the written language used to ossify our precepts of those alienated by imperial and colonial rhetoric. We can listen to Indigenous storytellers to provide contexts for the fragmented information gathered by conquerors. We can revalue Native narratives of cosmogony, religion, and world views.

Certainly, in trying to capture/ represent Indigenous peoples in a foreign language there is more going on than misrepresentation as Cabeza de Vaca admits to ignorance of Native American languages. Besides the gap between the signifier and the signified there is the problem of translation. Cabeza de Vaca and those he encountered were not only working from different sign systems, but also entirely different concepts of knowledge. Keith Basso, in "Wisdom Sits in Places," discusses this conceptual disconnect in relation to an Apache perspective.

Identity for many people is tied to physical places. Indigenous peoples not only derived a sense of self from location, but knowledge also revolved around and was attached to geographic locations (54-5). Basso notes, "The outsider must attempt to come to grips with the Indigenous cultural forms with which the landscape is experienced, the shared symbolic vehicles that give shape to geographical experience and facilitate its communication- its re-creation, and re-presentation- in interpersonal settings" (56). In other words, communication

and meaning-making for Indigenous people was tied intimately to the land. When severed from that which they depended upon for physical and mental being, traditions become devoid of meaning. Like Todorov, Basso hopes for the regeneration of the connection between physical and mental space.

Todorov discusses the same difference in valuing signs as representative of the ultimate defeat for those conquered in the early Americas. The colonizer, with written records, could communicate quickly between other men as orders and correspondences could be written, where those being colonized valued different signs which connected more to the world around them. As Todorov explains, between the colonizer and those colonized, there is a titanic disparity in the value assigned to different forms of communication. There are certain inherent inadequacies with language and representation. Nietzsche argues that language can only attempt through metaphor to represent what we cannot say.

However, Nietzsche offers one brief glimmer of hope for communication, the poet who seeks to reclaim surroundings by re-formatting perceptions “cast[s] off the mark of servitude” (882). If we can keep in mind the relationships between words, as Silko advocates through storytelling, there is space to imagine that words might have many different meanings with different relations and contexts. Imagination can be used to bridge the differences in ways knowing through the narratives of story. As Orwell asserts, the first step is to think clearly, so if we reassess and re-imagine the way we relate words and meaning, in this case the way in which Cabeza de Vaca has characterized those Indigenous peoples he encountered, then we can begin to contextualize what has been fragmented. We can create a context large enough to encompass different discourse communities, by recognizing differing pragmatic settings in the past and present.

In addition to re-interpreting the past, Todorov asserts that “it is in fact the conquest of America that heralds and establishes our present identity,” which makes the re-imagining of Cabeza de Vaca’s *Chronicle of the Narvaez Expedition* extremely important to our present and future identities (Todorov 5). Early explorers of America perceived and created, through the rhetoric of assumed dominance, the land and peoples primed for conquest. By

condensing peoples and lands through a rhetoric of dominance they have been severed from a collective whole. By examining the early travel narrative of Cabeza de Vaca, linguistic patterns concerning the representation and domination of those Indigenous peoples defined, might lead to a re-imagining, reclaiming, or as Orwell might phrase it, the “regeneration,” of those terms and those signified by them. In addition, this re-imagining might create new ways to position the self in a fuller contextualized version of the past and present. If we can reassess the purposes for which language was used in Cabeza de Vaca’s narrative, we might be able to take the fragments gathered through conquest and reconfigure them into a language of appreciation of the whole, which would open new ways of interpreting the present and new ways of communicating.

We should definitely be wary of Cabeza de Vaca’s representation of those captured in his narrative. He does not travel to the Americas to create narratives of appreciation; he is on a mission of conversion and conquest, which means he is to learn signs valued for further uses of control and manipulation. What we can do, now, is listen to Indigenous perspectives. Leslie Silko’s speech/ story starts at a beginning, with the incorporation of the myth of Tseitsinako, as she notes that the Pueblo perspective “is very much concerned with including the whole of creation and the whole of history and time” (54). Silko argues “through the appreciation for the boundless capacity of language which, through storytelling, brings us together, despite distances between cultures, despite great distances in time” (72). We must learn to value stories from those silenced by the rhetoric of colonization to mend the rift between colonized and colonizer and to re-image the way we perceive the legacy language.

The challenge we face, as expressed by Deepika Bahri in “Geography is Not History: The Storyteller in the Age of Globalization,” is that story, which represents collectivity, has been subjugated to information (Bahri 200-1). In essence, by positioning information as the highest form of communication, what has been lost is the ability to represent a whole. Information, emblematic of the postmodern condition, only heightens the need for a gathering of the fragments created and perpetuated by imperial conquest, colonialism,

and post-colonial rhetoric that continues to colonize. Cabeza de Vaca represents this sort of isolation of information separated from the whole as he can only observe as an outsider, because he cannot effectively communicate with the tribes he encounters. He does not know their language, and he cannot fathom a context that would support anything other than the imperial design. He is not concerned with tradition or Indigenous myth, but instead only with that which will benefit conquest, those bits of information useful for future colonization. He writes, "...we had no interpreter to make ourselves understood by the natives, and we would not be able to converse with them" (Cabeza de Vaca 11). Cabeza de Vaca has no interest in understanding or appreciating the Indigenous peoples and their practices. There is a difference between initiating understanding of the natives and "mak[ing] ourselves understood by the natives." In the first utterance is implicit the idea of a dialogic communication, where the latter suggests a single sided speaking. Cabeza de Vaca wanted only to know what could be controlled.

Todorov attributes the ultimate defeat of Indigenous peoples to their preference for informative communication. He argues, because Indigenous populations communicated to encompass and with the world around them, they were less skilled at manipulating informative signs than the encroaching conquerors. Todorov uses the example of Indigenous dress on the battle field. To the Indigenous, head dresses were a sign of rank and respect, to the encroaching empire head dresses were a sign for manipulation and control. Zeroing in on this sign, it could be removed physically and figuratively from the conflict. In other words, Europeans saw that Indigenous peoples placed a certain amount of power with those that wore head dresses, and, if they could be removed, so could their power. As a result of that defeat, however, we were meant to devalue that type of signification and communication. A type of communication we can learn to (re)value is storytelling, because as Silko and Bahri point out, it is a means of representing things as a whole what creates connections not just between words but between cultures.

Silko indicates that less emphasis is given to individual words, as "words are always with other words, and other words are almost always in a story of some sort" (Silko 55).

I think what is significant, here, is the recovery of this holistic view of language. Things are seen as interconnected and interdependent instead of on a hierarchical scale. I think for the same reason, Todorov chooses to format his revision of conquest narratives as an all encompassing myth, because, as he explains to his readers, he is more concerned with morality in the present than what was recorded as history (Todorov 4). What we are missing from Cabeza de Vaca's narrative is the context for the signs he gathers. Because he cannot with an objective perspective describe the Indigenous peoples he encounters, he cannot fully represent them.

Ultimately, the language of dominance is a self-justifying trope repeated colonizer after explorer making the task of identifying the rhetoric used to ossify that supposed superiority all the more pressing and important for re-imagining meaning and context for native peoples. Daniel T. Reff argues, "the production of an ethnographic text is governed by intertextuality; all authors-be they Spanish explorers or modern ethnographers-necessarily employ literary models, rhetorical strategies, and conventions that result in the past pre-figuring the present" (Reff 115). It is not unheard of to imitate other successful narratives. Before Cabeza de Vaca encounters and describes Indigenous peoples and places, there were other explorers that chronicled their experiences cementing the attitude by which Indigenous peoples everywhere would be encountered and described. It matters little what the colonizers' language was, French, Spanish, English. The goals of colonization regardless of language are similar. In this study we are dealing specifically with English. Even though Cabeza de Vaca's narrative has been translated, we will deal with the English translation. In any language, the processes of colonization are reductive of the people described.

This chapter investigates the ways that language is used as a weapon for control through historical, legal, and religious rhetoric specifically in the *Chronicle of the Narvaez Expedition by Alvar Nunez Cabeza de Vaca*; additionally, it will highlight the hope of how the language of story can and is used as a tool to resist the damaging rhetoric of exploration. Just as it is used for colonial control, language can also be used by the colonized to oppose it. The areas of history, law, and religion are not exclusive as often they work at the same time

to invalidate Indigenous peoples; in the case of Cabeza de Vaca, all three functions are justifications for control in his famous narrative where he and his crew are shipwrecked in Florida and without provisions depend upon native peoples for food and shelter.

This section shows examples of how Cabeza de Vaca's narrative is used to establish a colonial-historical presence, as his narrative becomes a historical document detailing lands that have been legally claimed in the act of renaming. Aurora Levins Morales argues that "Imperial histories fulfill a vital role for those who rule. Those who dominate must justify themselves and find ways to see their own dominance as not only legitimate but the only acceptable option" (Morales 24). We will see how this idea of justification plays out in Cabeza de Vaca's narrative as he creates and documents the historicity of his imperial conquest. Unfortunately for the natives that already inhabit the areas being claimed, Florida and further West, they are renamed and claimed as well. The Native Americans were viewed as legal subjects, since they lived on land claimed by the empire. In the act of naming peoples and places then, Cabeza de Vaca, lays a legal and creates a historical claim.

Cabeza de Vaca assigns new names to the peoples and places he travels to in the name of the King who is supported by the power of God. The (re) naming of places displaces a previous claim to the land, not that the Indigenous people would have considered they needed any legal claim or documentation to inhabit the lands they lived on. Jason Edward Black argues that for "American Indians de/colonizing discourses by both adopting and resisting them is reflective of the hybridity of Native rhetoric, which was necessitated by colonial context conducted through discursive forms forced on the rhetorical situation by a dominant power" (Black 72). In other words, to resist colonial representations Indigenous peoples must engage in the discourse, an opportunity that was not afforded by conquerors making maps for further control.

The names given to places reflect Cabeza de Vaca's experience in those locations. Early in the journey when Cabeza de Vaca and the rest of the crew are leaving what the Natives have called Aute (according to Cabeza de Vaca's translation and recollection), Cabeza de

Vaca writes, “According to the sworn statements of our pilots, from the bay which we gave the name the Bay of the Cross to this place...the Bay from which we set out is called Bay of Horses” (24-25). This seemingly simple act of naming carries with it what Gayatri Spivak terms “epistemic violence” which she defines as “the narrative of imperialism” which subjugates native knowledge because it has been “disqualified as inadequate” (799). The native names are of no use to the colonizer as they do not coincide with the imperial version of events.

The Native Americans that Cabeza de Vaca encounters are historically erased as their records do not coincide with that of the colonizer, including place names. The naming of places not only displaces any previous inhabitants, but the names function as evidence for Cabeza de Vaca’s narrative, serving as both historical and legal documentation. Besides the divine and royal rights to claim the land, the place names assigned also serve to validate a colonist version of narrative events. Naming represents the replacement of knowledge including perspectives of culture and history.

Marcel Cohen, in his book, Language: Its Structure and Evolution, states, “When a [colonial] language expands, it usually encounters other languages that are either stationary or growing; there is then a competition among them and varied results ensue” (Cohen 77). This discussion of language completely disengages the human aspects of violence from the equation. It would seem that Cohen has personified language to the point of an extreme hyperbole, where there is no acknowledgement of human violence that accompanies the competition of languages. Instead, as Cohen defines the struggle, it is a battle between languages and not people.

As it were, this type of discussion represents an ideology that Ramona Fernandez calls “violent literacy,” “a self justifying system in which literacy definitions are used as weapons against those who have the least defenses and resources. The violence of literacy is inherent in that it supports entrenched class systems, one in which those who have the economic advantage are precisely those who have the power to define literacy” (Fernandez 44). Literacy as defined by the colonizer means the written imperial language. In Cohen’s

attempt to divorce, or ignore, this violence he is only perpetuating the myth that those who have been colonized need some sort of saving.

For Cabeza de Vaca, the natives' languages he encounters serve only to further alienate them. Native languages meant little to Cabeza de Vaca as they were only signs to manipulate and conquer. In chapter seventeen, Cabeza de Vaca makes an irrational claim about the significance of one native language over another. "I trusted them because they spoke a different language from that of my Indians" (Cabeza de Vaca 45). Significant, here, is Cabeza de Vaca's ignorance as well as his use of possessive pronouns. Not only does he not understand these new Indigenous peoples, but he pits them against what he calls "my Indians." In using the possessive pronoun "my," Cabeza de Vaca establishes a sense of ownership over the Native Americans that negates their claims to authority and voice.

In chapter seven, Cabeza de Vaca and some of his men take (though the word take does not really do justice to the violence) the village, Apalache, by capturing the women and children, while the men are away. The Spaniards return all but one cacique, and when the native men return "begging" for her (18), "We asked the cacique whom we had retained and of the other Indians with us, who were their neighbors about the land's conditions and settlements, the quality of its people...and many other things" (19). Here, Cabeza de Vaca, is establishing strict distinctions between who belongs to the "us" category. Significant is the role the Native Americans play in supplying directions. The Indigenous people have a working knowledge of the land they live on and live in harmony with, but this knowledge is undermined both by demeaning rhetoric and new imperial/ colonial claims to the land as it will be used for further conquest and control.

Even though Cabeza de Vaca admitted to his lack of understanding of native languages, he persistently reports that through signs he is able to understand the Native Americans. When the expedition first arrives in Florida they immediately, despite noted obvious signs of habitation "several Indian lodges and dwellings," "took possession of the country in Your Royal name" (8-9). Even though there were signs of habitation, the notion of imperial right removes any right the natives had to the land. When Spaniards met with the Indigenous

peoples of the land they have just “possessed,” Cabeza de Vaca notes “although they spoke to us, we had no interpreters and did not understand” (9). Cabeza de Vaca’s rhetoric here draws distinctions between who belongs to the categories of “us” and “we.” Readers become part of the “we,” where Native Americans are disqualified from the category or “us.” However, as careful readers, we might avoid the trap of falling into this “we” category that accepts the rhetoric of colonization Cabeza de Vaca employs. As soon as he acknowledges he does not understand, he follows with a contrary claim, “but they made gestures and threats, and it seemed as if they were telling us to leave the country. With that they left us alone...” (9). Cabeza de Vaca could not see the irony of the situation. Just as he has righteously claimed possession of a land already inhabited, the significance of the “threatening gestures” escapes him, as if to say what right do these heathens have to claim land we have just claimed? Cabeza de Vaca cannot conceive of a context in which the Indigenous peoples would feel threatened and defensive. He cannot allow them the land they already live on as it became property of the King. Cabeza de Vaca’s narrative creates both historical and legal claims to the peoples and places encountered as a form of documentation and support for colonization.

Joanna Bartow, in Subject to Change, asserts that language as a weapon is used both in the deconstructive and constructive senses. She says for her, as an Indigenous person, “Learning to write implied losing Indigenous culture” (63). This quotation exemplifies one way in which language as a weapon to disempower the Indigenous user by way of erasure, but further into her discussion Bartow describes the constructive power of testimony, “...only through revelation of experience [testimony] do their words become weapons in the outside world...” (63). It seems that as long as language can be used to oppress, it will also be needed to resist and defend. In other words, to counter-balance the rhetoric of colonization, we can recognize the testimony of those colonized whether it comes in the form of fiction, poetry, storytelling, or non-fiction, and that can be conceived of as the double edged sword of literacy. It is double edged because just as it is used to oppress and subjugate, it can also be used against colonial powers to (re)write histories. While language

is used to impose control, as the narrative of Cabeza de Vaca imposes law, religion, and history in places that already have such elements, it can also be used as opposition as in the form of Indigenous testimony to reassert Native versions of religion, law, and history.

Ramona Fernandez argues, “Literacy spread as a result of government records validating property ownership and tracking commerce” (40). No value was assigned to Native forms of literacy; instead, documents like Cabeza de Vaca’s narrative were used as evidence of claim to the land. Garth Cook, in “Untangling the Mystery of the Inca,” addresses this invalidation motif:

Incan civilization was a technological marvel. When the Spanish conquistadores arrived in 1532, they found an empire that spanned nearly 3,000 miles, from present day Ecuador to Chile...Yet if centuries of scholarship is to be believed, the Inca, whose rule began 2,000 years after Homer, never figured out how to write. (Cook 49)

Cook goes on to tangle readers’ interest in the Incan Paradox, by examining current research on the Incan khipu. Khipu are a system of strings which expressed meaning across distances for the Incans. Everything could be conveyed in varying string colors and knots from trade logs to personal narratives. The Incans may not have written according to Western notions of orthography, but they had other forms of literacy. Cook notes:

How could the Inca have used strings to write? In a sense any written text is just a record of physical actions. You put a pen to paper and then choose from a prescribed set of options how to move and when to lift up. Each decision is preserved in ink. The same can be done with a string. The writer makes a series of decisions, recorded as a knot that can be read by anyone who knows the rules.(Cook 50)

The above quotation points to many important notions. While the Inca are not representative of all Indigenous peoples, they do represent the possibility of yet other forms

of literacy to be (re)valued. Native American cultures have historically been devalued in the battle between oral versus written culture, but just because explorers could not read what Native Americans were writing they were mistakenly categorized as illiterate. Cook touches on a notion important enough to reiterate. All languages, no matter how they are classified, have strict rules. This means that despite the Spaniards, and later the French and British, ignorance of meaning, Native American languages are as structurally sound as Spanish, French, and English and must be reconceived, re-imagined, and revalued as such.

Most frequently colonizing missions are initially supported by religious rhetoric which is acted out through forced religious conversion. George Herbert writes in “The Church Militant,” “Then shall Religion to American flee: / They have their times of Gospel, even as we. / My God, thou dost prepare for them a way, / by carrying first their gold from them away...We think we rob them, but we think amiss: / We are more poor, and they more rich, by this” (Herbert 185). These lines written in 1633, more than a century after Cabeza de Vaca’s journey to America, accurately describe the European attitude of superiority over Indigenous peoples. Yet, Herbert, unlike Cabeza de Vaca, can identify the irony of the conversion mission; native peoples are not devoid of spirituality, the crux of the colonizing mission, but they were robbed not only of the religious identity they had, but of so much more through the language that supposes authority over people and places by asserting new religion, law, and history.

So words, more specifically in this context, the Word, referring to Christian religious doctrine, not only assumes the righteous role of power, but serves to disempower those deemed non-believers, those illiterate in terms of the Word. It is not only religiously that people are erased, but historically identities are erased by language as well. With the introduction of the power of the Word, Indigenous religious ideals come to be seen as primitive and pagan without the validity of voice to defend those beliefs. It is the belief that non-believers must be saved and converted for their own salvation that drives the personified Word to dominate physically and spiritually. Though on several occasions Cabeza de Vaca is provided for by different tribes, he never acknowledges hospitality or

signs of what might be considered a civilized community. Instead any productive actions or occurrences are either a direct divine intervention, or due because of his assumed religious superiority.

In the narrative of Cabeza de Vaca, he returns to Spain with only his life and memories of the land explored, in 1536. The “gold,” as termed by Herbert, in the mind of Cabeza de Vaca comes in the form of the knowledge of the Americas he claims to recall, a spatial and cultural mapping. The narrative of his expedition serves as a map for future conquest. His narrative reflects the purposes of conquest both conversion and Christianity and land for the empire. With his version of encounters with Indigenous Americans, Cabeza de Vaca not only cemented terms to represent them, but provided survey maps for further colonization in the name of an empire and a God. Cabeza de Vaca offers his narrative to King Philip II of Spain in these terms:

No service is left to me but to bring an account to Your Majesty of the nine years I wandered through many strange lands, lost and naked. In this way you will know and understand the manner of the lands and the provinces in them, what foods and animals grow there, the customs of the many barbarous nations....This account, to my mind, will be of no little counsel to who, in your name, may go to conquer those territories and, collectively, bring them knowledge of the true faith and true lord and service to Your Majesty. (Cabeza de Vaca 4)

From Cabeza de Vaca’s Proema, King Philip II is addressed directly as the “Holy, Imperial, Catholic Majesty,” and the above quotation illustrates the complete displacement of those who already inhabit the lands described and destined for conquest. He offers no gratitude to those Indigenous people who kept him alive after losing his ship and provisions to a storm, because, despite the compassion shown to the Spanish expedition, Indigenous peoples are described as “devoid of reason, uneducated, and so brutish” (33). The authorial intent is clear: the narrative serves to capture knowledge of “the lands...and

barbarous nations” to be used to “conquer...and...bring them knowledge of the true faith.” This rhetoric is enforced by the institution of imperial law and the agency of history as expressed through the narrative of explorers like Cabeza de Vaca. Because this account was recorded and widely disseminated, it serves as both imperial and religious propaganda and an expression of history. Now, the task is to (re)read and (re)value these encounters from the Native perspective.

The people Cabeza de Vaca encounters are always referred to in demeaning terms; now, with the advantage of cultural relativity, or prespectivism, we can re-read and (re)value those things which have been categorized by explorers such as Cabeza de Vaca as pagan or pejoratively different simply because their practices stood outside the confines of Christianity. In only valuing the Christian master narrative, colonizers assigned little or no value to Indigenous myths and traditions. What we can hope to (re)gain from re-reading Cabeza de Vaca’s narrative, then, is an appreciation for cultures and peoples which are fragmented by the narrative of conquest into the bits of information used for control. In other words, the information Cabeza de Vaca relays about Indigenous peoples is not the whole of their story, but from those bits we can begin to see the workings of a bigger picture.

Cabeza de Vaca constantly positions himself in direct opposition to understanding or appreciating Native American traditions because he believed, as a Christian on a holy mission of conversion and conquest, in every way he was superior to the “poor and wretched” natives (25). Lisa Rabin explains the authority imposed by Cabeza de Vaca’s authorship:

...as Cabeza de Vaca relates conversion in colonial texts, the reader’s sight is also redirected, into a strange New World where the Old World paradigms of ‘truth’ and history are challenged by the subjectivity of the story tellerthe self’s horrified encounter with another version of itself in these conquest histories both suspends the narrative and advances it, allegorizing America reborn, as it were, into a new story to be told. (Rabin 44)

To a certain extent I can agree, but what Rabin does not articulate is Cabeza de Vaca’s

subjectivity does not favor the natives of the New World. Instead Cabeza de Vaca seeks to impose “the truth” of the Old World on the New World. I do agree that his text is the story of “America Reborn,” but it is not the story of the peoples of what is called the “New World;” it is the story the “old world” imports to impose upon the “new world,” and yet the “New World” is also an “Old World.”

In a revisionist effort, Todorov states, “A civilization may have features we can say are superior or inferior; but this does not justify their being imposed on others...to impose one’s will on others implies that one does not concede to that other the same humanity one grants to oneself, an implication which precisely characterizes a lower civilization” (Todorov181). Todorov points to the hypocrisy inherent in religious superiority: to elevate one’s own religion is to vilify another’s, defeating the humanism of Christianity. In retrospect, we can see what was lost without the slightest appreciation for anything other than the Christian.

There are several instances throughout the narrative where Cabeza de Vaca fails to see or validate native knowledge. “They said that in that direction, nine days’ march toward the sea was a village called Aute, where the Indians had plenty of corn, beans, and squash, being so near the sea they could get fish, and those Indians were their friends” (Cabeza de Vaca 19). Cabeza de Vaca fails to recognize the knowledge the natives share with him; they know the land, and what it can produce in terms of food, and they know their neighboring tribes. I think it is important to recognize, here, that first these directions needed to be translated, and on top of that we might question Cabeza de Vaca’s reliability as he writes this narrative from memory, a memory which even in his present tense is questionable. In other words, Cabeza de Vaca admits that he does not understand the natives’ language, but he assumes meaning. Furthermore, his narrative was not written throughout the journey but much later, upon his return to Spain almost ten years after the expedition.

Immediately after Cabeza de Vaca hears from the Native Americans captured and held as prisoner-guides that the land to the South, Aute, is not only friendly but abundant in food, Cabeza de Vaca makes this assertion: “Seeing how poor the country was and taking into account the unfavorable reports...” (19). Has he so pre-discerned all Native

Americans that even after acknowledging the guidance and positive reports of those held captive that anything having to do with the Indigenous populations translates into a fixed equation: Christians are good and Native Peoples are bad? It is this mentality of religious superiority that makes it possible for Cabeza de Vaca to justify and rationalize his mission of domination and impossible for him to fully understand and represent things from a native perspective.

In chapters eleven and twelve, we see illustrated the complete lack of appreciation for Indigenous culture and the absolute reliance on divine providence motif. Cabeza de Vaca sends a scout out to survey their surroundings, and they conclude that because there are “hallows” in the ground there must have been cattle. “...cattle had gone over it. He concluded from this that the land belonged to Christians” (31). They automatically connect cattle to Christianity as cattle have been imported by Christian expeditions in the past. Because there were cattle, the land must belong to Christians. Since the land belongs to Christians, without any proof or further consideration for current inhabitants, Cabeza de Vaca sees no crime in taking from local villages. He and his men, because the land is possessed by Christianity and empire, can take and name with no consideration for the present inhabitants. When they are followed by “Indians with bows and arrows,” then they begin to fear for their lives making no connection to the items they have just taken from a nearby Native American camp.

We could not defend ourselves...I stepped forward and called to them. They came, and to save ourselves we tried to calm them down as well as we could, giving them beads and bells. Each one gave me an arrow in token of friendship, and by signs they let us know that on the following morning they would come back with food.... (Cabeza de Vaca 31)

The above quotation is revealing in that it illustrates Cabeza de Vaca's willingness to interpret what he wishes from the “signs” the Native Americans share. I am not questioning the generosity of the Natives, I am questioning Cabeza de Vaca's understanding of the

Native American signs he so easily removes for context. To him the arrows are a sign of friendship, but could they not also be a warning?

In chapter twelve, entitled “How the Indians Brought us Food,” we witness the profound compassion of the Indigenous peoples, when they not only weep for the Spaniards’ misfortunes but also take them into their homes to care for them. Instead of appreciating the help and kindness displayed by the Native Americans, all Cabeza de Vaca can do is criticize their practices. “...they can as they had promised and brought us plenty of fish and some roots they eat...in the evening they returned with more fish...” (32). Even though Cabeza de Vaca cannot understand the native languages he claims that the Indigenous people “had promised” to bring food almost as if they are obligated to serve the Spanish invaders.

Cabeza de Vaca writes “they brought their women and children to look at us. Because of the little bells and beads we had given them, they considered themselves to be very rich...” (32). It seems that while Cabeza de Vaca interprets the Native Americans’ gift of arrows as a sign of friendship, they should not consider the bells and beads from the Spanish to be the same. In other words, while Cabeza de Vaca interprets the arrows as a sign of friendship, the Native Americans, according to him, cannot see that what the Spanish had given them did not mean the same.

As the Native Americans learn of the Spaniards’ misfortunes they weep for them, and Cabeza de Vaca notes “To see beings so devoid of reason, uneducated, so brutish, yet so deeply moved by pity for us, increased my feelings...for our own misfortune” (33). Evident is the complete alienation of the Native Americans; though they feel compassion, according to Cabeza de Vaca’s narrative, it is “devoid of reason.” In the same limited view, Cabeza de Vaca fails to cite the Native Americans as the source of their survival. His interpretation of salvation has nothing to do with food and shelter the Native Americans provide for them.

On several occasions, Cabeza de Vaca acknowledges the spiritual beliefs of those he encounters, but he refuses to assign any validity to their practices. Even if he, too, takes part in what would be deemed pagan, it is always nullified in the face of “the true faith,” Christianity. Todorov adds, “at no moment does he [Cabeza de Vaca] forget his cultural

identity, and this resolution sustains him in the most difficult ordeals...nor does he forget his goal, which is to rejoin his people” (198). If Cabeza de Vaca expresses any sympathy or parallels between religious rituals, he would be undermining the purpose/ rationale for conquest, religious conversion.

In chapter fifteen, “What Happened to Us on the Isle of Misfortune,” Cabeza de Vaca cites a Native American as having spoken, but only through the filter of his own memory, to support the virtue of the Spaniards’ piety. Upon being asked to help cure the sick, Cabeza de Vaca and his men laugh at the prospect, taking the suggestion of the practice of healing as a joke. “[A]n Indian told me...we, who were wiser men, surely had greater power and virtue” (40). He and his men then participate in the practice of healing, not because their food was withheld until they did, but because they were “wiser” Christians. In addition to the native forms of curing they add prayer to the service, and “Thanks to his will and the mercy he had upon us they were cured” (40). Even though Cabeza de Vaca participates in the supposed pagan practices, he maintains his reliance on the positive outcomes as a direct result of a Christian god’s divine intervention. The following passage displays this notion:

Then the natives fell sick from a stomach ailment so that half of them died as well. They believed we had killed them, and were, in fact, certain of it so they agreed among themselves to kill us...But when they came to execute their plan an Indian who had been keeping me told them not to believe we were the cause of the deaths....the best thing to do was to leave us alone. It pleased our Lord they should listen to his advice and counsel and give up their idea. (Cabeza de Vaca 37)

It is most conflicting that Cabeza de Vaca does not cite the Native American who clearly saves them as the source of their avoiding execution; rather, it is the Lord who works through the Native American to save their lives.

Daniel T. Reff asserts “There is no question that Cabeza de Vaca was the product of a

culture that embraced the idea of miracles and supernatural intervention, particularly when it came to the conquest and conversion of gentiles” (Reff 117). In other words, there was no leap of faith for Cabeza de Vaca to believe that he was healing the ailing Indigenous, but that faith was never placed into the native context. It was not through the native practices Cabeza de Vaca employed that they were healed; the healings only occurred as a result of the Christian presence.

On a positive note, there is space still for the rewriting of this depiction of the past. We can counter colonial claims to history, religion, and identity by actively seeking out Indigenous stories that offer what Cabeza de Vaca could not, an alternative perspective. In valuing Indigenous narratives whether they are in the form of testimony, poetry, or fiction, we can begin to reconnect to peoples we were so violently severed from by the language of colonization. Words as weapons cut both ways. Where once language was used to conquer and convert, now it can be used to reclaim and recreate Indigenous identity.

Chapter Two: Language's Roles in Establishing a Context for Reclamation after Colonization

Salman Rushdie argues “peoples who were once colonized by the language [English] are now rapidly remaking it, domesticating it, becoming more and more relaxed about the way they use it—assisted by the English language’s enormous flexibility and size, they are carving out large territories for themselves within its frontiers” (Rushdie 2540). Significant, in Rushdie’s comment, is the recognition that the malleability of the English language allows space for re-imagining meaning, intention, and interpretation of words. In Potiki, Patricia Grace skillfully describes and carves a space for the traditional communal meeting house of the Maori, the Wharenui, something that affords possibilities for its English translations. The narrative itself functions as a linguistic performance of a recovery of identity written in English with the incorporation of Maori Tanga. This text then might be a supplemental history having been recovered both in the story and as a story, but also the fiction lends itself to other possible recoveries. The narrative that Grace has created functions as the articulation of opposition to the colonizing of Maori history, identity, and culture as it may have been misrepresented through colonial texts. However, to fully understand the opportunities Grace’s novel creates we must understand the novel and the symbol of the Wharenui in context. In the process of understanding how language confers meaning, we need to reassess just how important context is in meaning making.

“Semiosis is at the root of understanding,” and further “without context, meaning is obscured and understanding necessarily impeded” argues Ramona Fernandez (61, 53). Without knowledge in and of context, what meaning could we make with language? In the process of retrieving semantic knowledge, some psycholinguists argue, that our brains

access network models where we retrieve how certain words are related from the concept of a word to the physical shapes it may take. In that process, we are limited to our own understandings of words declaratively (definitions) and episodically (associative memories). Yet, in another subfield of linguistics, pragmatics, words' meanings have the potential to change given different social settings. So, semantics (what words mean in relation to one another) can and do change in different pragmatic (differing discourse communities) settings.

We can heed this lesson from linguistics, and learn to incorporate new meanings in different settings. More specifically, we can apply this notion of different meanings in different contexts given the example of Patricia Grace's characterization of a fictional yet representative Maori family, and their struggle against colonization in Potiki. We can begin to see and value the world in a different way by becoming engaged in this narrative's fictional story of the Maori's struggle towards colonization. The language of fiction can be used to create a context where readers are given the opportunity to identify and even become emotionally invested in characters and stories from different cultures. In that imagined space, readers can learn to value other ways of knowing and interacting in and with the world, and we can create a more inclusive context and mapping-space for identity. The maps created by explorers and colonialists can be rewritten.

It must be possible to reclaim through language what has been taken from the colonized by the colonizer. Although, some elements subject to the erasure of empire's colonial legacy can never be recovered, hopefully there is the possibility of "regeneration" in terms of identity through language (Orwell 222). I would argue that through the (re)manipulation of the very tool used for colonization, in this case English, those colonized can reclaim a sense of identity culturally and spatially. What was once used as a tool of dominance, oppression, and erasure can be used reciprocally to reclaim by (re)defining terms in both English and the threatened language, in this case, Maori Tonga. What Patricia Grace has done through the amalgamation of Maori myth, language, and community in the narrative of Potiki centered around characters who experience the clashing of cultures between Western

ideology, personified as “Dollarman,” and a Maori family, illustrates the way in which English and the incorporation of Maori Tonga can be used to preserve, (re)explore, and reclaim identity both in and through story. “Dollarman” is a character that comes to represent the West’s notions of capitalism at any cost. “Dollarman” first tries to bargain with the Maori, but as they refuse his advances for their land, he turns to violence and destruction.

The story of Potiki is told from the perspective of different family members. The family consists of Roimata, Mary, Toko, and Hemi, and their story epitomizes the clash that occurs during colonization as the West descends with promises and lies to take possession of peoples’ places, spaces, identities, histories, and authority. In the case, of the Indigenous Maori of New Zealand, their lands and way of life are threatened by the West’s conflicting notions of capital and importance. This is the story of a family that comes together in strategic ways to protect their way of life and worldview from the encroaching presence of the West. The polyphonic narrative style offers to readers the variation of representation needed to amalgamate a more meaningful context for this story. In other words, Patricia Grace seems to have chosen to tell this familie’s story not from a singular perspective, but from varied characters making the narrative even more poignant and expansive. As with the narrative of Cabeza de Vaca, we will explore this narrative in terms of language and what can be recovered of identity and reasserted with authority of voice and the power to create opposition.

One of the first forms of colonization is the institution of a new language. This means that an existing set of historical documents become null as they are non- representative of the new language’s version of events. In Decolonizing Methodologies, Linda Tuhiwai Smith discusses what writing means in terms of this destructive type of power. “Writing has been viewed as the mark of a superior civilization and other societies have been judged, by this view, to be incapable of thinking critically and objectively...Writing is a part of theorizing and writing is history” (Smith 29). Language, in this sense, not only creates a hierarchical power structure as it invades new territory, but also disqualifies any possibility

the subducted people had to verbally defend themselves as their words become meaningless.

Patricia Grace has shown how, through the language represented in Potiki, identity can be reasserted and reclaimed. The last page and half of the novel are written in Maori Tonga, an obvious exclusion of the non-Maori speaking audience. Up to that point the novel incorporates Maori words and discusses and includes concepts specific to Maori culture. This rhetorical device means more than the exclusion of non-Maoris. Miriam Fuchs describes the narrative strategy of writing entirely in Maori Tonga: “the passage reaffirms the private, nearly inviolate, singularity of a people,” but I would argue that it is more an expression of or re-assertion of identity as separate (Fuchs 182). The closing of the novel written entirely in Maori can be seen as an invitation to enter into a different worldview. Grace’s editor for Potiki, Vilsoni Hereniko, notes that Grace’s symbolic “layering of meaning allows us to appreciate her at our own level, even if we suspect there is much more that we as non-Maori can never fully comprehend, that the key to the Maori storehouse of wisdom is available only to the initiated, or those willing to venture into the realm of the supernatural” (Hereniko 5).

Important to recognize is, yes, readers may be outsiders, but if we are “willing” we can enter into an appreciation of that difference. We are meant to be excluded as non-Maori in the final pages of the novel, but I interpret that as an invitation to learn more to try to understand. If in the rest of the novel there was not enough Maori-Tonga incorporated to begin building a lexicon and context for meaning by the ending, then it is an invitation to learn more. If readers are not interested in learning more then they are welcome to remain as outsiders, but having read the novel at least makes them cognizant of the ramifications of forcing beliefs on Indigenous peoples. If readers learn nothing else, they come away with a story of struggle and triumph, and a new understanding of a different way of life.

Early in the novel we hear from Toko, who also speaks the last, among many other chapters:

Everything we need is here, but for some years we had had little contact with other people as we struggled for our lives and our land. It was good now to

know new people and to feel their strength. It was good to have new skills and new ideas, and to listen to all the new stories told by all the people who came. It was good to have others to tell our stories to, and to have them there sharing our land and our lives. Good had followed what was not good, on the circle of our days. (Grace 145)

Toko, who is said to have a special kind of knowing by his family, articulates the more positive position on sharing land and stories. He argues that it is good to listen to new stories, and it is good that our stories are shared, because in the sharing of stories we begin to understand each other. Even if these stories shared are fictitious or imaginary, according to Kwame Anthony Appiah “it begins with the simple idea that in the human community...we need to develop habits of coexistence: conversation in its older meaning, of living together, association,” and one way of doing just that is by sharing our stories (Appiah xix, 29).

As mentioned earlier, the end of the novel is completely in Maori Tonga, but I do not interpret this so much as mirror of the exclusion colonialism creates, but more of an invitation to learn and appreciate something new and different much the way Toko envisions something “good had followed what was not good.” In other words, the good after the bad might mean that readers are inspired to value Maori views differently from their own through stories shared. Miriam Fuchs argues in “Reading Toward the Indigenous Pacific: Patricia Grace’s Potiki, A Case Study,” that there are two ways to encounter other cultures, either holistically or from a Nativist perspective, and any effort to navigate between these two extremes is problematic (Fuchs 168-9). In response, however, Grace’s narrative does negotiate between these two extremes. As readers of her narrative, we are privy to both inside and outside perspectives of the Maori culture; readers are, I claim above, invited to learn more as Grace purposefully excludes non-Maori. Through the power of story and the sympathy we develop for the storie’s characters, we become inside outsiders. In terms of a holistic view of the culture we are still outsiders, but we have learned enough through this one story to want to learn and appreciate more of the Maori culture. Additionally,

as outsiders and non native Maori speakers we cannot enter into the Nativist perspective. Grace's narrative can be conceived of as the space imagined between these two extreme approaches to different cultures where readers are invited to care for and appreciate new ways of knowing and living. Readers may remain excluded given the language barrier, or if they are "willing" as Vilsoni Hereniko suggests, they can begin to learn about the Maori beyond the language.

In Grace's fictional representation of the Maori, their history is displayed in the carvings on the Wharenui as well as by the perpetuation of their own stories, and this building serves as a pivotal rhetorical device. The Wharenui represents a physical meeting place for the community, but it also represents Maori culture, history, and identity. The privileging of written culture by Western thought leaves the Maori without a validated history as it is carved and spoken instead of written in a format that matches Western concepts of documentation. There is hope, however, the Maori can use the written word, in the story in the form of letter writing to expose duplicitous claims to their land as well as reclaim it, and in the process of bearing witness to Maori stories readers also participate in an imagined space where culture, identity, and history can be reclaimed and shared. In the form of letter writing, Rupena, an elder in the Maori community, uses a tool of the colonizer, written English, to resist and reclaim land and identity. His letters become legal papers as they document the complaints of the Maori as their land is unlawfully claimed by Dollarman and his construction crews. Grace uses English to share this one story with readers that begs them to invest more effort to share that imagined space.

In the story of Potiki, even the linguistic displacement of the Maori is not enough, as Dollarman resorts to physical violence to try and remove the people from their land, when they burn down the Wharenui. Hemi, the father of the family, thinks to himself: "There had been requests of the family to sell the land...and some pressure to open up a road along the beach. They were resisted Things were stirring, to the extent of people fighting to hold on to a language that was in danger of being lost, and to the extent of people struggling to regain land..."(Grace 60). As it were, this type of discussion represents an ideology

we have already applied to Cabeza de Vaca's narrative, "violent literacy," (Fernandez 44) and in Potiki this violence moves from the realm of the abstract to the physical world as the Wharenui, which represents Maori knowledge, history, and culture is destroyed by Dollarman. Dollarman, symbolizing the imperial push for controlling the people and their resources, decides that this specific Maori tribe resides on the exact spot needed to create a resort for Westerners. At one point, the Maori community invites Dollarman for a community discussion of the land purchase proposal, and after explaining why they do not wish to sell their land the discussion comes to a boiling point. Dollarman asserts "We need this corner [of land] or the whole thing could fall through." The Maori respond "We give it to you and we fall through" (Grace 95). As a result the family must move or be forcefully moved; unfortunately, not a stretch of imagination considering the ways that Native Americans were similarly dealt with by colonizers.

In Potiki, the Maori children learn from western schooling and the media that their history does not match that of the encroaching West, so they make the choice to write their own history mirroring what Grace is doing as both metaphorical Wharanui carver and storyteller. Hemi explains the conflict:

In this day they were expected to hide things, to pretend they weren't what they were. It is funny how people see each other. Funny how you came to see yourself in the mold others put you in, and how you began not to believe in yourself....Well our ancestors had been rubbished in schools, and in books, and everywhere. So were our customs, so was our language. Still we were rubbished to...Rubbished or ignored. And if those things were rubbished then it was an attack on you, on a whole people. You could get weak under the attack, but then again you could become strong. (Grace 65)

In essence, the narrative represents the melding of the traditional mediums of conveying Maori history, the Wharenui, and the orality of storytelling, within a new and adapted element in and through English narrative. To Hemi the conflict is clear, the colonizer will

try to put them down through various means, and they can either break under the pressure or “become strong” and hold to what they know.

Wharenuī, being a Maori word, must be translated into English, but instead of nullifying its meaning because of translation, Grace makes space mentally and physically through the adaptability of English. It means for the Maori, as it comes to mean for a non-native audience, community, a link to the physical landscape, spirituality, and historical and cultural identity. Grace makes the choice to incorporate Maori into English; a process Ngugi wa Thiong’o might argue is devaluing the culture. He argues that English as the language of the colonizer was moving those the language had been forced upon “further and further from ourselves to other selves, from our world to other worlds” (Thiong’o 2539). I would argue that Grace is not devaluing the Maori culture by exploring it in English, but instead sharing it with an audience who could not learn to appreciate it otherwise. Furthermore, there are words and entire passages that Grace does not translate. The Wharenuī might be explained in English, but its meaning remains a distinct cultural marker for the Maori. Because there is no direct translation, readers are forced to incorporate Maori ideals into their own vocabularies, creating a new context for the sharing of cultures. Where, at the closing of the novel readers can choose to continue learning about the Maori by endeavoring to learn the meaning of the passage that is not in English if they are “willing.”

It seems that there is an idealistic divide, however, between Western concepts and values and those of the Maori. John Patterson explains the rift between the Maori and Pakeha (white people) in the ways we conceive of and act out success by mapping the ways in which the word and idea of “mana” is translated. From a capitalistic Western view, goals are set and achieved as individuals, but for the Maori goals are set and achieved as a community. Patterson asserts two lessons: “the first lesson is that we cannot expect that the English-language idea of *mana* will be exactly the same as the Maori idea...The second lesson is that although the word *mana* is Maori, the idea commonly expressed by the word can be applied in other cultures” (Patterson 299). While we cannot simply and completely translate the word or concept into English we can learn to integrate and imagine

new ideas. Patterson notes the differing English and Maori definitions of the word. English dictionaries define the words as “‘authority, prestige, or influence’ and ‘...supernatural or magical power.’” “Maori dictionaries list a richer range of meanings: ‘authority, control; influence, prestige, power; psychic force; effectual, binding, authoritative; having influence or power; vested with effective authority...’”(Patterson 229).

Patterson distinguishes between two paths of achieving mana, both the yin and the yang. He combines the Maori and the Chinese because he believes that the concepts are complementary and overlapping and because the West is familiar with the yin and yang. The yin mana is achieved by “focusing on and moving toward common goals and common good” (236), where the yang mana is achieved through force and individualistic efforts. “If we focus on the yang mana, that an individual can achieve through winning in competitive activity, we may lose sight of other important goods, such as the yang mana that comes from contributing to the welfare of others” (238). In other words, by sharing new cultural ideas we can gain not just personally but as communities. In addition to lexical additions, we might also share in these new concepts.

The description and the inclusion of this traditional Maori community-structure, the Wharenui, points to several aspects important for this present discussion: One, the English language is used to describe something outside its linguistic and conceptual bounds. As non-native Maori speakers, we are forced to try to interpret and translate a foreign word and symbol, where-as a text and narrative, describing and exploring images expressed in language, the audience experiences a rebuilding of the Wharenui and a reclaiming of that physical and spiritual space. While at the same time the audience feels hopeful as the tribe regains land and identity, we are also meant to feel excluded, when we do not understand the language. This may be a way for Grace to illustrate how it feels for a culture to be threatened by an imposing language. Second, the physical place described represents the divide between oral and written cultures, the Western representation of history and the privileging of written English comes face to face with alternative forms of knowledge. Third, the symbol of the Wharenui works as a plot device that plays nicely into this discussion of

reclaiming possibility, because the Wharenui is symbolically and physically lost and then rebuilt. The Maori people, at the onset of the novel, have strayed from each other and their traditional beliefs, but when faced with the prospect of losing what they have forgotten to value, each other, as is symbolized in the Wharenui the traditional meeting place, they come together again to (re)value their community identity.

The Wharenui represents language, history, culture, community, space, and identity all of which are destroyed or disrupted by the encroaching Pakeha (white people), in this story symbolized by Dollarman, who will find a way to disenfranchise the Maori even if through deception and dastardly deeds. The meeting house as a symbol gives a people, through the characters described in the narrative, the validity of recorded history. Though, not in any institutionally ascribed way, instead the Wharenui through visual and literary representations of symbols created from and representing natural elements and in the carvings in the wood which makes up the Wharenui and the story Grace tells to describe it. History and myth are embedded and expressed in a physical space, as they are carved into the wood of the Wharenui, which are possessed and destroyed by an imperial and economic design.

Dollarman finds a way to devoid the Maori of their history and voice as it stands in the way physically and figuratively of Western dominance, so it is burned down. If the West recognizes the validity of the Maori's representation of history through the Wharenui, then their argument for presence and possession is negated. In other words, to allow the Maori a legitimated past without written documentation is to forgo any documented legal claims to the land. The Maori must fight fire with fire, English with English. It is in the redefining of the intentions of English that the Maori are free to continue writing their story. Both Grace and Rupena use English to fight back against Dollarman. Grace exposes colonial efforts in the novel, just as Rupena uses his letters to document the oppression and stripping of land by the Pakeha of the Maori. While these creations are imaginary, they still serve to offer an alternative to the narratives created through colonization. Further they illustrate the power of imagination through story to create links across and between cultures and

languages.

While expressing the quieted suppression of a people Grace's ultimate message is optimistic. There is history yet to be written as the prologue illustrates: "there is a part that is yet unknown. There is no one yet who can complete it that must be done at a future time. When it is known it will be done" (Grace 10). That there is still carving to be done implies possibility for change, change in the ways we treat each other as cultures, nations, and global neighbors. Grace as a parallel carver explores possibility through the story of this Wharenui and challenges the future to reclaim and recreate a past. The basic plot structure revolves around a family who experiences loss and recovery in several senses. The narrative frame provides some insight into the dilemma of lost identity. The prologue tells the story of a great carver, who records history, culture, and identity in the creation of the Wharenui, much like Grace in her creation of the narrative. The narrative ends cyclically where it began with the engraving of the Wharenui. It works as a central symbol to represent what was lost and what can be regained. Further, the cyclical style also says something of the Maori belief of time: "and this train of stories defined our lives, curving out from points on the spiral ever-widening circles from which neither beginnings nor endings could be defined" (Grace 41). In essence, the Maori concept of time, like the story of Potiki, is cyclical. There is no beginning and there is no end, only a continuing spiral:

There was no past or future, that all time is a now-time, centered in the being and this now time simply reaches out in any direction towards the outer circles, these outer circles named 'past' and 'future' only for our convenience. The being reaches out to grasp those adornments that become part of the self. So the 'now' is a giving and a receiving between the inner and outer reaches, but the enormous difficulty is to achieve refinement in reciprocity, because the wheel, the spiral, is balanced so exquisitely. These are the things I came to realize as we told and retold our own centre stories. (Grace 39)

This notion of time and story become central themes for these characters ability to

regain the rights to their own voice and authorship.

The characters, which move the narrative along, also play central roles in personifying culture, history, and identity. Hemi signifies the tribe's traditional and future ties to the land. As capitalism makes its way into the Maori way of life, members begin to leave the traditional ways of working the land behind to support their growing families. When jobs become scarce, Hemi reflects on the knowledge given to him by the elders and makes a sort of mental list of what is still important. "Then apart from the land and sea, apart from the survival things, there were their songs and their stories. There was their language. There would be more opportunity now to make sure that they, the older ones, handed on what they knew" (Grace 65).

It is significant that Hemi recognizes the importance of the land that supports them physically, or will again, as well supplying the workings of Maori myths. Similarly, Roimata, even though she has been away and educated by Western institutions, returns to recognize traditional myth inscribed in nature as she remembers "Tawhiri Matea who dwells forever between Earth and Sky" as is symbolized by and in the Wharenui (23). It is also important to note how the children are educated in the face of Western knowledge that threatens to "rubbish" their own values, history, and culture (74). Roimata and Hemi's children quickly decide that school is not where they are going to learn anything of value. The mantra becomes "everything we need is here" (69). That "everything" includes that land, the community, and their stories, which represent culture, history, and identity.

In school, the children recognize that their history and culture have been erased and polluted by Western versions of history and knowledge, what we have noted Gayatri Spivak calls "epistemic violence" (Spivak 799). They learn that they are the keepers of their own stories. Storytelling also becomes a central theme and device in the narrative, which represents the clash between written and oral cultures and the struggle for authorship and validity. The preserving of stories, through the Wharenui and retellings, is just as important as building upon them. The Maori concept of time indicates that it is just as important for story-tellers to create new stories as it is to preserve those from the past,

because there is no past or future only the present (Grace 39). The text becomes a symbol of retaining identity through language, as if to combat the Western perspective displacing an entire people for profit. The rebuilding of the meeting house symbolizes the notion of reclamation.

Andrea Greenbaum, in “‘Bitch’ Pedagogy: Agonistic Discourse and the Politics of Resistance,” discusses the idea of re-claiming, or re-imagining words. She asserts that reclaiming words can be “a form of social resistance, an attempt to strip the word, demystify it, displace its hegemonic power by co-opting the term and claiming it as women’s own” (Greenbaum 152). In her specific context, Greenbaum is referring to the way in which women might reclaim and empower the once pejoratively used word “bitch,” and she notes that similarly African American people have re-imagined the n-word, just as gay people have the word “queer.” If we can become conscious users, everyday language may take on new constructive meanings just as Greenbaum re-appropriates the word bitch. This reclaiming for the Maori, in Grace’s narrative, comes in the form of storytelling both in and as a text. They knew that their stories were nullified by Western knowledge and language and that “they did not have anything that belonged to them any more except they had each other...and they had their stories. Also they had an old man called Rupena who wrote letters” (Grace 73). It is through the re-imagining of English as a tool for communication that leads to the reclamation of land and identity in the story of Potiki.

Rupena’s letters are “a part of the old story,” meaning they belong to the familiar theme of the privileging of written language to devoid an oral culture of meaning. Yet, by no small effort on Rupena’s part the process of land claiming and reclaiming is documented in a format the West must recognize, conventional letters written in plain English. It is the ability of the Maori to keep adding to the story that in the end, or the beginning according to Maori concepts of time, makes it possible for recovery of land, community and identity. As Rupena’s letters are written in a format the invaders clearly recognize, they become quasi-legal claims to land and identity. It is not enough for the Maori to remember their version of events, it must be written in a format that the West can negotiate. The West

does not recognize that the evidence of claim to the land is represented in the Wharenui or in oral stories. The advantage that lends to the recovery of land and identity is the Maori's ability to adapt and continue their story in a different form, English.

Stephen Brown describes a process in which those who have been colonized might, through language, reclaim reality. He argues "To recover the world they must first recover the word" (Brown 67). Brown optimistically asserts:

Words, signification, representation when restored to the native are what allow him or her to escape this nightmarish no-man's land of nonexistence, in which they are formed, reformed and deformed as objects to be acted upon, unless and until they can affect their liberation through signification, radically reconstitute themselves as subjects, reclaim their World with the Word, and reestablish the harmony between native signs and the things they signify, between their language and their lived reality. Only then might their alienation give way to reconnection, their disintegration to regeneration, their dismemberment to re-memberment. (Brown 68)

In this way, Grace actualizes Brown's theory of reclamation as they continuously use traditional Maori names of locations instead of the names the colonizers imposed. The mere incorporation of Maori Tonga into an English context constitutes a reaffirmation of identity.

It is not enough for the Maori to have their history represented through the Wharenui and oral story. The Maori must use the tool of the colonizer to resist occupation. As Rushdie indicates, English can be used to combat erasure. Rupena's letters start a trend of resistance for the Maori, to follow and Grace's narrative represents this continued resistance. Given the adaptability of the continuing stories of the Maori there is room for incorporation of new elements, English, leading to recovery. Through the use of English, Grace conveys the struggle for identity locally as we sympathize with the fictional family and figuratively as we come to regard their struggle as emblematic of real historical erasure and colonization.

In this portrayal of the Maori, Grace restores history, culture, and physical being through the rebuilding of the Wharenui and the expulsion of Dollarman. Brown claims the recovery of the word will lead to the recovery of the identity. Grace mindfully incorporates Maori Tonga to differentiate an identity distinctly separate from the Western perspective.

By incorporating a language without translation Grace risks losing an audience that will not understand, but the narrative is so compelling that the ignorant Western audience wants to learn this Maori story. A complete reversal from Rupena having to learn and know English to resist, through the letter writing, we, the audience, are in no danger of epistemic erasure, yet we want to identify meaning in a foreign tongue. Through the use of English as a medium for narrative conveyance, Grace incorporates terms specific to the Maori language and creates a context for meaning within the narrative, teaching the reader to appreciate and understand something different.

Rob Wilson and Arif Dirlik provide further support for the argument that identity can be reclaimed through the (re)manipulation of English. They argue that “Serving as the main medium of interethnic and intraregional linkages and communication across the region, this English, paradoxically enough, can function as a tool to cut across...and challenge...colonization” (10). Grace does just that through her narrative, just as Rupena does in his letters. I would argue, however, that Grace is going beyond simply resisting colonization, she is reclaiming and defining for a Western audience what is worth recovering. Through the language of the narrative Grace provides, we learn about traditions of the Maori people, physical traditions that connect them to the land, and spiritual traditions that connect a community to the past and future.

As Orwell argues, “regeneration” is possible if we are willing to step out of our comfort zones and experience other perspectives. As discussed earlier, Orwell advocates that users more consciously apply their own usages in the hope of more honest and clear communication. As Orwell asserts, we might all become more cognizant users of rhetoric if we learn to identify language in our own lives more consciously and use it more productively by avoiding colloquial or institutionally indoctrinated phrases.

In this way, by re-imagining English, Rupena, Toko, and Grace are able to reconstruct English as a tool of resistance instead of supporting for entrenched hierarchies they challenge our perspectives and broaden our mental lexicons to include Maori concepts. As readers, we learn to reassess the privilege allotted to written language as we learn to incorporate new Maori terms and values into our vocabularies and mentalities. We may have to define Wharenuī with English, but it is that definition that offers hope for re-establishing identity, physically as in reclaiming land, and culturally both historically and spiritually. There is more to English than colonial ideology when “regenerated” it can create understanding and appreciation of difference.

Further, what Grace does is build a context to help readers begin to know something of a Maori perspective. The story of Potiki serves to educate non-Maori readers about themes central to their beliefs. In that construction of context, Grace allows readers to more fully involve themselves in a culture not their own. As the representation is dynamic in terms of themes and speakers, Grace begins to create a context for readers to place budding notions of Maori culture in. Readers are still outsiders to the culture, but, unlike the exploration narrative of writers like Cabeza de Vaca, now there is a context for native symbols where they might come to mean more than colonial control. Through the story of Potiki, Grace has restored the power to define identity, history, and culture to and from a Maori perspective, and she has invited non-natives to appreciate Maori culture by sharing in the losses caused by colonization, and sharing in the hope for a better future through the redefinition of English as it is used from the Maori perspective. It is possible as illustrated in Potiki to use English to redefine itself, by creating space to delineate the context for new concepts through English, imagination, story.

Chapter Three: Recycling and Reapplying the Rhetoric of Control Through Rhetorical Resistance

This chapter illustrates the more positive power of language by offering a linguistically and literarily crafted perspective that counters the continued invalidation of Indigenous populations and their world views, through the process of recycling imperial and colonial rhetoric. The language of Autobiography of My Mother by Jamaica Kincaid, and Things Fall Apart by Chinua Achebe, describes the experiences of those being oppressed by a colonial presence and its rhetoric in different parts of the world, and it offers a creative space where a sense of authority and voice, even if in the language of the colonizer, can be (re)articulated, helping to restore a sense of cultural and historical context for those who have been, and are, decontextualized by the processes of colonization. We might regain what has been intentionally omitted and fragmented from historical recollections, because as Howell and Prevenier remind us “history is: the stories we tell about our prior selves or that others tell about us. In writing stories, however, historians do not discover a past as much as they create it; they choose the events and people they think constitute the past, and they decide what about them is important to know” (Howell 1). It is important to consider histories written by those consumed by colonialism to allow them the opportunity to tell their own stories.

“In a world of limited access to communicative channels, scarce resources, and disparate power relations, there are many silences and elisions, and we need representatives” asserts Marouf Hasian Jr. The literature discussed in this chapter might function as representations of those silences. However, I am not mistaking these novels for the voices speaking for all Africans or Caribbeans. Instead of viewing these fictions as representative of entire cultures,

they come to signify the trauma of colonization that Aurora Levins Morales argues needs to be revisited for political changes to take place. While some literary critics might shy from the responsibility of politics, we might remember Orwell insisting that all language is political. Sallie A. Marston argues that

language as discourse constitutes an active social category; a material practice that is important element of the interaction between agents and the social structure. Furthermore, this discourse is historical-geographical in that it emerged as a response to, and a negotiation of, the distribution of opportunities and constraints in a particular time and place. (Marston 436)

Fictions as both language and discourse, according to Marston, are active social and political agents. If we keep this in mind while we read postcolonial fictions, we might internalize and perpetuate a rhetoric and also opposes colonization past and present.

In the last chapter, we discussed that Salman Rushdie argues that the very language once used for the purposes of control and manipulation can be recycled to creatively articulate spaces for new, old, changing, and different identities (Rushdie 2540). This chapter will focus on examining specific narratives that exemplify Rushdie's notion of creating new spaces through the very tool used for colonization, English. Important to note, though, is that not all colonizers use English as the colonizing language as there are many colonizing nations with different languages. As mentioned earlier, it does not necessarily matter what language the colonizer speaks, the goals are the same. English is only one of the many languages used as a tool for colonization.

The peoples forced into an imperial language have new and explicit knowledge of the imposed language as they are forced to abandon native languages for the language of the colonizer. Shaligram Shukla and Jeff Connor-Linton argue that

Sometimes the speakers of one language conquer the speakers of another and impose the conquering language for a time. Members of the conquered speech community are motivated to use the language of the conquerors to gain access

to social resources (power, wealth, education etc.) which are controlled by the conquerors. Over time, the conqueror's words supplement or replace the corresponding words in the conquered language. (Shukla 278)

I would add to the "power, wealth and education" that conquered accesses through the language of the conqueror the ability to communicate understanding across the gap between the colonizer and the colonized. The explicit knowledge of the forcibly learned-language gives speakers an advantage beyond the tacit knowledge of the language's native speakers and the ability to reform and transform its capabilities to reuse it to create new meanings and structures. In that "power" category, then, appears the power to use the conqueror's language to resist the conqueror by creating narrative alternatives. Given the limitless capacities of language, as syntactically there are an infinite number of possible sentences and lexically and pragmatically any one word can mean several things in different contexts, there is this optimistic opportunity for anyone who uses the language of a conqueror to create new meanings and redefine old contexts.

The fictional depictions represented in this chapter, Autobiography of My Mother and Things Fall Apart, show how the English language can be used to re-contextualize the past to hopefully redefine the present and future. What we learn of identity through this recycling of rhetoric, we can incorporate into our everyday perceptions and uses of language. We can all become rhetorical activists and use language more responsibly, because through language it is possible to create political action and change. This chapter will analyze and explore fictions that make it possible to re-imagine the past and our personal relations to the present and future. By revisiting the history of colonization Aurora Levins Morales argues there are

medicinal uses, in the power of history to provide those healing stories that can restore humanity to the traumatized. use history not so much to document the past as to restore to the dehistoricized a sense of identity and possibility Such medicinal histories seek to re-establish the connections between peoples

and their histories, to reveal the mechanisms of power, but also to reveal the multiplicity, creativity and persistence of resistance among the oppressed. (Morales 24-5)

Revisiting the trauma of colonization, in Morales' view, is necessary to resistance. For rhetorical activism this means engaging in texts that create awareness.

In the novel The Autobiography of My Mother, by Jamaica Kincaid, the main character, Xuela, grows from a young girl to a mature woman in a postcolonial environment, and all the while she is searching for a connection to the mother she can only imagine. Her mother dies in the novel before she ever has a chance to know her. As she tries to conjure a story for her mother, she imagines her parents meeting:

A fateful meeting between conqueror and vanquished, sorrow and despair, vanity and humiliation; it was only itself, an untroubled fact: she was of the Carib people. He would not have asked, Who are the Carib people? More accurately, who were the Carib people? for they are no more, they were extinct, a few hundred of them still living, my mother had been one of them, they were the last survivors. They were like living fossils, they belonged in a museum, on a shelf, enclosed in a glass case. That these people, my mother's people, were balanced precariously on the ledge of eternity, waiting to be swallowed up in the great yawn of nothingness, was without a doubt, but the bitter part was that it was through no fault of their own that they had lost, and lost in the most extreme way; they had lost not just the right to be themselves, they had lost themselves. This was my mother. (Kincaid 197-8)

This excerpt accomplishes several things that I think are important for our discussion. It creates feelings for both sides, the conquered and the conqueror, "sorrow and despair, vanity and humiliation" making colonial and postcolonial events more personal so that readers might even feel sympathetic as they engage with the narrative and characters. Sympathy in exploration and colonial writings from the perspective of the colonizer makes

it a point to avoid identifying with the colonized, as we saw with the narrative of Cabeza de Vaca; otherwise, the mission might be void, if the colonizing mission is undermined with sympathy that might lead to understanding and the admission that there are similarities between colonizer and colonized defeats the purpose of colonization. There was no want to understand the peoples targeted for conversion, only the desire to convert and control.

Second, the above passage almost effortlessly identifies the cold calculation of historical perspective as it once exclusively belonged to the colonizer as “untroubled fact.” This excerpt simultaneously critiques colonial rhetoric and recycles it to meet new ends. While Kincaid has Xuela imagine the setting of her parents meeting, she illustrates through metaphor the meeting of colonized and colonizer, while at the same time criticizing and recycling the rhetoric to create sympathy and understanding. While Xuela notes her mother’s people were both lost and had lost themselves, she is also finding them and recreating them through imagination and rhetoric as if the history Xuela creates posits the authority to validate her, be it imagined, people’s history creating a new and alternative history countering colonial recollections.

Imagination is central to stories’ creation and survival. Linda Tuhiwai Smith notes “Imagination enables people to rise above their circumstances, to dream new visions and to hold on to old ones...Throughout the period of colonization Indigenous peoples survived because of their imaginative spirit, their ability to adapt and to think around a problem” (Smith 158). One of the ways that imagination is expressed is through stories that embody Indigenous myth, culture, and identity. One way to counter colonial and imperial rhetoric, then, is to use story to keep Indigenous peoples alive much like Xuela does for her mother, and her mother’s people who were lost, but then found again in her story.

The very title of Kincaid’s novel draws readers’ attention to the importance of the critical and active analysis of language. Linguistically the title, The Autobiography of My Mother, carries within it a number of implications: First, the possessive pronoun “my” is assertion of ownership that lends authority to the recounting of history. The utterance and noun phrase, “My Mother,” negates any other claim to defining her life story and possession

over that articulation. The very mention of “Autobiography” leads readers to interpret that this mother’s life must be defined through reflection and analysis, as there is no other way to create autobiography.

The title of the novel is at once a metaphor for the task of redefining history through reflection and analysis just as it exemplifies that one’s history can easily be defined by an outsider. Xuela wishes to know her mother, so she makes assertions about who she might have been, much like readers of colonial history are forced to piece together the decontextualized fragments left of Indigenous peoples and places. Furthermore, the title serves to highlight the dual nature of literacy, words as weapons, as it can be both a tool for imperial control and a tool to actively resist that control depending upon the speaker and audience. In other words, the intentions of the speaker will lead the audience to certain conclusions. Whether each linguistic use is positive or negative depends on the reader, which is why it is crucial that readers ask themselves questions that create context beyond the literal text.

There is to a certain extent some debate about the function of Indigenous populations using the imperial language. Franz Fanon argues, “The colonised begins to see the language of the coloniser as a means of enlightenment and social progress” (quoted in Mazrui 357). Because according to Fanon, “a man who has a language consequently possesses the world expressed and implied by that language” (Fanon 18). In other words, when Indigenous peoples use English it means that they have internalized the imperial culture and were in turn becoming part of it. I would argue, however, as I have, that English is large enough and flexible enough to encompass and allow for differing definitions. In other words, as Rushdie argues, English does not belong solely to the English anymore.

In the spirit of resistance and imagination, Xuela continuously refuses to conform to the imposition of imperial conventions. It is in her imagining that we see the full potential of language to remake the past and future as Xuela creates a portrait of the mother she so desperately wishes to know and love. Her agonizing search to piece together a picture of her mother is a metaphor for the process of recreating a context from the fragments left

after colonization for all Indigenous populations. I am not reducing the differing detriments of colonization of all peoples to a single experience; I am only highlighting the similarity of fragmentation that imperial conquest causes. Xuela's mother's absence, and the search for her, symbolizes the Indigenous desire to reconnect to cultural identity and the possibility of regaining context and the authority to define it.

For Indigenous writers, fiction has the power to re-establish context, but further it has authority of voice to assert history and identity from the perspective of the colonized. Within the vast creative space language and imagination allow, there is room for new and re-contextualization of not just history but present and changing identities. Neither language nor culture is stagnant, but they are ever evolving and changing to meet the needs of new generations coming into authority. Now, one might argue that fiction is but a very minimal retribution for the high costs and losses of colonization for Indigenous peoples. I am not arguing that fiction is the only way to (re) articulate identity, culture, and history, but it is just one creative space and imagined and imaginative space where such opposition through story is possible. If we can begin to know each other through stories, it is just one way of beginning to sympathize and even empathize with speakers and cultures we may not know. We can begin to (re)contextualize what has been purposefully decontextualized. Fiction may be the first step in a process of (re)iterating identity.

This novel highlights the inescapable importance of context. Xuela thinks to herself as a young girl attending English schools in reference to learning British History, "it did not then have meaning, it did not have context, I did not know the history of events, I did not know their antecedents" (Kincaid 15). The importance of context goes beyond the inclusion of singular world views. We must consider "not just the content of the text, but its author issuer, the publisher and its institutional location, the audience, and the immediate (political, social, economical) context of its original publication" (Howell 33). In the cases of historical, social, and cultural representations, context goes beyond a semiotic and pragmatic ontology that creates the associative meanings of a given text; it also encompasses communicative questions readers should ask of any text who wrote this,

why was this written, when was this written, what does the when have to do with the why, and how do these questions help readers to more actively interpret texts? In other words, Kincaid is alluding, through the character of Xuela, to the idea that there is meaning to be made beyond the literal interpretation of any text.

Even as a young girl, Xuela knows that one educational perspective cannot elucidate meaning beyond one political agenda, and in this case like in many of the cases of the English education of Indigenous peoples, the educational goals are to invalidate perspectives of history, knowledge, and identity that differ from that of the English. Alamin Mazrui states,

In short the coloniser continuously seeks to dehumanise the colonised in his quest for political legitimacy and hegemonic status. Colonial education and the Christian missionary enterprise become the main agents of perpetuating the racist images of the 'native'. Both these exercises were intended to evaluate the culture of the coloniser and debase the culture of the colonised. (Mazrui 357)

It becomes the task of the concerned rhetorical activist to read between the lines produced by imperial institutions to (re)validate the less heard voice of the colonized. Furthermore, because Indigenous opposition comes in the form of English it does not make it any less of a counter story.

Even at a young age, Xuela knows she is being indoctrinated with beliefs that are not her own; she notes how the imperialistic education of Indigenous populations contributes to contextual control both spatially and linguistically. She recalls learning to read in English "at the top of the map were the words 'the British Empire' and these were the first words I learned to read" (14). This selection is important because it highlights the way that language is used for control of more than just historical education/ erasure. In this quotation, Xuela learns to read in a foreign language, and the authority she may have had over her own physical location and native language are both denied and rewritten. The map signifies the loss of control over both physical and mental space, yet the fictional depiction

draws attention to that very issue, thereby creating a new space and sense of control over the perpetuation of such imperial indoctrination. The map Xuela is made to read inculcates her with both linguistic and geographic imperial information. Yet, Xuela's depiction of an English education directs readers' attention to this violent linguistic and spatial claim to authority, where readers can make an active choice to redefine their interpretations of historical claims to space and control.

Another linguistic aspect Xuela draws readers' attention to is the expressed denial of her native language in favor of the conquering language. She notes, "We spoke English in school-proper English, not patois- among ourselves, we spoke French patois, a language that was not considered proper at all..." (Kincaid 16). This quotation highlights a few aspects of language-control worth noting. First, it draws attention to the fact that another colonizing language, French, had previously displaced any native language, and even another colonizing language is considered by the English to be improper. Yet, Xuela, continues to resist the apathy of hegemony by refusing to conform to the imposed linguistic codes. She notes that away from the watchful imperial English instruction, she and her peers speak in the language they feel more comfortable using, thereby exerting, to a degree, some control over their language and identity. This passage serves to continue the spirit of willful resistance that embodies the notion of rhetorical activism. Xuela and her peers refuse to let English invade every aspect of their existence by still speaking the language they feel more comfortable in outside the confines of the English educational institution.

Continuously Kincaid highlights the positive and negative powers of language, the weapon that cuts both ways. Through Xuela's postcolonial experience, readers are offered a look at imperialism from a postcolonial perspective, and through that experience readers are given the opportunity to (re)define history and context anew. I think some of the major themes to note for the purposes of this study of language are the linguistic displacement of Indigenous knowledge including authoritative claims to history, religion, and law. At the one extreme, through educational indoctrination, readers view the negative associations with language, as Xuela is taught "my teacher said...my words are a lie" (Kincaid 21).

This quotation exemplifies the imperialistic nullification of Indigenous perspective through language. Xuela's words and what they mean are literally negated by the imposition of an English education and colonial rhetoric.

Homi K. Bhabha recalls key instances of colonial English education by drawing attention to Thomas Macaulay's "Minute on Education." Bhabha highlights Macaulay's argument for educating Indigenous peoples is 'to form a body of well instructed laborers, competent in their proficiency in English to act as Teachers, Translators, and Compilers of useful works for the masses of the people.' Education, in this view, is not a tool of liberation, but instead a tethering of Indigenous people's perspectives to self-justifying mechanisms of colonizing institutions. In other words, education, like and through language, is used as a weapon to indoctrinate the colonized with the perspectives of the colonizer. Bhabha points readers to another telling passage about the meaning and use of education in colonized countries. He quotes from "a correspondent of the Church Missionary Society" who writes to London from Tranquebar

The principal method of teaching them the English language would be by giving them English phrases and sentences, with a translation for them to commit to memory....They would in short become part of the mission; and though first put into the school from worldly motives alone, should any of them be converted, accustomed as they are to the language, manners and climate of the country, they might soon be prepared for a great usefulness in the cause of religion. In this way the heathens themselves might be made the instruments of pulling down their own religion, and of erecting in its ruin the standards of the Cross.
(quoted in Bhabha 1170)

Those educated in English were to become the bringers of their own conversion from "heathen" to controlled subjects. There is no mistaking the purposes of English educational institutions in colonized places. Education meant teaching the colonized to internalize and perpetuate colonization. We see this motif as illustrated in Xuela's musings on her

education.

Where at the other extreme, readers are directed to the empowering possibilities of language, Xuela notes how the use of language can change things for the better. She says

I had through the use of some words, changed my situation, I had perhaps even saved my life. To speak of my own situation, to myself or to others, is something I would always do thereafter. It was in this way I came to be so conscious of myself, so interested in my own needs, so interested in fulfilling them, aware of my grievances, aware of my pleasure. From this unfocused, childish expression of pain, my life changed and I took note of it. (Kincaid 22)

At this point in the novel, she is still a young girl and had written letters to her father from the school she was attending telling him of the cultural and historical erasure she was witnessing and experiencing. In the words of a child unable to clearly express what she was really experiencing she writes to her father “Everyone hates me, only you love me” (Kincaid 20). Xuela notes that she did not even really believe those words, and that she did not even really intend to send them, but for her in that instance she learned the power of reflection. Xuela learns and, at the same time, teaches the audience the importance of analysis and discussion. She says “to speak of my situation, to myself and others,” both the analysis and the sharing of the colonial experience is important for creating change. This analysis comes in the form of the narrative itself and in the sharing of stories in general. That letter both gets her in major trouble with her teacher, who believes she is “everyone” in Xuela’s letters, but it also draws necessary attention to the injustices being linguistically imposed as part of the fiction drawing readers’ attentions to both the empowering and disempowering possibilities of English and education. Just as this colonizing language is being used to teach and preach the replacement history and religion, the language of this narrative is also drawing attention to that very issue.

The last linguistic aspect I would like to highlight from this novel is the connection between language, identity, and space. Earlier, with the quotation referring to spatial

mapping, this argument touched on the importance and connection between language and claims to space, but there is another more telling quotation that exemplifies this connection:

A human being, a person, many people, will say that their surroundings, their physical surroundings, form their consciousness their very being...they invisibly, magically, conquer the distance that is between them and the beauty they are beholding, and they feel themselves become one with it...the meeting of people and place, you and the place you are from are not a chance encounter; it is something beyond destiny, it is something so meant to be that it is beyond words. (Kincaid 191)

This quotation harkens back to the earlier discussion of (re)valuing different types of communication as was analyzed in the discussion of Native American world views in Chapter One. As mentioned earlier, Todorov argues that there are more types of communication like that of the Native Americans and how they not only communicated within nature but with nature. English can be used to encompass differing worldviews, or it can be used to deny them, the choice is made by its users. In the imagined space of fiction, beyond authorial intentions, there is room for the audience's interpretations which might contribute to the communicative power of language to change the historical perspective of the colonizer. Even simply reading can be a work of rhetorical activism, if the reader engages in a meaningful interpretation.

At this point, I mean to highlight the connection between identity, person, place, and story by analyzing another story of colonization told from the perspective of the colonized, Things Fall Apart by Chinua Achebe. This is the story of an African tribe, the Igbo, and how "white men" move in first with religion, then law to change their ways of speaking, doing, and being. The story centers on the character Okonkwo, his family, their troubles, and the witnessing of the beginning stages of colonization. However, "white man" does not enter the novel until the second half. This is significant because Achebe is establishing an identity for Okonkwo and his people before the effects of colonization as if to highlight

the abrupt changes and losses due to colonization. Describing the Igbo before colonization gives readers a sense of scope in terms of what is changed and what is lost.

Achebe is using English to narrate a story about African resistance, but what he does with that English is particularly interesting. Eugene McCarthy argues, “Achebe reshapes English in order to imitate the linguistic patterns of his mother tongue, Igbo...The narrator’s repetitions are a technique of the traditional storyteller...” (McCarthy 243-4). McCarthy goes into a detailed analysis of different excerpts from the novel to illustrate this point. I mean to highlight the importance of the use of English, in that it is flexible enough to mimic Igbo linguistic traditions to further assert an identity oppositional to colonial control. McCarthy asserts that through Achebe’s use of English to imitate traditional Igbo speech patterns “we may learn about the nature of rhythm and orality, and about the form of the novel, but especially we may better see the unique English Achebe has created and realize its African tone in order to understand another whose language one, as a non-African, does not speak” (McCarthy 256). In a sense, like Patricia Grace, Achebe is inviting non-natives to learn more about the once colonized but still resisting culture.

This story, being told from the perspective of those being colonized, is recreating the rhetoric of colonization by recycling the language, English, to create new meanings of history and identity. In exploration narratives, like that of Cabeza de Vaca, the narrative tells the story of intrusion and exclusion, but conversely novels depicting colonization offer the story from a new perspective, one that first establishes the cultural activities, traditions, and rituals of the Igbo tribe. For better or worse, Achebe commits to re-establishing identity for the Mbanta from the perspective of the Igbo, and not from the perspective of the intruding missionary- colonist (though that perspective later shifts). Through this focus, Achebe is able to recycle the language of the colonizer to meet new ends. Authorial rights are returned to the native, where they are no longer spoken of but instead doing the speaking. No longer are they being described, but instead doing the describing, and further the events of colonization are removed from the context of the colonizer, thereby offering a new creative space for Indigenous peoples to respond to colonial rhetoric describing their

own responses to the processes of colonization.

In other words, those who have been deprived of the right to speak in opposition to colonization, have the tools to (re)assert their story of colonization, and according to the wise words of Okonkwo's mentor who tells "a story to illustrate his point," "there is no story that is not true" (Achebe 141). That is as long as we can understand the story, and to speak to the colonizer the colonized can choose to be understood in a language that the colonizer can identify with, English. Otherwise, how else would they be heard? This wise Mbanta tribesman does what colonial rhetoric consistently fails to do; he validates opposing views as if to coolly counter the assumption that there can only be one true perspective. There is room for different stories in the evolving Mbanta mentality. There must be room for new and different stories, as Smith argues, imagination is key to survival, "Imagination enables people to rise above their own circumstances, to dream new visions and hold on to old ones...Throughout the period of colonization Indigenous peoples survived because of their imaginative spirit, their ability to adapt and to think around a problem" (Smith 158).

Telling stories that change and adapt is pivotal to that survival both literally and figuratively. Yet, even further, as we discussed in chapter one (re)valuing the creation myths and traditional Indigenous stories enable non-Indigenous peoples to connect to the world and their environments in new ways. Smith goes on to argue "Indigenous people's ideas and beliefs about the origins of the world, their explanations of the environment, often embedded in complicated metaphors and mythic tales, are now being sought as the basis for thinking more laterally about current theories about the environment, the earth and the universe" (Smith 159). In other words, Indigenous stories are being (re)valued as they help to reconnect humans with the earth and each other. We can and are learning to (re)value forms of communication that encompass more than the fragments of information colonization distilled for control.

Looking back, in Chapter Two, we explored how colonization creeps in under the guise of religious conversion, where it transforms rhetoric; then, after inserting itself through

Christian conversion it transforms to legal and education matters to gain monetary control in addition to religious and intellectual control. Achebe's novel describes this painful process as it applies to the Igbu tribe. "The missionaries had come to Umuofia. They had built their church there, won a handful of converts and were already sending evangelists to the surrounding towns and villages" (Achebe 143). This seemingly peaceful state of religious conversion, in the novel, follows a hauntingly silent massacre:

Then one morning three white men led by a band of ordinary men like us came to the clan...That was the day it happened. The three white men surrounded the market...And they began to shoot. Everybody was killed, except the old and sick who were at home and a handful of men and women whose chi were wide awake and brought them out of the market... (Achebe 139-40)

I think these excerpts are important to highlight for a few reasons: one, a story is being conveyed inside the novel; the story is of a neighboring clan's extinction at the hands of white men. This transference of information highlights the importance of the communicative possibilities of English and story. Two, there is an eerie silence not even described by the tale's teller. Those who are killed are not given a chance to speak nor is a scream even commented upon; they are murdered in their day to day ritual at the market, mirroring and foreshadowing the demise of other neighboring tribes.

The silence may represent the absence in colonial texts of the voice of the colonized. Begging the question, what language does suffering need to present itself in for the colonizer to see the damages done to the colonized? Were they allowed to speak, or further were they heard, that act of listening might undermine imperial and colonial assumptions for conquest. In other words, the colonizer needs to believe in their colonizing mission for the sake of their presence and "progress." If the colonizer allows the Indigenous a voice then they validate a form of knowing that undermines their presence. Stated simply, if the Indigenous were allowed to speak, they may have something valid to say.

As we have discussed the Christian ethic of ritual and spiritual negation takes place in

this novel as well. One of the converts speaks of conversion to the clan: “He said he was one of them, as they could see by his color and language...And he told them about this new God, the Creator of all the world and all the men and women. He told them that they worshipped false gods, gods of wood and stone...” (Achebe 145). This excerpt serves to further illustrate one of the first forms of colonization, religious conversion. Like the clash of words, languages, the clash of Words, as in religious truisms, serve to invalidate the Indigenous worldview. As mentioned earlier, religion is only one the first markers of invasion and invalidation.

The Mbanta quickly see the second negation of authority as the legalities of empire quickly follow the religious, “The white man had not only brought a religion but also a government. It was said that they built a place of judgment in Umuofia to protect the followers of their religion. It was even said that they had hanged one man who killed a missionary” (Achebe 155). This selection points to several things worth noting: one, the second imposition of imperial design is government and law. Second, it is assumed that there will need to be judgment and discipline for the colonized. In other words, it was predetermined and even assumed that those who were to be colonized would need moral instruction first and discipline second. Third, the above selection highlights the fragmentation and decontextualization of those being colonized; there is no consideration given to why the missionary may have been killed. The action is at once deemed punishable regardless of the imposition and usurping of Native authority.

As things fall apart for the Igbu, for the colonizer they clearly come together. After religion and government, come education and commerce. The Christian conquest of conversion quickly reveals the underlying import of colonization, economic gain for the empire. “The clan had undergone such profound changeThe new religion and government and the trading stores were very much in the people’s eyes and minds” (Achebe 182- 3). In the tale Achebe tells, these elements of empire work seamlessly and relentlessly to break the Igbu’s spirit. Achebe’s cleverly crafted novel illustrates how easily empire weaves its way into the fabric of those to be colonized. In the novel, religion, government, education, and commerce work

one after the other and in tandem to unravel the ties between clans.

In an act of desperate retaliation Okonkwo leads some of the clansmen against the encroaching empire, by burning down the first symbol to make its way into their village, the church. As a result, the imposed government disciplined those who took action against the imposed institution, and had them impounded until a huge fine could be paid. In the end, because he believed his people's way of life would be no more, Okonkwo takes his own life. To compound the injustice of colonization the final chapter is told from the perspective of an outsider looking in on the tragic story of Okonkwo and his clan. Upon seeing his body dangling from a tree, the narrator reveals what the outsider and onlooker is thinking:

As he walked back to the court he thought about that book [he would write].Everyday brought him new material. The story of this man who had killed a messenger and hanged himself would make interesting reading. One could almost write a whole chapter on him.Perhaps not a whole chapter but a reasonable paragraph, at any rate. There was much else to include, and one must be firm in cutting out the details. He had already chosen the title of the book after much though: The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger. (Achebe 208-9)

This is how the novel tragically ends. The narrator's choice to trivialize and decontextualize the concluding tragedy of Okonkwo's death symbolizes the attitude of imperial erasure. Let us more closely analyze the conclusion of the novel.

First, the novel does not end as it begins, from the native's perspective suggesting that even this story is not their own. This may beg the question that will be addressed in the next chapter, the conclusion: what qualifies me to speak for, of, and on the perspective and condition of the colonized? Second, this selection draws attention to the selective fragmentation of Indigenous populations, as the imperial writer notes "one must be firm in cutting out the details," as he trivializes and reduces Okonkwo's death to a rhetorical device that "makes for interesting reading." The title, too, that the onlooker suggests bears some light into our current discussion of language and the power it has to construct and

demolish meaning, “The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger.” This codification of the savage representation of the Indigenous harkens back to chapter one, where we analyzed how exploration literature can cement and perpetuate the image of the Indigenous as savage. Conversely, however, narrative can be used, as it is in the novels we have discussed, to highlight and recant the imperial and colonial rhetoric that previously demeaned and demolished the Indigenous authority of voice.

The two novels discussed in this chapter have highlighted the processes that colonization takes, but additionally they have shown the more optimistic power of language to expose, explore, and remember such tragic losses of life, culture, identity, and the authority to simply tell a story. In the next chapter, the conclusion, we will analyze how the themes from this and previous chapters translate for further study.

Conclusion: Continuing the Conversation

I have stressed the importance of critical care with the crafting of oral and written rhetoric using the proposed theory of rhetorical activism. In the spirit of “regeneration” and rhetorical activism, then, we have (re)explored the discovery narrative of Cabeza de Vaca to identify the pejoratively codified representations of those encountered and alienated through the colonial and imperial rhetoric to create awareness for conscious users of rhetoric. The aim of rhetorical activism is to make sure those representations, those words and phrases that create the colonized are not perpetuated as they are in colonial and postcolonial discourses. The misinterpretations of early American explorers due to intense decontextualization were sadly cemented into colonial perspectives and justifications for intrusion, oppression, and control. Now, using rhetorical activism, we can draw more distinct lines between what colonizers cemented and perpetuated into post-colonization by decolonizing the very same rhetoric once used for control.

We have analyzed the importance of both story and context and what they mean to the language and processes of decolonization and recovery through the fictions of Potiki, Autobiography of My Mother, and Things Fall Apart. The communicative power of imagination and language through story allows readers to sympathize with and even care about different cultures and their mythologies. Further, story as described by Aurora Levins Morales offers the opportunity for those who have been victimized by colonizing forces to recover, “Recovery from trauma requires creating and telling another story about the experience of violence and the nature of the participants, a story powerful enough to restore a sense of our own humanity to the abused” (Morales 15). Story provides the vessel for those who have been historically, religiously, and legally, invalidated by colonizing rhetoric to oppose those creations of authority and to (re)assert their own agency through the authority of

language. As we have witnessed in the analysis of novels like Potiki, Things Fall Apart, and The Autobiography of My Mother the language of story is central in restoring contexts that oppose the fragmentation of colonial interests.

Linda Tuhiwai Smith writes, Indigenous peoples want to tell their own stories, write our own versions, in our own ways, for our own purposes. It is not simply about giving an oral account or a genealogical naming of the land and events which have raged over it, but a very powerful need to give testimony to and restore a spirit, to bring back into existence a world fragmented and dying. (Smith 28)

What right do I have, then, to tell Indigenous stories? The box I check on official documents reads “white,” but at one time my ancestors were victims of colonization, too. Maybe that is the next project to come for me, reconnecting with my own Irish roots, but to start I wanted to share stories that have moved me, and may have the power to move others to share and appreciate others’ stories. As Toko, from Potiki, reminds us “It was good to have others to tell our stories to, and to have them there sharing our land and our lives” (Grace 145). What difference does it make who shares the story as long as it is reaching new people in different places. If we are conscious enough not to repeat the rhetorical devices of colonial language, does that change the decolonial sentiment? Furthermore, I am not “telling” Indigenous stories as if they were my own; I am analyzing the rhetoric used in different fictions to illustrate how the language of the colonizer can be used by the colonized to reclaim creative and imaginative spaces.

One might argue that as an outsider, I cannot speak for those whom have been colonized? However, I am only speaking for myself. I am only analyzing decolonial fictions as a student of literature, and as someone concerned about sharing this world and stories. I only wish to connect to what has been fragmented, too. In valuing the stories of those who have been colonized, I am realizing the other in myself. To borrow for Tzvetan Todorov,

I have tried to avoid two extremes. The first is the temptation to reproduce

the voices of these figures 'as they really are'; to try to do away with my own presence 'for the sake of the other.' The second is to subjugate the other to myself, to make him into a marionette of which I pull the strings. Between the two I sought the path of dialogue. I question, I transpose, but I also let them speak (whence so many quotations) and defend themselves. (Todorov 250)

The key, here, is allowing enough of the fictions to shine through to speak for themselves, while at the same time drawing critical attention to moments that help define the importance of redeveloping context and redefining language for each story to be shared and understood. The dialogue, here, comes in the form of textual reference and analysis as literary critics we can take that dialogic analogy even further.

According to Kwame Anthony Appiah, and in the spirit of cosmopolitanism, the sharing of stories is the beginning of meaningful dialogue that helps audiences to connect to those peoples and places alienated by colonial rhetoric. He argues, "...in the English we speak every day, it is natural to call what we do when we seek, through a conversation rich in the language of value, to shape each other's thoughts and sentiments and deeds..." (Appiah 30). Now, we must be cautious with this dialogue and conscious that others' values are not necessarily our own, but if we can proceed with a conversation through the sharing of stories that helps to normalize difference, that is the first step towards tolerance, understanding, and empathy (Appiah 28-30).

From the linguistic focus, there are simple rules we can keep in mind to continue this conversation. There are codes to conversation with which we can engage in a critically conscious conversation through the rhetoric of story. According to H. P. Grice, there is something to be shared and adhered to by each party of the conversation. It is called the "Cooperative Principle," and it is defined as the "speaker's meaning can be calculated on the basis of semantic meaning and the assumption that the speakers are behaving rationally and cooperatively" (Portner 160). Now, according to this principle, speakers engaged in conversation are to behave rationally and cooperatively. The focus for our task of decolonizing rhetoric, should be on the cooperative aspect as definitions of rational may

vary. According to Grice, there are four main maxims to following in order for each party of the conversation to honor the other:

The maxim of Quality: make your contribution on that is true rather than false. The maxim of Quantity: provide the information that is required for the purposes of conversation, but no more. The maxim of relevance: make your contributions relevant. The maxim of Manner: be clear and orderly in your talk. (Portner 160)

These maxims uphold what linguists term implicature, which is defined as “the idea that meaning is based on the speaker’s intentions” (Portner 160). That is the speaker’s meaning may differ from the readers’ semantic meaning, which is why it is so important to interpret within a context, rather than without.

If we aim to uphold these Gricean Maxims through fiction, literary criticism, and begin the process of decolonization, they may need some adjusting because fiction and its interpretation do not always strictly adhere to the rules of conversation. In response to the first maxim on quality and truth, we might recall Okonkwo learning from his mentor, in Things Fall Apart, “there is no story that is not true” (Achebe 141). This does not of course mean that all fiction is literally non-fiction. It does mean that beyond each story there is a truth to be learned, a moral or a lesson. For each story told of colonization we can learn ways to resist, and we can share those stories. The second maxim of Quantity offers no issues in terms of fiction as a conversation, because as an art each author knows exactly what information is important, and that which is not is left out. It does, however, bear some weight in terms of historical content, as historians and authors alike are privileging certain aspects or events previously to glorify empire. Now, authors have the opportunity to (re)write historical perspectives from the view of those that were colonized.

The maxims are to work, however, for both speaker and audience, if the conversation is to be considered meaningful dialogue. So this means that, as readers of fiction, we must also try to make our contributions and interpretations “true, relevant, and clear and orderly”

(Portner 160). Now, I am stretching the applications of the term conversation to attempt to show how actively we, as readers, can participate in fiction. To take the meaning, the resistance of post and decolonial fictions posit readers must be active in the conversation. That is part of being a rhetorical activist. We must believe that rhetoric can and does make a difference. We must read beyond the text to engage in a context that does not apathetically accept imperial and colonizing rhetoric.

In the previous chapters we have explored the importance of critical reading, but let us revisit some of the vital elements to employ in everyday readings, writings, and conversations. Context is inescapably important for effective meaning-making. Without context, representations are deprived of the rich connection and interrelation of words, concepts, and beliefs. As we saw with the narrative of Cabeza de Vaca, signs and symbols, through the processes of imperialism and colonialism, are decontextualized and devoid of Native meaning. However, through story and fiction, those pieces of the fragmented past can be reassembled to recreate meaning and context.

This process of reclamation is in no small way due to the power of imagination. Without imagination Xuela could not dream up a history for her mother or her people. Without imagination authors could not conceive of a past other than the imperial version of events. Without imagination readers could not conceive of sympathizing with characters from different cultures. The English language, with its infinite space and possibility, is and can be recycled to recreate authority of voice and representations of the past.

With this knowledge, the future of groups who have been purposely excluded from speaking and writing roles in the recorded rhetoric of colonial endeavors, can speak and be heard for and by themselves as well as by outsiders who care enough to engage in worlds beyond their own. In the sharing of stories, imagination, and context we can all learn to share this existence, and while we may not agree, we can still appreciate and celebrate difference.

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Curriculum Vitae

Jerien Elizabeth Rausch was born in El Paso, Texas, on October 31, 1981. She was the first daughter born to Markie and James Rausch. She attended and graduated from Montwood High school, in 2000. After beginning college at South Western Oklahoma State University, she transferred to the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP), where she finished her undergraduate degrees in American Literature and Creative Writing, in 2006.

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Jerien's interests include writing fiction and poetry, theorizing about rhetoric, and photography.