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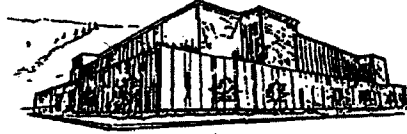
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WHISPERING IN THE WIND:  
TEXT AND TRADITION IN BLACKFEET APOLOGIA

By

Rowland G. Freeman IV

B. A. University of Montana, Missoula, MT 1993

M. Div. Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, CA 1996

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements


for the degree of Master of Arts

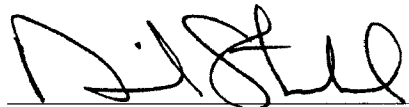
The University of Montana

Department of Communication Studies

May 2003

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## ABSTRACT

Freeman, Rowland G. M. Div., M. A., May 2003

Communication Studies

Whispering in the wind: Text and Tradition in Blackfeet Apologia

Director: Sara Hayden, Ph. D. *SH*

According to Percy Bullchild, the author of *The Sun Came Down: The History of the World as My Blackfeet Elders Told It*, "What the whiteman wrote about, that all of the Natives of these Americas were savages and warlike people, is *nothing but a lot of wind* that come out of their mouths. Compassion for the life of people and for everything that was created by Creator Sun and Mother Earth was theirs and still is in these days." In order to refute the misrepresentation of the "Native of these Americas," Bullchild compiled a collection of Blackfeet narratives that contain the, *mythos, logos, ethos and pathos* of the traditional Piegan culture and offered this as an *apologia* in response to the *kategoria* (attack) on the Native by "whiteman." Constructing a framework of hermeneutic and critique by engaging *The Sun Came Down*, I argue that a criticism of intercultural rhetoric can be developed following these understandings: 1) The critic will be able to locate the text in time and space so the distinctiveness of cultures is apparent. 2) The critic will understand the limitations imposed by the intercultural location of the text and realize the importance of contextualizing the critique. 3) The critic will undertake a radical reflection on his or her own culture as a consequence of the encounter with the text. 4) The critic will discern the "right to speak" of the author by virtue of the standards present author's speech community. 5) The critic will assume the presence of at least one redactor (the author). 6) The critic will comprehend the tasks of interpretation and redaction including, translation and exegesis and internal commentary. 7) The critic will assume at least four levels of the multivalent nature of the intercultural audience including the intracultural, opposing, universal and critical audiences. 8) The critic will discern simultaneous and multivalent strategies including consubstantive identification as persuasion, allusion to historical, religious and literary understandings, metaphor, direct refutation and enthymemic commentary. 9) The critique will contribute to the project of a global understanding of human dignity.

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(we are all friends and relatives here)

For Wes Shellen, guide and friend.

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## Foreword

What the whiteman wrote about, that all of the Natives of these Americas were savages and warlike people, is *nothing but a lot of wind* that come out of their mouths.

Compassion for the life of people and for everything that was created by Creator Sun and Mother Earth was theirs and still is in these days. -Percy Bullchild *The Sun Came Down*

קְּחֵתָהּ: 15 וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֲדֹנָי קֵךְ שׁוּב לְדַרְכֶּךָ מִדְּבָרָהּ  
דְּמָשֶׁק וּבָאתָ וּמְשַׁחֲתָ אֶת־חִזְאֵל לְמֶלֶךְ עַל־אֲרָם: 16 וְאַתָּה יְהוָה  
בֶּן־נֹמְשֵׁי תִמְשַׁח לְמֶלֶךְ עַל־יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאַתָּה אֱלֹהֵי שָׁפֵט בֶּן־שָׁפֵט מֵאֲבֵל  
מִחֹלָה תִמְשַׁח לְנָבִיא תַחֲפִיךָ: 17 וְהָיָה הַנִּמְלֵט מִחֶרֶב חִזְאֵל יָמִית  
יְהוָה וְהַנִּמְלֵט מִחֶרֶב יְהוָה יָמִית אֱלֹהֵי שָׁפֵט: 18 וְהַשְׂאֲרֵתִי בְיִשְׂרָאֵל  
שְׂבַעַת אֲלָפִים כָּל־הַבְּרָכִים אֲשֶׁר לֹא־כָרְעוּ לְבַעַל וְכָל־תְּפִיחַ אֲשֶׁר  
לֹא־נִשְׁקָ לֹ: 19 וַיִּלֶּךְ מִשָּׁם וַיִּמְצָא אֶת־אֱלֹהֵי שָׁפֵט וְהוּא

-Biblia Hebraica, Regum I 19:15-19 p. 608

[*The Creator said, "Go out and stand on the mountain in my presence for I am about to pass by." Then a great and a powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the Creator, but he was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Creator was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire, but the Creator was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper.*

*And the Creator spoke in the whisper.] -I Kings 19:11-12 Paraphrase*

## Chapter One

### The Argument in Favor of Remaining Quiet

#### *Introduction*

It's 8:00 a.m. on the morning of January 23, 1870. As the sun rises over the bluffs that shelter Heavy Runner's camp alongside the Bear River there is an uneasy stirring. Early risers make out the shape of 'seizers,' a troop of U. S. Cavalry led by brevet Colonel Eugene Baker, riding down the riverbed. Heavy Runner is alerted and emerges from his lodge holding the peace accord he recently signed above his head. He walks toward the soldiers proclaiming his peaceful intentions. A shot shatters the icy winter stillness. Heavy Runner falls dead on the frozen river. The shot becomes the signal for the fusillade to begin. Over 7000 rounds will be fired into the lodges and their inhabitants during the next hour. When it's over 173 women, children, old men and invalids will lay dead in the snow. (Gibson, Hayne, 2001)

Blackfeet author James Welsh recalls the horror of this event in his novel *Fools Crow*.

They walked among the lodges, at first quietly; then they became bolder and began to laugh and talk. Whenever they saw a movement from under one of the lodge covers they shot until it moved no more. They rounded up the bodies and threw them into the fires. Those lodges that stood untouched by fire were ragged with bullet holes. The seizers cut the bindings and set those lodges on fire. They took what they valued and threw all the rest onto the fires...*(In his imagination, Fools Crow saw)* Napikwan (*white*) children playing and laughing in a world that they

possessed. And he saw the Pikuni (*Blackfeet*) children, quiet and huddled together, alone and foreign in their own country. ‘We must think of our children,’ he said. He lowered his eyes to the red puppy who had rolled onto his back, his front legs tucked against his chest. They had no children” (Welsh, 1987 p. 384).

Shortly after the massacre, Lt. Gus Doane, Commander of Baker’s F Company is reported to have replied to a settler’s query about whether the, “Indians would now remain quiet, ‘(Well I can’t say), but there are certainly one hundred and seventy-three very good arguments in favor of their remaining quiet, lying out on the Maria’s”” (Gibson and Hayne, 2001, p. 4).

Baker and Doane’s “argument” has taken on the form of a narrative. The story of the Bear River Massacre has been told and retold for over 130 years (Augare, 2000). In the starkest most horrific sense the retelling of the event can be considered an extreme example of intercultural rhetoric. The progression from event (*kategoria*, attack), to description (narrative), to interpretation (exegesis), to rationalization (commentary) and finally rebuttal (*apologia*, defense) becomes a spiraling discursive dialectic, a social drama (Burke, 1950, 1955, Conquergood, 1991, Philipsen 1992, Warren 2002), a speech set (Fisher, 1970; Ryan 1982), a storm of words in which representatives of both cultures, explain, respond and justify their perceptions of the event and the effect it has on themselves ( Carbaugh, 1996) and their ongoing relationship. As Aristotle has it, “One man accuses the other, and the other defends himself, with reference to things already done” (Roberts, 1954, p. 32).

When a series of events occurring over centuries has resulted in the subjugation of one culture by another, the voice of the suppressed culture can become muted. The rhetoric of attack, the pounding of the hoofs of the seizer's horse, the fury of the fusillade, gives way to the rhetoric of rationalization and justification. L. Frank Baum, author of *The Wizard of Oz*, was also a prolific editorial rhetor on the subject of the American Indian. Following the massacre at Wounded Knee, he wrote,

The Pioneer (a Wichita, Kansas newspaper) has before declared that our only safety depends upon the total extermination of the Indians. Having wronged them for centuries we had better, in order to protect our civilization, follow it up by one more wrong and wipe these untamed and untamable creatures from the face of the earth. In this lies future safety for our settlers and the soldiers who are under incompetent commands. Otherwise, we may expect future years to be as full of trouble with the redskins as those have been in the past (Pierpont, 2000).



The "Arguments In Favor of Remaining Quiet:" Wounded Knee 1890

A year earlier Baum had written,  
The proud spirit of the original owners of these vast prairies inherited through centuries of fierce and bloody wars for their possession, lingered last in the bosom of Sitting Bull. With his fall the nobility of the Redskin is extinguished, and what few are left are a pack of whining curs who lick the hand that smites them. The Whites, by law of conquest, by justice of civilization, are masters of the American continent, and the best safety of the frontier settlements will be secured by the total annihilation of the few remaining Indians. Why not annihilation? Their glory has fled, their spirits broken, their manhood effaced; better that they die than live as the miserable wretches that they are  
(Pierpont, 2000).

The cavalry horse, the Sharps repeating rifle, the newspaper editorial, the railroad tracks, the barbed wire and the retelling of the story in this way are arguments for remaining quiet. The argument continues as Fr. Edward Kohler presides over Randy Brown's funeral Mass at Little Flower Parish in Browning on April 16, his young cousin, Raven, walks the aisle. Randy, 17, was shot and killed in Missoula a few days earlier. (Smith, 2003)





At about the same time (1969-1985) James Welch was writing *Fools Crow*, Percy Bullchild was rewriting his collection of Blackfeet stories, *The Sun Came Down: The History Of The World As My Blackfeet Elders Told It*. Darrell Kipp, the co-founder of the Piegan Institute's Blackfeet immersion language recovery program, recalled a meeting where several Northwest Tribes were represented at which Percy Bullchild spoke. Darrell said Percy spoke at length in eloquent and emphatic Blackfeet and midway through his speech he paused and asked a question. The room became silent. He asked the question again and in the lengthy pause that followed people turned their gaze down and shifted uncomfortably. Finally one man hesitantly raised his hand, and then a few more followed until a small percentage of the audience had their hands in the air. Then Percy resumed speaking. Darrell asked Ed (Redman) Little Plume what Percy had said. "He said he wanted everybody who could understand what he was saying to raise their hands," Ed replied. Darrell told me it was then that the enormity of "all we had lost hit me" (personal communication, 2002).

The Blackfeet James Welch, Darrell Kipp and Percy Bullchild have not remained quiet. Rather they have engaged in refutation, restoration and reconciliation. They tell the stories out loud. They engage in narrative persuasion. They seek to restore identity, to situate self and other. In the face of the attack, the *kategoria*, they "speak in answer" (Ryan, 1982, p. 255) as apologists. In the face of the windstorm of attack they have continued to tell the story, at first in whispers and now boldly and effectually. As Bullchild proclaims,

What the whiteman [sic] wrote about, that all of the Natives of these Americas were savages and warlike people, is *nothing but a lot of wind*

that come out of their mouths. Compassion for the life of people and for everything that was created by Creator Sun and Mother Earth was theirs and still is in these days.” (Bullchild, 1985, p.230)

A reader can engage *The Sun Came Down* simply as a recollection or recovery of precious traditional stories that were in danger of becoming lost forever. However to do so would be to miss a larger purpose and value of Bullchild’s work. I ask the critical reader of *The Sun Came Down* to consider this collection of stories as a work of intercultural rhetoric, an *apologia*. In this view *The Sun Came Down* is an *apologia* in response to the *kategoria* represented by the “argument in favor of remaining quiet.” “What the whiteman wrote about, that all of the Natives of these Americas were savages and warlike people, is nothing but a lot of wind that come out of their mouths” (Bullchild, 1985, p. 230).

#### *Participant Observation.*

I first encountered *The Sun Came Down* as I was finishing up my Masters of Divinity at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California in 1996. I had been reading everything I could find about Native American ministry in anticipation of being sent to the Blackfeet Indian Reservation in Browning, Montana as a local pastor for the United Methodist Church. I found *The Sun Came Down* so engaging that I read it straight through. I thought I perceived substantial common ground from which to develop relationships in this culture in which I could not assume I would be a welcome stranger. My research had also turned up evidence that the people who had, murdered, raped, robbed and decimated the culture of the Blackfeet for two centuries looked and talked

very much like me. The Blackfeet word for paycheck translates literally as “slick head,” in honor of a long ago Reservation government payroll clerk who also happened to be bald.

Additionally I also sensed a growing conviction that in the light of the theology and ethos I had discovered in *The Sun Came Down*, the Blackfeet Reservation had no need of my input. But I went anyway because it was right next to Glacier National Park.

Of necessity my learning curve was short. The last six of my predecessors had left the ministry after serving Blackfeet Parish. Not because, I immediately discovered, the Blackfeet people were inhospitable. In fact having lived all over America I found Browning, Montana to be the most welcoming and generous place I had ever stayed. Within months I had reasonably close relationships with a number of Blackfeet spiritual leaders, traditional as well as Christian pastors. My association with them and the insight that was given me convinced me not to do any more “Native American Ministry.”

I had a wonderful time after that. I led regular traditional Anglo/Catholic ministry and worship. Our little faith community prospered. I received the greatest complement of my life when Roberta Kipp, who was working with my wife Marion when Marion was the middle school principle, told me, “If you and Marion died here, you’d have a big funeral.”

After a time I began to notice specific communication behaviors that fascinated me. I could see that if there were a way to measure interpersonal communication intelligence, these folks would score awfully high. I began to observe more and more things about the speech community that had been hinted at or described in *The Sun Came Down*. I decided that further study in intercultural communication would help me do my

job better and process what I thought I was observing more accurately so I enrolled in the Graduate Program of the Department of Communication Studies Department at the University of Montana. After six years on the Reservation, I read *The Sun Came Down* as source document for a rhetorical theory seminar. I was astonished at how much I had missed the first time around.

In my view it was still a work of theology, and now I could see how the presentation of the traditional Blackfeet belief system was part of a larger claim. Bullchild had constructed a rebuttal argument. His consubstantial demonstration of the assumption, “Like it or not, we are all related, regardless,” supported his purification of the image created by the people who articulated the argument in favor of remaining quiet; meaning the people who looked and talked like me that Bullchild calls, “our white friends.”

I am now reading *The Sun Came Down* came down as a work of intercultural rhetoric. In the following chapters I explain why. To paraphrase Bullchild “with what little education I have in the Blackfeet language and culture I’m going to try to write the critical response to the version of our own true ways in our history and our legends.”

#### *Narrative: In the Beginning was the Story*

While I am aware that the understanding of *narrative* is broadening daily in fields as diverse as psychotherapy and physics I will restrict its use to a more traditionally rhetorical definition. Narrative is a specific form of information processing and cooperation inducement. Narrative for my purposes is the account of an event located in or over time and place with a beginning, an end, characters, plots and themes and motives. “Jack and Jill went up the hill,” is a narrative. Although an infinite number of

stories could be told about them, the stock exchange figures on the financial pages of the Wall Street Journal are not narratives. The first chapter of Genesis is a narrative. Descartes' *Discourse on Pure Reason* is not.  $E=MC^2$  is not a narrative. Information does not become narrative until a story about living creatures and their actions is told.

Literary critics (Mitchell, 1981), science and technology philosophers (Ormiston and Sassower, 1989), Biblical scholars (Alter, 1981), rhetorical critics, (Burke, 1950; Fisher, 1984, 1989) have all used the term 'narrative' in a variety of ways which have expanded its denotative meaning exponentially. Fisher (1989) claims that it is the paradigmatic form of human communication by stating, "Human beings are essentially storytellers" (p.64). In the intercultural rhetoric of *The Sun Came Down* I see narrative as a primary component of the overall project of persuasive discourse. It is the story of what people do and how and why they think, feel and act the way we do.

Narrative by its very nature assumes context and audience. Stories speak out of rather than to a location. Stories from one communication context don't easily transfer completely to other contexts. The comic storyteller's response to a lack of audience response, "I guess you had to have been there," illuminates the dilemma for an intercultural narrator. Intercultural rhetoric in the form of narrative faces complexities and challenges that some of the other 'means of persuasion' do not. *The Sun Came Down* tells a story, a very big story, the history of the world and its people, their actions and their relationship to their Creator. It also tells a story of loss and oppression, of humor and survival. Although made up of numerous small stories *The Sun Came Down* is a cohesive narrative.

### *The text of The Sun Came Down*

Bullchild tells us, “I myself must write as I heard it told by my elders and not what’s written by whitemen or historians. They have a way of adding to their writings or leaving out things that may be important to the people being written about” (p.2). The narrative of *The Sun Came Down* is presented in four sections; *Earth’s Beginning*, *Napi Tales*, *Kut-toe-yis/Blood Clot Tales*, and *Honoring Creator Sun*. I characterize these stories in the light of Bullchild’s overall argument as *mythos*, beginning with a generic definition, “A traditional story of unknown authorship ostensibly with a historical basis, but serving usually to explain some phenomenon of nature, the origin of man, or the customs, institutions, religious rites, etc. of a people” (Webster, 1964). While Bullchild cites the storytellers who are the sources of his narrative, there is no claim to specific authorship. He calls his narrative, *The history of the world as my Blackfeet elders told it*. He heard the stories he has collected from his elders but they are not the authors. This meets the definition of *mythos*, which Fisher (1984) expands, “I contend further that human communication in all of its forms is imbued with *mythos*—ideas that cannot be verified or proved in any absolute way. Such ideas arise in metaphor, values, gestures and so on” (p.19). I would add the traditional storyteller’s reply to the query, “Grandmother, is that a true story?” “Yes, it may not have happened exactly like that, but it is still a true story.”

*Earth’s Beginning* describes the nature of the Creator and the Creation of Mother Earth. The sequence of events leading to Human Beings as Children of the Creator is described. The establishment of norms and rules is developed and the foundation is laid for the appearance of Napi.

As Bullchild tells us, Napi as a character appears in many Native narratives under different names, perhaps the most familiar is Coyote, the trickster. Napi is a being in human form endowed with all of the power the Creator could give him. His mission is to teach the Creator's children the right way to live on Mother Earth. His power goes to his head and rather than teaching the desires of the Creator for his children, Napi strays from his mission and becomes a 'negative example.'

Napi's failure leads to the arrival of *Kut-toe-yis*/Bloodclot, a heroic figure, whose mission is to rid the world of evil and wrongdoing. The stories told around Bloodclot hold up virtues and right living as positive examples while *Kut-toe-yis*/Bloodclot combats the negative behaviors that lead to death and destruction. Bullchild notes at the conclusion of this section, "People say *Kut-toe-yis* is still out looking for the wicked. But if he is, he's done a very bad job of it because today wickedness is so abundant all over the world" (p.266).

Finally Bullchild traces the development of traditional Blackfeet religious practice, primarily the Bundle and The Sun Dance. This section consists of the stories that portray the first ceremonies, but it also contains substantial exegesis and commentary. At this point in Bullchild's argument it becomes quite clear that he is asking for acceptance and validation of these ancient understandings. He is not merely presenting the Native Religion as an anthropological curiosity but as deeply held faith based convictions that stand in opposition to the way that the Natives have been understood and dealt with by the immigrants from Europe. As he concludes this section he comments,

These are a few comparisons of the Native faith and the Christian faith as seen these days, there are many more that differ and many that correspond to one another.

The Native lived a serene life before the coming of whiteman. History has it in writing just the opposite from our true ways of life. History has the native as being warmongers, barbarians, bloodthirsty people, cruel, brutal, filthy, dirty, lousy with human ticks, savages and murderers.

None of these were true, just read the history, wherever it might be a little truly written. We always just too devoted to Creator Sun and always so very compassionate to others, even to the first comers of the non-Indians (p.389-390).

What is this history that might be a little truly written? How did people get the idea that the Natives were war-mongers, barbarians, etc? If that's all a lie, what really happened?

#### *A Historical and Social Context.*

Effectual intercultural rhetoric and hermeneutics requires an awareness of the past as well as the present. Visiting the Blackfeet Reservation one might see a bumper sticker proclaiming, "You're On Indian Land," or one might overhear a comment like John Murray's, who is a former director of Native American Studies at Blackfeet Community College, "You have to be schizophrenic to live here." These comments point up the terrible tension that exists for the residents of the Blackfeet Reservation as they live



between two worlds, the world of *The Sun Came Down* and the world that came into being with the arrival of whiteman.

No one knows for sure who the first *Napikwan* (whiteman) encountered by Bullchild's ancestors was or where the meeting occurred (Crowshoe and Manneschmidt, 2002, p. 56), but Bullchild would never have written *The Sun Came Down* in American Indian English if these contacts had not occurred. He would never have had to refute the stereotype of the 'Native,' if the immigrants had not created one. He would not have an audience for his narrative argument and he certainly wouldn't have the compelling rhetorical motive that carried him from his ailing wife's bedside to the offices of Harper and Row Publishing Company.

In this section I will not offer an alternative view of the history recorded in *The Sun Came Down*. I will, however, chronicle several events, which resulted in what is now known as the Blackfeet Indian Reservation as a communication context. I will provide some historical and social context that will aid in understanding Bullchild's text. The critical reader of *The Sun Came Down* requires some knowledge of the interaction between the Native and whiteman that led Bullchild to record the stories and arguments that appear in the pages of his narration.

### *Physical Geography and the Loss of the Land Base*

LeAnne Howe (2002), the Choctaw scholar and novelist, reminds us that for the Natives of the Americas, stories have locations. She means that there are identifiable geographic features that are the sites of many of the origin stories told by indigenous people. Howe says that she can get in her car and drive to the location of the "navel of the

world.” Similarly Bullchild could locate on a map or drive to the locations of many of the stories he recounts in *The Sun Came Down*. Bullchild includes this map in his text (pp. 64-65) It shows the boundaries of the “Piegan-Blackfeet aboriginal hunting area.” The area extends north to south from the North Saskatchewan River in Alberta to Yellowstone National Park, and east to west from the North Dakota, Montana Border to the Continental Divide, an area measured in thousands of square miles. The present Blackfeet Indian Reservation occupies less than one percent of that area. Bullchild calls this a, “wicked onslaught and robbery of our land and waters” (p. 390).

As Keith Basso notes (1971) the sense of place and the name for places can have a multi-layered significance to the indigenous residents. Not only are historical meanings attached to place names, but also spiritual power is associated with their invocation. Losing the land itself is significant, losing the location of the sacred even more so.

### *First Contact*

Because the Piegan were not particularly interested in the trading of Beaver pelts and were said to be quite protective of their territory there is little historical mention of them in early European fur trader annals. One of the first dated encounters occurred in 1806. Captain Meriwether Lewis had a confrontation with one of Bullchild’s ancestors.

At the distance of three hundred paces they entered a steep niche in the river-bluffs, when Captain Lewis, being too much out of breath to pursue them any further, called out, as he had done several times before, that unless they gave up the horse he would shoot them. As he raised his gun one of the Indians jumped behind a rock and spoke to the other, who

stopped at the distance of thirty paces. Captain Lewis shot him in the belly... The white men were gainers by this sad affair, for they had now in their possession four of the Indians' horses, and had lost one of their own. Besides these, they found in the camp of the Indians four shields, two bows and their quivers, and one of their two guns. The captain took some buffalo meat which he found in the camp, and then the rest of their baggage was burned on the spot. The flag given to one of the so-called chiefs was retaken; but the medal given to the dead man was left around his neck. The consequences of this unfortunate quarrel were far-reaching. The tribe whose member was killed by the white men never forgave the injury, and for years after there was no safety for white men in their vicinity except when the wayfarers were in great numbers or strongly guarded (Brooks, 1902, p. 321).

This incident is also recorded in Lewis' journals. The place where this happened is located on what is now known as the Blackfeet Indian Reservation. The implications of this and subsequent events have shaped the historical and social dynamic that *The Sun Came Down* addresses. When one uses the English phrase "Lewis and Clark" on the Blackfeet Reservation it has a much different meaning than it does to the residents of Great Falls, Montana where the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center is located. "The Voyage of Discovery" was not the unmitigated success to the ancestors of modern Blackfeet that it was to the colonial ambitions of the United States government. The encounter with Lewis was only one of several subsequent events that changed forever the life of the people Bullchild describes in *The Sun Came Down*.

### *Smallpox and Starvation*

Statistics on Smallpox and Starvation related to Plains Indian tribes in the United States and Canada can be gleaned from a variety of sources (Crowshoe and Manneshmidt, 2002). These figures echo from Tierra Del Fuego to Prudhoe Bay and regardless of the actual numbers given one thing is quite clear; the arrival of European immigrants was followed by an astonishing amount of death by disease and starvation on the part of the indigenous people of the Americas.

In 1781 (Binnema, 2001) an outbreak of smallpox struck the Great Plains and an estimated one third of the Native people died. While the numbers of people who died was devastating enough there were permanent effects that changed the social fabric of the Plains Indians forever, “The epidemic must have so dramatically affected American Indian communities that most, if not all, bands on the northwestern plains ceased to exist as autonomous units” (p. 124). Additionally, “communities inevitably lost important repositories of community knowledge” (p.127). It is difficult to imagine what losing one third of our teachers, healers and spiritual leaders would do to contemporary American culture, but as I emphasize in chapter three, Bullchild and his sources didn’t have to imagine it, their ancestors had lived through it.

This history of famine and plague is enfolded into the expressions ‘Small Pox Epidemics’ and ‘Starvation Winter’ on the Blackfeet Reservation. An observer will hear these events referred to as the genocide committed by the government to get rid of the Native population. The Starvation Winter referred to on the Blackfeet Reservation actually occurred in 1883 but it was not the first period of starvation since first contact.

That winter, however, enough elders and children died to reduce the population of adults on the Reservation to below 2000. Estimates of pre-columbian populations run as high as 15,000. The direct cause of this disaster is again laid at the feet of the nation's capital. Through a combination of mismanagement, corruption, and Washington inertia (some say purposeful inertia) promised rations did not arrive on the Reservation in time to prevent the death by starvation of hundreds of Blackfeet. Under the peace policy of Ulysses Grant beginning in 1875 Indian Reservations were assigned to major church institutions for their 'civilizing and christianizing.' Old timers in the area recall the quality of the "Methodist" Indian Agents. These agents are characterized as corrupt and inefficient and accused of selling of rations to line their own pockets. (Piegan Institute, 2001).

### *Missionary Boarding Schools and the Loss of the Language*

The words "Missionary Boarding Schools" refer to the time when children were taken from their parents, often by force or coercion, and raised in church run boarding schools. It was there that the most focused attempts to deliberately erase the language and traditions of the Blackfeet were made. There were several boarding schools on the Blackfeet Reservation as well as a number of one-room schoolhouses. Part of the meaning associated with Missionary Boarding Schools has to do with the stripping away and demonizing of traditional Blackfeet culture. In reference to traditional healing arts, Bullchild comments, "This wasn't a form of witchcraft, like our white neighbors or the priests and preachers claim. If our Native powers are of witchcraft, then! What the white man teaches us through the school system or through the many kinds of churches is more

a witchcraft then what we did to save lives. Their teachings cause more destruction and taking of human lives than I ever knew” (p.84).

*The Baker/Mariah's (Bear) River Massacre-1870*

The Baker (Bear River) Massacre referred to in the introduction carries a range of discursive meanings on the Blackfeet Reservation. Since 1985 memorial observances have taken place at the site of the massacre, which include the children of the Reservation. Carol Murray, former president of Blackfeet Community College and an organizer of the memorial, calls this the “pedagogy of hope” after Paulo Friere (1990) who has written about the “Pedagogy of the Oppressed.” In 2001 I participated in the memorial along with six busloads of children from Reservation schools. Murray along with Dorothy Still Smoking, Native American Studies Director for Browning public schools, believes that this event must be confronted to understand current conditions on the Reservation (personal communication, 2000, 2001). John Murray offered the observation, “You have to be schizophrenic to live here,” during his presentation at the Blackfeet Community College memorial observance in 2001. His comment illustrates the tension involved in living between membership in the Blackfeet Tribe and citizenship of the United States of America, who employed Major Baker. Darrell Kipp who initiated the 1985 observance and whose ancestor was present at the massacre, reports on the experience of wearing a United States Army Uniform and the emotional turmoil it caused (personal communication, 2001).

The recollection of the stories that surround these events and the myriad of small occurrences of intercultural conflict that are part of Blackfeet History, informs the

understanding of the significance and urgency of a critical reading of *The Sun Came Down*. Bullchild knew these stories, as did all of his contemporaries. These stories run parallel to the stories Bullchild records in *The Sun Came Down*. Often Bullchild directly references them in commentary, at other times they are part of the multi-valent meaning in the language in which Bullchild presents his narrative rationale.

Bullchild's creation of *The Sun Came Down* began in a hospital. Darrell Kipp believes Bullchild offered it as part of a prayer for healing throughout nightlong vigils at his wife Rose's bedside. Others have suggested he is praying for healing, for the land, the people and the future. If anything *The Sun Came Down*, written as it was in the awareness of a horrific history, is the kind of rhetorical offering that can be used in the construction of intercultural bridges.

#### *Consubstantiation and the Logic of Good Reasons*

"Santoro took a breath, 'In my view, lying at the core of every murder case is a simple story.'" (Scottoline, 2001 p.292)

Whether we are prosecuting the murder of a person in district court, persuading people to accept that the murder of a people or a culture has been attempted or refuting the "argument in favor of remaining quiet," there are traditionally understood ways to be effectual. Within a culture the rules and norms are reasonably well understood. We can say we know or think we know what are acceptable forms and contents for arguments. Argumentative traditions and theoretical underpinnings for the intercultural rhetor are less clear than they are for the public servant in the Montana State Legislature or the attorney arguing before the United States Supreme Court. There are reasons why virtually

all of the major religions of the earth have as their primary communicative resource a collection of stories. There are reasons why so many of Grandmother's admonitions and life lessons begin with, "Back when I was very young...." The quote that opens this section is taken from one of Lisa Scottoline's murder mysteries. The setting for it is a courtroom. It is the beginning of a forensic argument. It is one of the arenas of concern for the type of speech Aristotle addresses in "Rhetoric" and it begins with an allusion to simple rational narrative.

Gerry Philipsen (1992) reminds us of this "basic tenet of scientific dogma."

Although the world might appear to be random, there is, after all, order in it, and humans can discern that order, if with some difficulty.

Ethnographers of speaking have produced a research literature that confirms and illustrates what was at one time only assumed: that everywhere speech is heard, there is a structure in who speaks, to whom, in what language(s), through which channels, on what occasions, in what settings, for what purposes, in what sequence of action, and with what instrumentalities (p. 9).

I begin with the assumption that there is a structure to the speaking that *The Sun Came Down* records. *The Sun Came Down* is an ordered collection of theological narrative.

Of Aristotle's (Roberts, 1954) three modes of persuasion, "the personal character of the speaker, putting the audience into a certain frame of mind and the proof or apparent proof, provided by the speech itself" (p. 24), two are especially amenable to the



use of story. Aristotle reminds us that an “uneducated man” can argue effectually using “common knowledge” or stories we are all somewhat familiar with.

We now come to Enthymemes...It has already been pointed out that the enthymeme is a syllogism of dialectic. Thus we must not carry its reasoning too far back, or the length of our argument will cause obscurity: nor must we put in all steps that lead to our conclusion, or we shall waste words in saying what is manifest. It is this simplicity that makes the uneducated more effectual than the educated when addressing popular audiences-makes them, as the poets tell us ‘charm the crowd’s ears more finely.’ Educated men lay down broad general principles; uneducated men argue from common knowledge and draw obvious conclusions (Roberts, 1954, p. 139).

This understanding of enthymeme is especially applicable to *The Sun Came Down* and to intercultural rhetoric in general. Bullchild offers stories as implicit illustrations of principles that he will develop in his exegesis and commentary or in some cases, he allows the audience to draw their own obvious conclusions. In this sense narrative is evidence. This is a part of the understanding of Fisher’s (1984) theory of rational narrative and Kenneth Burke’s (1950, 1954) presentation of persuasion as consubstantive identification.

### *Kenneth Burke and Consubstantiation*

Burke sees a larger function for rhetoric than what might be observed in the courtroom or on the floor of the senate. Rhetoric is, “the use of language as a symbolic means of inducing cooperation in beings that by nature respond to symbols” (Burke, 1950, p. 45). The idea being that rhetorical speech fosters a unity of understanding which is the foundation of social cooperation. “You persuade a man only insofar as you can talk his language by speech, gesture, tonality, order, image attitude, idea, identifying your ways with his” (Burke, 1950, p. 55).

Consider the persuasive action of Col. Baker and Lt. Doane that left “one hundred and seventy-three very good arguments” lying dead on the winter shores of the Marias’ River. Consider the speeches of explanation and justification. Consider the speakers, Baker and his troops, government representatives, Heavy Runner and his descendants. Consider the context, the burgeoning western edge of the territory claimed by the United States Government or the territory already occupied by the *Nit zi tah pi* (real human beings). Consider the symbols, the reports of rifles, the fluttering of bloodstained worthless paper on the early morning breeze, the collapse of the lodges, the smoke rising as a message from the pyres. Consider the effect, “remaining quiet,” lying dead in the snow or standing by helplessly while their tradition, territory and faith in their Creator’s good will terminates in swirl of exterminated game herds, poisoned water, eroded soil and social desperation.

Thinking about history and speech in this way, we can share the realization that, “the more strident our journalists, politicians, and alas! even many of our churchmen become, the more convinced we are that books should be written for tolerance and

contemplation” (Burke, 1950, p. xv). Kenneth Burke’s understanding of persuasion as consubstantial identification of that which we hold ultimately in common as real human beings aids directly in the project of the interculturalist, which is to build bridges of communicative understanding across “the torrents of ill will” (Burke, 1950, p. xv).

*Homo narrens: Walter Fisher and the Logic of the Storyteller*

(1) Humans are essentially storytellers. (2) The paradigmatic mode of decision-making and communication is "good reasons" which vary in form among situations, genres, and media of communication. (3) The production and practice of good reasons are ruled by matters of history, biography, culture, and character... (4) Rationality is determined by the nature of persons as narrative beings - the inherent awareness of narrative probability, what constitutes a coherent story, add their constant habit of testing narrative fidelity, whether or not the stories they experience ring true with the stories they know to be true in their lives. (5) The world as we know it is a set of stories that must be chosen among in order for us to live life in a process of continual re-creation (Fisher, 1989, p.64).

From these assumptions about narrative as the essential mode of human communication and narrative probability as a basis for judgment, Fisher (1978, 1984) derives a set of critical criteria or “logic of good reasons.” This “logic” has more in common with a broad understanding of this definition of *logos*, “Reason, thought of as constituting the controlling principle of the universe and as being manifested by speech” (Webster, 1964), than it does with symbolic logic and syllogistic deduction. Fisher’s critical criteria

address questions of fact, relevance, consequence, consistency and transcendence. If narrative rationality is essential to human communication these criteria, to be valid, must be valid in an intercultural critique as well. By the same token intercultural rhetoric in the form of narrative rationality must be seen as effective, or influential.

### *Effective Narrative*

It isn't any different from the stories our white friends tell about such as King Arthur of the Round Table and Joan of Arc, there are many other stories of the white legends that are written too.

Some of these stories may sound a little foolish but they are very true. And they have much influence over all of the people of this world, even now as we all live (Bullchild, 1985, p. 3)

The question of influence or effect arises in this claim. How much change is evidenced as a result of this particular intercultural rhetoric? It is clear to me that *The Sun Came Down* influenced my perception of the Blackfeet Reservation prior to my first encounter with the community. But was I merely predisposed to listen? Did I really understand the argument?

Others have advanced understandings similar to mine, as evidenced by the reviews that accompanied the publication of *The Sun Came Down*. "This remarkable book is the testament of a living faith" (Forecasts, 1985). "The spiritual view of the Piegan's world, the legendary basis for attitudes and ceremonialism, the touches of humor, tragedy, morality and universal humanity—all are present in the flow of characters, events, and elements of the natural world in these linked

narratives”(Roripaugh, 1987). However, *The Sun Came Down* is an apologia in defense of character, not a policy we can vote on. It is difficult if not impossible to measure the effect, especially now that it’s out of print.

Edwin Black (1965) points out that this is a near term view. In writing of Chapman’s *Coatesville* speech he points in the direction of an effect analysis that looks into the long term. He speaks of the context of the speech, which was delivered in front of an audience of three persons in a rented empty store.

It is a context whose place must be measured by a continent and whose time must be reckoned in centuries. Its direct audience has been and is all of those who are interested in a meaningful interpretation of the history and moral status of this country, and indirectly its audience is all of those who are influenced by the direct audience. This dialogue has not ended, but still continues, and insofar as the model of the United States is increasingly influential in other parts of the world, the potential to this audience grows larger (p. 53).

I liken *The Sun Came Down* to a message in a bottle tossed into the stormy seas of this era of global change and awareness. It is a whisper in the winds of history, but in view of what Black is saying I nominate Bullchild to this canon of influential works for the long term. “This book is essential for all tribal libraries and for students of mythology, literature, and anthropology”(Turner, 1985).

A part of Fisher’s (1984) logic of good reasons is the question of consistency or the confirmation or validation of the values presented by the personal experience of the audience. Fisher goes on to ask the transcendent question, “are the values the message

offers those that in the examination of the critic constitute the ideal basis for human conduct?” This is Bullchild’s claim. His narrative is his evidence.

### *Summary of Chapters*

In chapter two entitled: *Toward an Interpretive Critique of Intercultural Rhetoric*, I explore the critical components of intercultural interpretation and offer a definition of effectual intercultural rhetoric. I develop the traditional rhetorical understandings of authority, audience and rhetorical strategy as well as examining the hermeneutical tasks of redaction, translation, exegesis and commentary. I provide a theoretical basis from the literature of the study of communication and rhetoric to support the criteria I will use to evaluate the argument that Bullchild presents.

In chapter three entitled, *Apologetics: In defense of the faith*, I describe a systematic theology that emanates from the narrative of *The Sun Came Down*. I avoid an exercise in comparative religion or comparative folklore and focus on the way in which Bullchild uses Blackfeet oral tradition to create a systematic theology that address the generic concerns of most theological religions. I show how this apologetic is the basis of his overall apologia or defense of the character of the Native.

In chapter four entitled: *Apologia: In defense of the culture*, I describe how Bullchild develops his overall refutation of the misrepresentation of the Native by “white historians,” using his apologetic as a foundation. He will engage in point by point rebuttal of the indicator terms that compose the negative stereotype of the Native. He will also offer commentaries on the narrative that provide warrants for his larger consubstantial

claims. I explore the possibility of the metaphorical representation of “whiteman” in the characterizations of Napi and the assorted villains in the narrative.

In chapter five entitled, *Implications and applications for intercultural rhetoric*, I examine how *The Sun Came Down* works as effectual intercultural rhetoric and generalize from this case study of Blackfeet rhetoric to larger application in the field of intercultural communication and intercultural rhetoric.

## Chapter Two

### Toward an Interpretive Critique of Intercultural Rhetoric

“Rhetoric unsettles.” (Starosta, 1984). With this statement I am reminded of the daunting task facing the intercultural rhetor or critic. Even when completely understood, an encounter with the text from another culture is unsettling. Growth and change are givens, empathy and appreciation, hoped for outcomes. In this chapter I explain the model of intercultural rhetorical criticism that I apply Percy Bullchild’s *The Sun Came Down*.

Similar distinctions that qualify communication as intercultural also distinguish rhetoric as intercultural. While some have quipped that, ‘all communication is intercultural communication,’ others have opined that, ‘all discourse is rhetoric or persuasive.’ For the purposes of this study there are distinctions. From the perspective I take throughout this critique, culture functions to facilitate communication and induce cooperation among members. The components or features of culture; tradition, symbols/language, norms, beliefs, etc., are all a part of that process. Communication becomes intercultural when one or more of these features or components becomes salient enough to be an obstacle to communication that has to be overcome, hopefully by expanded understanding, in order to facilitate communication between the members of two or more distinct cultures. Rhetoric or persuasive discourse becomes intercultural when its intended audience poses the same challenges as intercultural communication in general.

In my view the process of intercultural hermeneutic and critique is an overwhelmingly positive privilege, but intercultural rhetoric and consequently its



interpretation and criticism is not without its problems. Starosta (1984) lists some of the pitfalls facing the interculturalist in the form of assumptions that apply to intercultural rhetoric. His review is a sobering reflection on both the nature and effectiveness of intercultural rhetoric. Starosta reminds us that intercultural rhetoric is purposeful and it is driven more often than not by the needs of the sender rather than by the understanding of the receiver. Where Fisher (1984) describes universality of narrative as a paradigm of human communication, Starosta reminds us once again that while narrative might be universal some narratives are more universal or influential than others. The desire on the part of the storyteller that his or her message, product, means of salvation, or political ideology will transfer intact from the sender's culture to the receiver's culture is not only unrealistic but can often be characterized as invasive, imperialistic and infectious.

Starosta admits that his, "analysis appears to be iconoclast, wholly negative, with much hope for intercultural rhetoric" (pp. 231-237). He is primarily examining the type of rhetoric that we are familiar with in the context of international political conflict, missionary conquest or commercial exploitation. Lt. Doane's "argument in favor of remaining quiet" is an example of this type of rhetoric, as is Baum's call for the extermination and annihilation of the Indians. This rhetoric is more than unsettling; it is destructive and at this point in history, a threat to the survival of human beings and their Mother Earth. This rhetoric is often the after-the-fact explanation of why, 'we had to destroy the village in order to save it.'

In contrast, the rhetoric that emanates from *The Sun Came Down* constructs an expanded 'approach to interpreting reality.' It is the ancient voice of a people compelled to remain quiet.

It speaks in answer to the rationalizations for genocide. It rebuts historical misrepresentations. It reaffirms and purifies the image of the Native of these Americas. It is unsettling, but it reminds us of Aristotle's assurance that, "Rhetoric is useful because things that are true have a natural tendency to prevail" (Roberts, 1954 p.22).

With that in mind I will offer this working definition of effectual intercultural rhetoric. Effectual intercultural rhetoric overcomes the obstacles to the reception of public persuasive discourse between distinct and self-defined cultures. Effectual intercultural rhetoric foregrounds the consubstantive nature of human beings while representing the distinct meanings, traditions and cosmology of diverse self-defined speech communities. The outcome of effectual intercultural rhetoric is an active awareness of common meaning and purpose between people of distinct cultures. This awareness induces cooperation toward the achievement of common goals. In the words of the folk song *If I Had A Hammer*, effectual intercultural rhetoric, "hammers out love between my brothers and my sisters all over this land." In a more ontological, sense effectual intercultural rhetoric *is* the hammer that builds the bridges of understanding between the diverse children of Mother Earth.

### *Critical Understandings for the Interculturalist*

The functional components, tasks and considerations facing the intercultural interpreter are the same as those faced by the intercultural rhetor. Just as the process the rhetor must engage to bring out a text from his or her culture is complex and multivalent, the interpreter brings out his or her cultural understandings to engage the text in the same fashion. To be conscious of that process is hermeneutic, to evaluate it, is to be critical.

I offer a set of critical understandings for the intercultural critic that I derived from this engagement with *The Sun Came Down* and the on going conversation in the field of rhetorical criticism. While inevitably incomplete they are at least not the ones I started with. This change is a function of the intercultural hermeneutical process. The type of knowledge gained is as Deetz (1984) has it, reflexive.

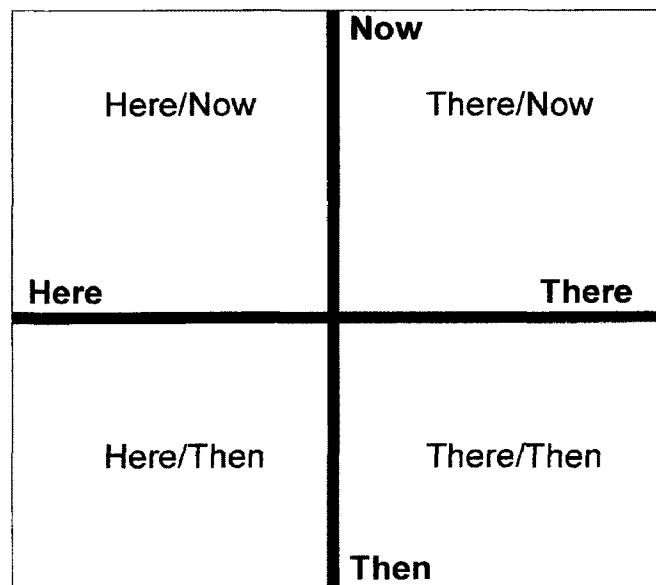
- The critic will be able to locate the text in time and space so the distinctiveness of cultures is apparent.
- The critic will understand the limitations imposed by the intercultural location of the text and realize the importance of contextualizing the critique.
- The critic will undertake a radical reflection on his or her own culture as a consequence of the encounter with the text.
- The critic will discern the “right to speak” of the author by virtue of the standards present author’s speech community.
- The critic will assume the presence of at least one redactor (the author).
- The critic will comprehend the tasks of interpretation and redaction including translation, exegesis and internal commentary.
- The critic will assume at least four levels of the multivalent nature of the intercultural audience including the intracultural, opposing, universal and critical audiences.
- The critic will discern simultaneous and multivalent strategies including consubstantive identification as persuasion, allusion to historical, religious and literary understandings, metaphor, direct refutation and enthymemic commentary.

- The critique will contribute to the project of a global understanding of human dignity.

These critical understandings also reflect the functional components, tasks and considerations of intercultural composition and hermeneutic as well as critique. In other words, these criteria can be used by the author to engage his or her texts and tradition intraculturally and by the audience to interpret intercultural rhetoric.

*Locating the Text in Time and Space.*

In its simplest form this understanding can be represented graphically by considering intercultural rhetoric in the light of time and space. When the movement is horizontal or diagonal the discourse is intercultural. When the movement is vertical the discourse is intracultural.



Time, Space and Intercultural Rhetoric

This diagram also suggests the living dynamic nature of intercultural hermeneutic. It can apply to the study of ancient intercultural texts as Jarret (1991) does in her examination of Sophist rhetoric or to images of entire societies and cultures as Brown (1987), following Bernstein (1971, 2000), presents *Society as Text*. Bringing text and tradition from then to now and from there to here, is what Percy Bullchild did when he collected stories from the oral tradition of the Blackfeet and shaped them into a coherent narrative, translated this narrative into American Indian English, exegeted them for an intercultural audience and presented them as a refutative argument against the historical misrepresentation of the Native American.

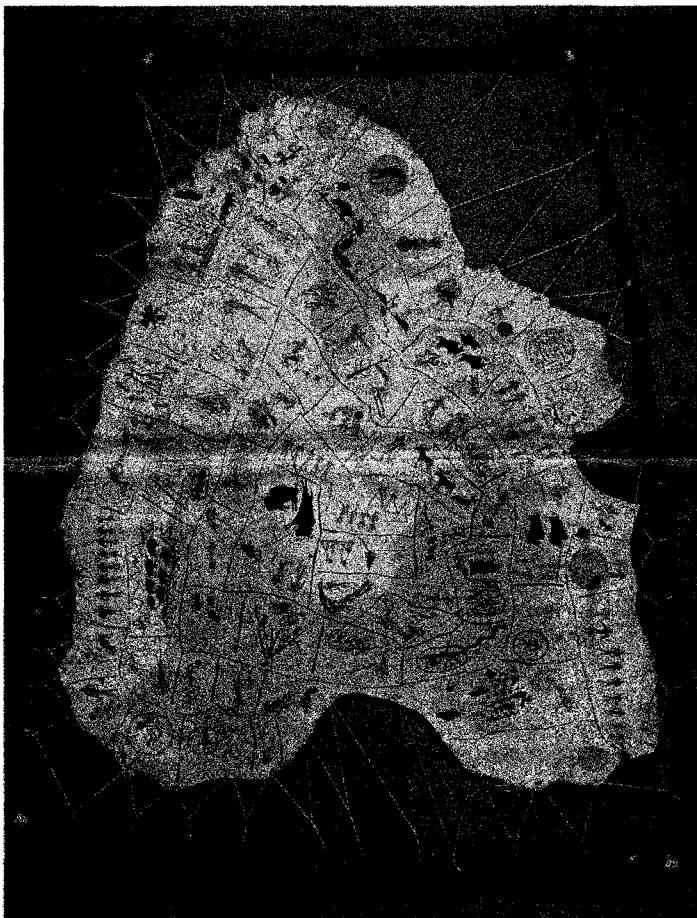
#### *Contextualizing the Critique.*

As I noted in the introduction I missed a lot of *The Sun Came Down* on my first reading. I read it in Berkeley, California at the end of a three-year study of Christian theology. Other than my membership in the Boy Scout *Order of the Arrow*, I knew little of Native American culture or pre-columbian history. My second reading began after living on the Blackfeet Reservation for six years. This considerably deepened my understanding of the text. I hesitate to suggest that the intercultural critic must also become an ethnographer of the speech community that is location of the text, but an inability to engage the historical and intracultural context will certainly limit the perspective of the critic. As Black (1978) reminds us, "It is generally true that the work of rhetoric is fragmentary outside its environment; it functions only in a particular world" (p. 39). Black is specifically referring to transcripts of historical speeches and the importance of conceptualizing a historical context. This fragmentation has the potential to jump several orders of magnitude when critiquing a work of intercultural rhetoric outside

of its “particular world.” Black suggests two critical stances other than the historical; re-creative and judicial. An intercultural critique will require engaging the text from all three of these stances, especially when the text includes, historical, recreated and judicial elements in its own discourse.

Critical methodologies are also affected by limitations imposed in consideration of context. Lake (1983) notes that the standards by which effect is measured may vary from intracultural to intercultural audience. Specifically he says, “For the Indian audience, Red Power rhetoric is persuasive insofar as it serves consummatory purposes” (p. 128). In this sense Indian rhetoric is effective in that it validates Indian cultural and historical understandings regardless of the effective success or failure of the rhetorical act.

The use of language, types, allusion and other strategies will certainly vary from



culture to culture. *The Sun Came Down* is a notable example of a particular style of discourse that is very much a part of its location and might seem awkward to an intercultural or universal audience applying Western literary standards to this work. The braided belt is a better analogy than beads on a string for this type of discourse. The hide painting that Bullchild includes in

his frontispiece actually begins its pictographic narrative in the center and progressively spirals outward to the boundaries of the hide.

When I would ask a question in the Reservation community, that I might consider simple and straightforward, I would often find that a response took hours and included the woven strands of narrative, translation, exegesis and commentary that are a prominent feature of *The Sun Came Down*. In the appendix I have included a portion of the text of *The Sun Came Down* that includes all four of these features of discourse in two pages. I used four different colors and font styles to illustrate the braided nature of Bullchild's intercultural rhetoric.

If I insisted on processing an intercultural narrative in a more linear and syllogistic fashion on the basis of my cultural critical assumptions as to the best way to tell a simple story, i.e. an introductory thesis and a body of illustration and example followed by a restatement and confirmation of the thesis, I would limit my understanding to my own context and fail to expand my perceptions with an appreciation of the rhetor's context and critical assumptions as to what constitutes a true story.

### *Radical Reflection*

Connerton (1978) defines hermeneutics as, "the art of interpretation which aims to disclose and underling coherence or sense in a text or a text analogue, whose meaning is unclear" (p. 102) Deetz (1984) extends this understanding,

This is clearly the methodic task of all intercultural communication. But hermeneutics must go beyond this to recognize the role of the interpreter

in all understanding and to critically investigate the conditions under which cultural meaning is created (p. 217).

Deetz offers two functions for an intercultural hermeneutic. 1) Interpretations demonstrate the meaning and production of meaning as well as demystifying, deconstructing, and reducing the illusion of realist text in each cultural expression (Ricoeur, 1978). This is a starting point for the interpreter to “reflect radically on his or her own culture- to form understanding between cultures.” 2) The critic, “focuses on the underlying structures- the linguistic and extra-linguistic activities and modes of production that explain the genesis and validity of human artifacts...Key to such an analysis is a hermeneutic consciousness that seeks among other things to create, ‘reflexive knowledge about the structure of natural language and the subject’s dependence on it’ (Deetz, 1973).

Two considerations spring to mind in the light of these understandings. One is that interpretation leads to critique, but intercultural critique cannot occur without a hermeneutic. Secondly the process of both interpretation or hermeneutic and criticism is reciprocal. As the critic examines and makes judgments about another culture’s text, in a sense the text is challenging the critic. Because of the many facets of understanding required in understanding and evaluating an intercultural text it is not an endeavor from which a critic can emerge unscathed with all his or her prior assumptions intact.

The first of these assumptions to go would be the “illusion of realist text.” The illusion of a “realist text” is based on the assumption that the sole meaning of a text is apparent to anyone who engages it. Yet no text, intracultural or intercultural, is transparent. I think it is helpful to visualize the notion of realist text as an Orthodox



religious icon. Usually painted on wood, small and portable, an Icon can move from place to place or context to context without appearing to change. Intraculturally speaking quite a few of our texts take on this iconographic character as rhetorical referents. We hear the texts ‘The Constitution,’ ‘The Bill of Rights’ or ‘Manifest Destiny,’ referenced as if the audience shared the same understanding of these constructs, when in fact we know this is an illusion. This type of thinking affects intercultural hermeneutic, because it seems as if we have a tendency to read texts from other cultures as realist when we would not read a similar text from our own culture this way.

In his critique of Hitler’s *Mein Kampf*, Burke (1941) rejects critiques that engage this text on the surface and “vandalize” it by what he calls “attitudinizing” or merely challenging the author’s explicit claims as if they were an objective reality. Instead Burke delivers an analysis that reveals the effectual qualities of the text as well as its problematic nature including locating it in time and space, considering authorship, analyzing its audience and reviewing its strategies. An intercultural “realist” text might be erroneously considered immune to structural, logical and ethical analysis because of its ‘foreign’ origin and context. That precludes comprehensive critical understanding.

I have owned several translations of Lao Tzu’s *Tao The Ching* and have read Bynner’s (1941) version many times. The text that I hold in my hands, regardless of how profound and meaningful it is to me cannot be considered in and of itself unproblematic or realist. Assuming I am engaging a realist text that finally depicts the world of LaoTzu is an illusion. Assuming that I would share my understanding with a Chinese Taoist without a shared hermeneutic is an illusion as well. This awareness is vital to the engagement and interpretation of intercultural rhetoric. Intercultural conflicts have arisen

that range from the amusing to the horrific based on the illusion of an unquestioned understanding of the interpretation of a text as the realist representation of a culture. The reflective effect of engaging an intercultural text results in an expansion of the understanding with which the interpreter or critic views his or her own 'realist' texts whether it is a dearly held intracultural narrative or a perception of a society itself as an iconographic text.

This does not mean that judgment must be withheld. There is a basis for evaluating "the validity of human artifacts." As Philipsen (1992) reminds us "Although the world might appear to be random, there is, after all, order in it, and humans can discern that order, if with some difficulty." However, the eminent interpreter and critic Raymond Brown tells us "It is recognized that the empirical, scientific model of reality dominant in Western culture, while having its own validity, is not the only or solely valid approach to interpreting reality" (Brown, 1990 p.1370). This is the "difficulty" in intercultural hermeneutic and criticism. And this is also what makes it worth doing. The process of establishing context and a platform which to analyze intercultural rhetoric requires the critic to examine his or her assumptions about the reality of his or her own culture.

### *The Right to Speak*

We are familiar with the concept of "expert witness" through forensic argument. This takes on a larger meaning when a person desires to speak for an entire culture or in the case of *The Sun Came Down* a collection of cultures know as the "Native of these Americas." In a strictly local sense I often heard public discourse on the Blackfeet

Reservation begin by establishing the persons “right to speak.” Family lineage, personal experience, age, designated authority are all a part of this. Added to that is the community recognition and validation of the speaker’s wisdom and honor. Because silence is not a threat to social interaction in this particular speech community, when one does not have the right to speak there is no disgrace in remaining quiet and listening.

I would not even attempt a project of criticism like this if Bullchild’s publication of *The Sun Came Down* had not been a tacit invitation to respond to it. I would never consider representing the Blackfeet people. I do not have the “right to speak.” I could study the culture for an eternity and never be given that right in the sense that it is understood on the Reservation. The acceptance of Bullchild’s published text as an important artifact of the Blackfeet tribe validates his “right to speak.” His authority emanates from the lineage of oral tradition and his retention of traditional language, his age, wisdom and standing in the community.

To generalize this understanding is to become aware of the problem addressed by *The Sun Came Down*. Simply put, ‘Just because people don’t know what they are talking about doesn’t prevent them from offering opinions.’ Part of the hermeneutic of intercultural rhetoric would be the discernment of the author’s right to represent his or her culture. However, there is a level of self-effacement on the part of the author of *The Sun Came Down* that seems particularly strategic, at the same time it seems appropriate to the context from which the text was created. Bullchild is defending the culture and character of the Native and not himself as a representative. The ethos of the Blackfeet is offered as evidence rather than the ethos of the speaker. The portrait I offer of Bullchild is sourced extra textually for the simple reason that I want to be confident that he does have the right

to represent his people as he claims. Once that right is critically established the speaker's character recedes while character of the community becomes salient. This self-effacement could well be a feature of other high context cultures and should be considered as part of any critique.

Additionally: The hermeneutic of authority will address one or more rhetorical situations or motives such as Fisher's (1970) typology of affirmation, reaffirmation, subversion or purification. 1) Affirmation creates an image. 2) Reaffirmation renews an existing image. 3) Subversion tears down an image. 4) Purification cleanses an image. An example of affirmation is "I have a dream." Lincoln reaffirmed when he began, "Four score and seven years ago." Baum's, "pack of whining curs" is subversion, an attack. Bullchild's, "Like it or not, we are all related, regardless" is a purification.

#### *The Presence of the Redactor*

In the strictest sense, a redactor prepares a manuscript for publication. In a broader sense redaction is part of the task of the intercultural narrator. Compiling texts from oral traditions often involves considerable redaction. Often many versions of the same or similar story exist simultaneously and hermeneutical, strategic and critical decisions must be made. This is consistent with Deetz's (1973) view of intercultural hermeneutic, "to recognize the role of the interpreter in all understanding and to critically investigate the conditions under which cultural meaning is created."

Sacred texts illustrate the importance of the redactor in the preservation and transmission of their special rhetoric. An example of this is the *Book of Psalms* found in the *Hebrew Bible*. This collection of one hundred and fifty song lyrics attributes a variety of authorships spanning centuries and has been through a multitude of translations and

redactions (Douglas, 1982). *The Book of Psalms* continues to be translated as well as redacted to this day.

The redactor in intercultural rhetoric must be considered a rhetor even if his or her only contribution is the arrangement of stories. When the author is the sole redactor of an oral tradition, the selection and order of presentation can be assumed to be persuasive. When more than one redactors craft a text for presentation, they become contributors to the rhetoric.

The other important redactor present in the preparation for publication of *The Sun Came Down* was Bob SanSouci of Harper and Row (Bob SanSouci, personal communication, 2002). *The Sun Came Down* reads as if it was a transcription of a recording rather than the eleventh version of a 300 page “hunt and peck, clearly a labor of love” manuscript, which it is. In a poignant aside SanSouci described Bullchild’s typewriter as having “bad keys and a ribbon that faded in and out.” At the time of publication Harper and Row maintained its Native American Publishing Division in San Francisco, California. The ‘Division’ consisted of Bob SanSouci and Dessa Brashear. Both of these editors are named in the Bullchild’s author’s dedication. SanSouci himself has co-authored with his brother *The Legend of Scarface*, a children’s book based on the Blackfeet story of the Sundance (SanSouci, 1996). SanSouci told me that it was his decision to leave the manuscript in its original form with minimal editing. SanSouci believed that it was important to preserve the original voice of the author. This decision has considerable significance to the critical reader of this text. One reviewer (Jacob, 1986) commented that, “Bullchild’s idiomatic storytelling style allows the richness of the

original works to follow through.” Another reviewer notes, “his storytelling is rich and leisurely, reflecting spoken narrative in diction and form” (Roripaugh, 1987).

The historical veracity and cultural validity of the intercultural rhetor is assumed because of his or her “right to speak.” The text as it is presented to the intercultural audience is the artifact under consideration, not similar texts from other traditions or other versions of the stories.

### *The Tasks of Interpretation and Redaction*

As noted in chapter one in the general discussion of narrative, the assembly or redaction of a text of intercultural rhetoric is an intentional, constructive and strategic process. The same will hold true for its translation, exegesis and internal commentary. Of these three, translation merits primary consideration. Understanding the general considerations involved in translation is important to hermeneutic. Applying these considerations at this point to *The Sun Came Down* is necessary because so much of the analysis that follows includes passages from the text that contain a use of American Indian English (Leap, 1993) syntax and vocabulary that may at first glance seem jarring or dissonant to the reader. For example, “Things of the past are always in our minds, us old people. Our good old days that have gone by.”

*Translation: “It might not be good English, but it’s good Indian” (Edward ‘Redman’ LittlePlume, 2001).*

One of the first things the critical reader of *The Sun Came Down* might notice is the use of non-standard English by the author. Grammar, syntax, word choice, word order

and usage all run parallel to or at times well afield of what is considered standard American English. Bullchild tells us in his preface, “I do not have a good education of the whiteman language, I cannot speak it fluently. Unfortunately I only went to the sixth grade and couldn’t speak English before going to school. And so the whiteman language is still very foreign to me” (p. 1). Whiteman language might be foreign to Bullchild, but his use of it contains within it the understandings that inform the Blackfeet language that was spoken in his childhood home. This is not an uncommon occurrence among global cultures that have had another language layered over their indigenous language by colonial invasion. The language Bullchild uses does not detract from the ‘rhetorical power’ of *The Sun Came Down*. In fact, Bullchild’s use of the English language is conscious and strategic and works to support rather than detract from the effectiveness of his argument.

Rather than viewing *The Sun Came Down* as a crude or primitive example of misused English I suggest that it be read as an expansion and an enrichment of standard literary English. Dell Hymes (1971) addressed this in a more general way in reference to “pidgins and Creoles.”

Their very existence is largely due to the processes—discovery, exploration, trade, conquest, slavery, migration, colonialism, nationalism—that have brought the peoples of Europe and the peoples of the rest of the world to share a common destiny... And while these languages have come into being and existed largely at the margins of historical consciousness—on trading ships, on plantations, [*Indian Reservations*], in mines and colonial armies, often under the most limiting

and harshest of conditions—their very origin and development under such conditions attests to fundamental characteristics of language and human nature. (p. 5)

These “fundamental characteristics of language and human nature” that Hymes refers to could be called consubstantial, those things we share in common. As I will show, this is what Bullchild is after, a recognition, through the use of narrative argument in a language unique to his particular social location, that if we listen to him carefully enough we can hear truths that we share simply because, “we are all related, regardless.”

The decision made by Harper and Row editor, Bob SanSouci to offer *The Sun Came Down* as close to the original autograph as possible is in line with the larger process Hymes refers to. It would be naïve to suggest that some day there will be no language barriers to communication or that there will come a time when translation is no longer necessary, but part of the significance of *The Sun Came Down* is that it exists as a document that represents an expansion and enrichment of standard American English rather than stories that have been redacted to meet a more narrow normative form of language.

Bullchild spoke ‘Blackfeet’ (more correctly *Piegán* or the language of the *Amskapots Pikuni*) as a child. Linguists (Shellen, personal communication, 2001) say that when language is acquired after the age of five or six the acquisition is a process of translation. That means the newly acquired language is understood and spoken in the light of the old. Marvin Weatherwax (2000), a Blackfeet Language teacher, describes the process of acquisition as follows, “We turned the English words into Indian words so that



we could say them in Indian.” Following this logic then each English word in the Blackfeet vocabulary has an “Indian” meaning. Along with a denotative Blackfeet translation would go the historic cultural assumptions and high communication context of the Blackfeet people.

A high communication context locates the speaker on a continuum between person or individual centered communication and group or social context centered communication. Two examples on the far ends of the spectrum might be the type of communication that occurs in western psychotherapy and counseling as low context, person centered; and the team oriented, company driven communication context associated with Japanese manufacturing as high context group centered. According to linguist Jack Holterman (1996) who lived for many years on the Blackfeet Reservation, "It is important to realize that in Blackfeet, as in other American Indian languages and world view and in some also of Eastern Asia, nothing exists apart from its relationships. (Quite unlike English)."

It is also important to realize the broader understanding of speech or language in some indigenous cultures. Muriel Saville-Troike (1989) explains:

The ethnographer of communication cannot even presuppose what a speech community other than his own may consider to be “language,” or who or what may “speak” it: ‘language for the Ojibwa includes thunder; dogs among the Navajo are said to understand Navajo; the Maori regard musical instruments as able to speak; and drums and shells are channels through which supernatural forces are believed to speak to members of the Afro-Cuban Lucumi religious cult (p. 4).

Donal Carbaugh (1999) brought a similar understanding to the context of the Blackfeet Reservation and extended it to include the idea:

That discourse and culture come hand-in-hand; that senses of place run deeply into cultural discourses; that these can include communication forms that may be, in large part non-linguistic; and further that some cultural uses of discourse and language, such as the directive to “just listen,” can, for some people, presume this basic, non-linguistic communication process, as a kind of cultural action prior to language (p.253).

One would expect to find these high context, descriptive, relational and non-linguistic features in the discourse heard on the Blackfeet Reservation and in the language Bullchild (a life long resident and member) used to write *The Sun Came Down*.

Edward (Redman) LittlePlume (1997, 2001), a fluent Blackfeet speaker and language teacher insists that, “Blackfeet is descriptive, it’s not ‘abstract.’” When Ed LittlePlume says that Blackfeet language is ‘not abstract’ he doesn’t mean that it is incapable of describing conceptual or invisible phenomena. David Murray (1991) in his study of Native American speech and writing addresses this characterization of Native languages as ‘concrete’ and therefore ‘primitive’ and limited. And as Murray shows us, the range of expression in indigenous languages is no more limited than any other. While English may boast phoneme combinations in the hundreds of thousands based on five or six vowels and twenty-one consonants, Blackfeet operates with four consonants and eight vowels and yet there is nothing in English that can’t be described in Blackfeet. The Blackfeet language has the flexibility to come at a concept, activity, person, place or thing through a variety of relationally descriptive approaches. One could characterize

Blackfeet as perhaps more explicitly referential and relational than Standard English without suggesting linguistic impoverishment.

The idea of *valence* enters here (Stroud, 2002) when considering texts that speak across cultures in indigenous languages. This word was coined in chemistry and physics to describe the ability of atoms and molecules to combine. A derived definition refers to a capacity of something to unite, react or interact with something else. Intercultural texts are of necessity multi-valent. That is, they can unite or interact on a number of levels at a number of points of connection. Blackfeet language is not only typically multivalent within the community because of its descriptive referential nature and sense of place but also carries this norm into intercultural interaction. The relational nature of Blackfeet transfers to the English words acquired by Blackfeet speakers in intercultural communication. Consider this comment from Black Bear Woman, the wife of Joe Cobell, who claimed to have fired the shot that killed Chief Heavy Runner and sparked the Bear River Massacre. She is referring to Major (brevet Colonel) Baker who led the U.S. Calvary force that perpetrated the Massacre, “I heard later that the colonel was supposed to be punished for doing all that killing. But then I also heard that he had been sent to Washington to be a big shot. Maybe that was his punishment” (Gibson, 2001, p. 15). While apologizing for belaboring the obvious, I invite the consideration of the multi-valent meanings of the words, ‘Washington big shot’ carry to the descendants of the survivors of The Smallpox Epidemics, The Starvation Winter, The Baker Massacre and The Boarding Schools. Given these events in Blackfeet history whose root causes can be traced back to the nation’s capital, the phrase carries the connotation of personified evil. It reminds the hearer that the speaker is not ignorant of the politics that precipitated the

massacre. It speaks to the perception that bad things come from the nation's capital. Even the word "Washington" when associated with the first president carries connotations. President's Day, a holiday combining celebrations of Washington's and Lincoln's birthday with honoring the memory of presidents in general is not commonly celebrated on the Reservation. Although the day is a holiday the Tribe calls it "All Chiefs Day." Washington and Lincoln are considered chief among the presidents whose administrations destroyed the Native Americans and their way of life. They are on par with Christopher Columbus and Ulysses Grant as historical villains. Time and again I have overheard comments on the Reservation that carry this multi-valence to several orders of magnitude. It seems to me as an outsider that it happens very fast and requires a lot of thought to penetrate even part way into the matrix of humor and understanding.

For example, I was standing in the entrance of Little Flower Catholic Church in Browning on the Blackfeet Reservation, because the church was packed with family members and friends of the 20 or so women who had just completed a four day Cursillo retreat. It was a sweltering spring afternoon. A man worked his way out of the crowd to the entry on his way out and as he passed by, the man in front of me muttered, "You can't leave, it's just like a sweat." Even I as an outsider caught at least a couple of layers of the valence of that remark. A "sweat" or sweat lodge cleansing and prayer is part of traditional spiritual practice. It would be the absolute height of discourtesy to walk out during one. The speaker is making a joke and at the same time it's not a joke. The Cursillo retreats are very important to the families on the Reservation. However much of Christian practice is an object of contention and often ridicule. Pretending to take something seriously that the "whiteman" initiates is a common form of ridicule.

These two examples combine and interact with history, social perception and even theology in a way that, while not unique to the Blackfeet Reservation, is an especially salient part of Reservation discourse. It is also subversive in the undermining sense that Fisher (1970) uses the term.

Henry Louis Gates (1988) calls this type of subversive multi-valence situated in black literature, “two-toned” or “double voiced.” Gates claims that African-American vernacular has its own grammar and philosophy. As Gates notes “Free of the white person’s gaze, black people created their own unique vernacular structures and relished in the double play that these forms bore to white forms.” From Frederick Douglas to urban Hip-Hop lyrics this double, triple, quadruple play is a distinctive feature of African American vernacular English. The use of vernacular English has a subversive history among colonized people. The level of compliance with the rules of grammar can be seen as a question of the degree of political cooperation as well as a function of acquiring knowledge and skill.

Both the interpreter of intercultural rhetoric and the critic will be required to listen beyond the boundaries of Standard English, to be able to hear the representation of the culture represented *The Sun Came Down*. The intercultural rhetor may aid in this process by providing exegesis and commentary from within the narrative. This exegesis and commentary can also be seen as strategic and persuasive. Central to the understanding of narration, translation, exegesis and commentary is the word explanation. Narrative explains an act, event or intention. Translation explains a word in an unfamiliar language in terms of a familiar language. Exegesis explains the context of the narrative. Commentary offers relevance, implication and application to the intended audience.

*Exegesis.*

Dell Hymes (1981) reminds us, “When things were said or sung within the native culture, explicit analysis—a detailed meta-language for dealing with form—was not needed. Performer and audience shared an implicit knowledge of language and speaking.” If I were to tell a family story at one of the big Thanksgiving get-togethers we have every year at Grandmother’s house in Glasgow very little explanation beyond the actual account of people and events would be required. Because we know each other so well, I wouldn’t have to develop Uncle John as a character within the context of a gathering like that. We all know who Uncle John is, where his ranch is, how he runs it, what his kids are like and remember other stories about him well enough that any oblique reference to them will spark recognition. Within our family culture I can just tell the story.

Trying to tell the same story at someone else’s family gathering requires more than a simple narrative. Bullchild tells us,

At the very beginning of the lives of Mudman and Ribwoman, when the few children born to Mudman and Ribwoman began this life we are in on Mother Earth, the words of their spoken language were very few. It was a real simple language. As the children of Mudman and Ribwoman scattered ever so far apart from one another, their languages changed more and more until none of them could understand the other. This happened to almost all of those small groups that had separated from one another. In time, none of those groups could even begin to understand the other.

Communication was impossible. This language barrier existed between those first people until they learned to talk to one another with their hands.

The Native sign language began over this language barrier in that beginning. Today, too, there are language barriers between all nations of this world. Translators or interpreters are needed to understand one another. (p.63)

For my purposes ‘translation and interpretation’ are not equivalent. Intercultural hermeneutic requires exegesis. For example Bullchild gives us the translation of “*Koki un-coon-ohp-oo-doo-dah-cope*. Come on let’s get firewood.” Closely following in parenthesis is an explanation, “(In the Native way—and it is still the same way among our people—your own children and those you might have raised or your grandchildren, aren’t thought of as different from your own family...)” I consider this type of explanation as exegesis. It is additional information that is required for the intercultural audience to comprehend some of the nuances of the story. These might include, the social context and norms, relational understandings, and elaboration of practical activities. In the case of *The Sun Came Down* they will also be part of the argument that Bullchild is crafting. I will develop the idea that the intercultural rhetor’s translation and exegesis are both strategic as is the commentary included in the narrative.

*Internal commentary.*

While translation and exegesis are located contemporaneously with the events and context pertaining to the narrative itself, commentary brings understandings derived from the narrative forward and applies them to world of the audience. Consider this example from *The Sun Came Down*,

It’s the same today, people are forever migrating from one country to another to find food and a good living. Jobs of these days are a part of

living, and they concern food too. So! It's still the way Creator Sun and his disciple Napi had taught all people—to leave one place, find a new place of plenty with room and food to live by. Now people even have a plan to seek a place to live in space. But there! The space is Creator Sun's domain and he will not permit anyone to live out there. He give (sic) his bride Mother Earth to suckle all of his children, and those that are to live out in space aren't suckled by Mother Earth. Nothing will come to them. They'll be forgotten and shall perish not matter what they might try to do to better it out there (p.217).

There are many passages consisting of commentary like this in *The Sun Came Down*. They often appear in the middle of narrative passages. They are a continual reminder to the reader that Bullchild's purpose is to persuade a contemporary audience of the relevance of traditional Native understandings. In this case, yes it is in the nature of real human beings to migrate, but there are boundaries and contact with the planet he calls Mother Earth, is one of them. His reasoning is theological. Humans are the children of Mother Earth and this is their appropriate domain. The rest of the Universe is the abode of the Creator and not for us to travel around in or attempt to migrate into. Of course, grounded in practicality as much of Native discourse is, it won't work anyway and seems foolish and expensive to attempt it.

In *The Sun Came Down*, commentary is also the location of the explicit development of Bullchild's persuasive goal. In his preface he states his purpose, "Most of the written history of us Indians, the Natives of this North American continent, and the South American continent too, has been written by non-Indians. But this is our history



and our legends of our beginning, the very beginning of all life. Most of these are so false and smearing that it gets me mad. That's the very reason I am writing now" (p. 1). Again "I have read many books on the Native of these countries. Our white friends do much smearing in those books. In most case we were called almost everything except our true name, Natives. So with this book I am trying to right the wrongs" (p.84). These wrongs range from the essentializing, demonization and dehumanizing of Natives to the theft, exploitation and abuse of their indigenous territory. These wrongs include the poisoning of the air and water, the poisoning of the people, the destruction of culture and language and the rationalizations that are still heard today implying that this was and is all part of a larger purpose consistent with a greater good (Old Chief, 2002).

Exegesis and Commentary occupy a substantial portion of *The Sun Came Down* and it is this fact that moves it from a collection of folk tales to a consubstantive rational narrative argument supported by the "logic of good reasons" (Fisher, 1978). The difference between the two has to do with temporal location. Exegesis is the explanation located within the thought world of the story and commentary is the explanation and application that advance an intercultural hermeneutic in response to the "arguments in favor of remaining quiet."

#### *The Multivalent Nature of the Intercultural Audience.*

It's very late at night or very early in the morning in 1969. A man well past middle age sits in a chair by his wife's bedside in Toppenish hospital. For many reasons sleep does not come easily in this place. Although he has worked as a rancher and migrant orchard worker for much of his life and traveled a good deal, this place is not his

home. Although he knows in his heart there are other traditional ways of healing, he has entrusted his beloved wife to the hands of white medicine. His wife's illness is a lengthy one. Night after night he sits in vigil. One night he asks for pencil and paper from the nursing station. He begins to write the story of his people. He tells about their close relationship with their Creator and their understanding that the Creator Sun wants only good things for his children. He writes to remind himself and the Creator that he has not forgotten. Is he praying? Is he hoping that telling the story will invoke the healing presence of the Creator's compassion? Is this his audience?

As the man writes, the stories come one after the other, yellow pad after yellow pad is filled with his recollections. The story becomes bigger. More people than just his wife are in need of healing. He sees how the people live in his home on the Blackfeet Reservation. He knows how far this is from the Creator's intentions. He sees through the lens of history. He sees the disease and heartache of an entire indigenous continent. He wants the stories to be told again by the people they belong to. He wants the language spoken and understood in the old way. He wants the young people, 'smarties' he calls them, to remember their traditions and live according to the way of the Creator. He wants the Elders to nod and agree that yes, this is true.

Today we Natives of these United States are trying to pick up our Native customs and cultures, seeking to find the lost part of that once precious way of our ancestors. We find pieces, those we are fitting like a jigsaw puzzle, because our young people hunger for that great culture. And as the Native goes along in life, we piece together those lost parts of our great

culture of life and once more live like those precious days of yesteryear (p. 84)

He also knows that there are people of good will who will listen to his stories and become persuaded that the misrepresented stereotype of the Native character is not only an error in image, but has been used as warrant in the “argument in favor of remaining quiet.”

*The intracultural audience.*

There is certainly more than one audience for the intercultural rhetoric of *The Sun Came Down* and for intercultural texts in general. Bob SanSouci told me that when *The Sun Came Down* was published, Harper prepared a specially bound copy printed in water proof ink on velum and it was presented to the Blackfeet tribe in a ceremony that Bullchild attended shortly before his death six months later. It is preserved as a cultural artifact of the Blackfeet Nation. This audience could be considered his intracultural audience. Teresa Spoonhunter, a Blackfeet tribal member, comments.

Probably over half of the Indian Students are ashamed of being Indian here. Most of the students that go into college, that are Indian, drop out and they don't finish. And the ones that do, they come home and they say, “I wish I would have known my culture when I went into college.” And some people even find out that maybe a non-Indian knows more about the Blackfeet background than that person going to that college (Piegan Institute, 1995).

Karver, (1986) comments about *The Sun Came Down*, “It is a gift from generations past to those who will shape the future and exemplifies the Native American belief that the creation is never complete.”

*The opposing audience.*

The opposing audience for *The Sun Came Down* consists of those who Bullchild characterizes as “non-Indians, white historians, whiteman, and, sarcastically, our white friends.” While his refutative argument exists in the rhetorical situation or motive of purification and he addresses this audience as his opponents. I wish this audience only existed in the past, but I had only been on the Blackfeet Reservation long enough to open a checking account when an off Reservation merchant refused to accept my check because it had a Browning address on it. Prejudice large and small has its roots in ignorance and suspicion. We who grew up in the middle of the last century can easily recall how tenaciously and defiantly we cling to our stereotypes in spite of the hope that people would be not be judged on the “color of their skin, but on the content of their character” (King, 2002). Bullchild explicates the character of the native as the focus of his *apologia* because the opposing audience still exists.

*The universal or implied audience.*

The universal or implied audience is a construct composed of those persons of good will who given the claims and warrants of the argument will agree with the conclusions of the rhetor. The universal audience will be amenable to a logic of good reasons. This audience will be able to identify representative values in the text. It will respond to a consistent presentation of values that can be affirmed by one’s personal experience as well as be aware of the consequences of agreement. Most importantly for the project of effectual intercultural rhetoric, the universal audience will be conscious of an overarching or transcendent message that they share with the rhetor.

Argumentation addressed to a universal audience must convince the reader that the reasons adduced are of a compelling character, that they are self-evident, and possess an absolute or timeless validity, independent of local or historical contingencies (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969, p. 32).

*The critical audience.*

The critical audience evaluates intercultural according to standards derived from and appropriate to the culture represented by the text. When Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca's hermeneutic and critical standard is applied to intercultural rhetoric specifically it means that the work will have intracultural validity, historical veracity and universal application and agreement, a monumental task. This, however, is the standard by which Bullchild invites critical evaluation and interpretation when he claims about the narrative in *The Sun Came Down*, "Some of these stories may sound a little foolish but they are very true. And they have much influence over all of the people of this world, even now as we all live" (p. 3).

*Simultaneous and Multivalent Strategies*

The basic claim of the intercultural rhetor is a consubstantive version of, "We are all related." According to Burke this is the basis of persuasion. When made successfully this claim can serve as a warrant for refutation of subversive rhetoric. Support for consubstantive identification can take the form of historical, literary or religious allusion.

*Historical and literary allusion.*

The ancient appeals to the means of persuasion or proofs of *mythos*, *logos*, *pathos* and *ethos* will be present in some form or another in a work of intercultural rhetoric. To

use these terms interculturally and theologically will require expansion of their meanings as components of an intercultural hermeneutic beyond their use in traditional speaker oriented rhetorical criticism (Covino & Jolliffe, 1995). I offer these expanded meanings as I will use them in analyzing both the apologetic and the apologia of *The Sun Came Down*.

*Mythos* can be thought of as a foundational narrative or metaphor that orients a culture or explains the way the culture's world works. In classical rhetoric the appeal to mythos held more weight than it does in our materially constructed cosmology. It is mythos that lends final authority to the existence of norms and beliefs. The harmonious world or culture can be seen as operating within the will and purpose of the central mystery of the Creator. Supernatural explanations have been given throughout history for natural phenomena. Interpreting intercultural rhetoric requires an understanding akin to this, "One person's superstition is another person's deeply held religious conviction." This was brought home to me at a graveside service within days of my arrival on the reservation. Following a traditional Catholic funeral mass, the graveside committal closed with traditional Blackfeet drumming and songs. As the songs were offered, a magnificent Bald Eagle hovered low over the open grave for a moment and then flew off toward the sun setting over the Rocky Mountain front. When I saw one of the singers, Al Potts, at the post office a few days later, I asked him if he would show me how they did that. He just smiled at me.

The concern of theology in regard to *mythos* is the nature and character of the Creator. The nature of the Creator reveals the purpose for which the world and the human being were made.

*Logos* assumes a reasonable and ordered universe that can be comprehended at least in part by human beings. In persuasion it is an appeal to a common perception of reason and order. This logic and order operates through speech and text. For the purposes of intercultural rhetoric it must be noted that speech is not necessarily limited to an exchange of principles, theories and philosophy. In many cultures the primary organizing dialog takes place between spirit and flesh. The word of the Creator and the prayers offered in response to this word is the central dialectic. Additionally, as represented by Al Pott's Eagle, communication is thought to be possible between all created and spiritual beings. In theology *logos* represents this dialogic relationship of the human being with the Creator. This relationship can be seen as a principled and purposeful.

The syllogistic, symbolic logic *logos*, may have less application in intercultural critique. While every culture has its own order, these logics do not necessarily have a one to one correspondence, based as they are on a variety of narrative myths.

*Ethos* has traditionally referred to the character of the speaker as proof for the veracity of his or her claims. In intercultural critique, especially in the presence of a self-effacing rhetor, *ethos* can be expanded to consider the character of an entire culture. This is especially important in apologia, which can be considered as an attack on the *ethos* of a culture. It is difficult to consider *ethos* apart from *mythos* in a spiritually centered culture. It is the understood intentions of the central organizing narrative concerning the Creator that gives rise to the *ethos*. In theology *ethos* is the establishment by the Creator of rules and norms for human beings. These rules, or what Bullchild refers to as "restrictions" and "commandments," address the question in the light of the relationship with the Creator,

“How should we then live?” The answers to this question become the manifestation of the character of a people.

*Pathos* has traditionally been understood as an appeal to a variety of emotions. Language and imagery that evoke emotions can be used to sway an audience. *Pathos* is the appeal to the heart. Central to human emotions is the universal experience of suffering. Part of the strength of an apologia comes from the empathetic recognition by the audience that the rhetor participates in shared suffering. When Bullchild portrays the world of his ancestors, his portrayal has a poignant and melancholic dimension that tugs at our heartstrings. There is a sense of grieving for a world that has gone by. A world that seems to make more sense; seems to be more human and more delightful than the world that replaced it. This evocation is a potent strategy with which to establish common ground with all four levels of audience.

Different belief systems configure the human tragedy in a variety of ways. In the world of *The Sun Came Down*, suffering is a result of wrongdoing, or the failure to follow instructions. The Creator will intervene to prevent further suffering. Both the prevention and remedy for suffering are in large part the basis of religious practice. The concern for theology is, “How can right relationship with the Creator be restored when we have strayed?”

While there is a general progression of ideas and conceptual development, the argument follows the pattern the hide painting in the frontispiece and spirals to its conclusions. This is a use of the enthymeme as Aristotle describes it above. Bullchild reasons from examples put forward in the narrative. He relies on the strength of *mythos*. As Jarrett (1991) notes this is another way of arguing that has deep roots in global



cultures and is nevertheless effectual. Recalling Brown (1990), “It is recognized that the empirical, scientific model of reality dominant in Western culture, while having its own validity, is not the only or solely valid approach to interpreting reality” understandings are drawn from narrative whether they are considered historical, literary or religious

*Religious allusion: Apologetic.*

Up until relatively recently the definition of human essence in a created world has been the province of the theologian. Whether she spoke as an oracle from Delphi, wrote apocalyptically from the island of Patmos, sat beneath a Bo tree in central India, or the djinn filled night sky of the Arabian desert, perched on a misty cliff above the Yalu River or told stories beside a campfire that merged sparks and stars on the North American Plains, created humans have looked to the one who listened to and studied the words and intentions (*logos*) of the Creator (*theos*). Their purpose has been rhetorical in the sense Burke uses the term. They desire to induce cooperation with the will of the Creator. The belief systems that have developed from the stories they told or the stories told about them are based on narratives from which answers to four central questions are derived. “Who is the Creator? For what purpose did the Creator make us? How can we be rescued in our straying from that purpose? How shall we then live”(Baltimore Catechism, 1891)? Catechisms and apologetic arguments based on faith claims revealed in narrative accounts are the domain of the systematic theologian.

In the domain of systematic theology there is of necessity a reliance on narrative accounts as discursive bedrock. Aiken (1907) offers this definition of apologetics as the rhetoric of systematic theology.

The comprehensive, scientific vindication of the grounds of Christian, Catholic belief, in which the calm, impersonal presentation of underlying principles is of paramount importance, the refutation of objections being added by way of corollary. It addresses itself not to the hostile opponent for the purpose of refutation, but rather to the inquiring mind by way of information.

For some critical readers there is a tension between ‘scientific vindication’ and narrative argument. Apologetics might be seen to function from within what Fisher (1984) would call the ‘rational world paradigm.’ However Fisher’s alternate way of way of approaching argument through narrative as both ‘real and fictive’ acknowledges the tension that exists in apologetics when he cites Goldberg:

A theologian, regardless of the propositional statements he or she may have to make about a community’s convictions, must consciously strive to keep those statements in intimate contact with the narratives which give rise to those convictions, with which they gain their sense and meaning and from which they have been abstracted (p.273).

Staying in contact with the story defines the task of the apologist. By reason of its authority, antiquity and acceptance the story provides from within its telling the good reasons to which logical rationale can be applied and an applicable system can be constructed.

Robert Altar (1981) makes a compelling argument for reading the sacred Hebrew text known as the Pentateuch and the former Prophets as “historicized fiction.” He believes that applying the tools of literary critique to this work as if it was narrative

fiction allows a much deeper understanding of the deliberate nuances employed by the various authors. Some might find this approach threatening if they see it as a claim that the Biblical writers composed and shaped the narratives in order to support a claim rather than simply recording the explicit word of God. Alter on the other hand sees this as enhancing, if anything, the “moral vision embodied in a particular kind of narrative” (p. x). By the same token we can examine Bullchild’s origin stories as support for a systematic theology with the tools of the rhetorical critic without impinging on the dignity of moral vision portrayed in them. I consider Bullchild a theologian, because he reports the words and intentions of the Creator. Rarely in the field of theology does there appear an account by one author that includes the recollecting of the story, the translation from the original language in which the stories were told, the exegesis of the social and historical context surrounding the stories and commentary on the narratives, translation and exegesis that speaks to contemporary application. This alone makes *The Sun Came Down* a work of rhetorical and theological significance. Whether or not the reader agrees with the literal record of events is not as important as the ‘true story’ of the moral vision that once upon a time defined a people and hopefully will continue to influence and induce cooperation.

### *Metaphor.*

Given the multivalent nature of intercultural rhetoric, the presence of explicit or implicit metaphor can be expected. If a vernacular presentation can be considered as double-voiced or two-toned, then the presence of metaphorical characters and stories will be considered a form of support for the claims of the rhetor. Interpreting metaphor is filled with pitfalls, not the least of which is the lack of knowledge of the author’s intent.

Also shared assumptions about history must be present in sender and receiver. If the audience views American history through the construct of manifest destiny their understanding of metaphor will differ from the audience who sees history as a record of cultural genocide.

The origin and root referents of metaphor may not be readily observable to the interpreter or critic or even to the author of the text. As Deetz (1984) explains, “While metaphors are material manifestations of culture, they are not mere empirical objects or verbal behaviors. Language cannot be treated properly as an object in the way it expresses experience, nor can metaphor. The patterns of metaphors, the system of similarities and differences they entail, all trace the way a culture thinks” (p. 220). As philosophers and psychologists have pointed out this pattern may reside in a very deep and unarticulated part of our consciousness. Perhaps for this reason it is a powerful rhetorical strategy.

### *Refutation.*

The intercultural rhetor may assume, construct, engage and refute negative stereotypes of his or her own culture. With help like that furnished by L. Frank Baum and his ilk, it is not particularly difficult to assemble a negative stereotype of a culture in order to refute it. This is far from being a straw argument, as the “arguments in favor of remaining quiet” would attest to if they could reply. The intercultural rhetor can list the indicator terms that compose a stereotype or misrepresentation and refute them explicitly or implicitly throughout the narrative. The intercultural interpret and critic will be cognizant of this process and be able to ascertain evidence of it.

*Enthymemic internal commentary.*

As noted in the above discussion of narrative rationality, stories are evidence. To make the connection between claim and narrative warrant apparent, internal commentary can be expected. Commenting from inside the text the author may present enthymemic conclusions in accordance with Aristotle's broad definition of enthymeme. Part of intercultural is matching up claim and warrant in this sense. The intercultural critic applies the logic of good reasons to the commentary as well as the narrative.

*The Project of a Global Understanding of Human Dignity*

Writing as I am in the midst of a global war with the memory of my own personal experience in Vietnam of the "argument in favor of remaining quiet" in the forefront of my consciousness, the necessity for the intercultural hermeneutic seems urgent. Subject to daily doses of subversive discourse by those for whom warfare remains a diplomatic strategy of choice, I remember how important it was to dehumanize my enemies in order to exterminate them.

Bullchild recalls the time when animals and humans could speak the same language and how hard it was for the human to kill a creature that was begging for its life. How easy it is to deafen ourselves to the consubstantial rhetoric of our brothers and sisters in order to hear the rhetoric of extermination. How strange it is that only when the culture is dying in the snow of the North American prairie or on the sand of the Fertile Crescent do we hear the voices of its members crying, "In vain we tried to tell you." Effectual intercultural rhetoric like *The Sun Came Down* is an antidote for this inability to

listen. It expands our sense of hearing and understanding, opens our hearts and engages our common humanity.

A serviceable intercultural hermeneutic can be constructing following these theoretical considerations. In the next chapter I develop an apologetic from *The Sun Came Down* in order to demonstrate how easily a systematic theology can be ascertained in the narrative and show how the existence of this apologetic is a large part of the refutation of the misrepresentation of the Native character. The presentation of the apologetic demonstrates the use of this model of intercultural hermeneutic. Another purpose of this development is to provide a more comprehensive glimpse of the content of *The Sun Came Down*. Following that I show how this apologetic informs the remainder of Bullchild's multivalent apologia.

I invite the reader to recall the image of a braided and beaded belt or the hide painting on page 34 when processing the following analysis. As I have demonstrated, the strands of narrative, translation, exegesis, and commentary make up a holistic argument in a fashion common to the speech community from which *The Sun Came Down* was written. As I proceed to unravel *The Sun Came Down* for the purposes of critique I remember that it is best read and understood as a whole. There are a variety of strategies and argument forms employed by Bullchild, but they all point at one main thing: We are all related, regardless of what we have been told in the past.

Bullchild describes Native storytelling as speech event that would go on for an entire night; Story after story with comment and explanation interspersed, imagery merging with the sparks and smoke of the campfire against the backdrop of a universe of

stars until finally one collapses into sleep to continue the unity of understanding in dreams.

## Chapter Three

### Apologetics: Defending the Faith

“They came for the freedom of religion, but it wasn’t freedom for the native of this land”  
(Bullchild, 1985, p.45).

As Bullchild concludes his *History of the world as my Blackfeet elders told it*, he advances the claim that the Native had true religion.

According to the written history of the non-Indian, this stopping of the Native religion in their way was very contrary to the coming to this land of Natives. Those first comers of the non-Indian say that they come for the freedom of religion. But they stripped our way and in place taught us a foreign religion that even now some of us Natives don’t really understand, because it’s still foreign to us people. Us Natives of these Americas had the truest faith that everyone followed in these lands. We weren’t the only believers in the sun, but we knew for a fact that it was true to worship the sun, he was our true Maker. He must’ve made the God that’s trying its best to take our Creator Sun’s place. Even now, that God takes the glory that our Creator Sun does for all people. That God that the white people try to shove on to us is a selfish God, and only whiteman’s God. My Creator Sun is all colors, all nationalities, and helps everyone in the body of Mother Earth, not just certain ones. Creator Sun provides for all, it brings up all food, it gives us breath and life from all of its elements (p383).



Bullchild's central claim that "Like it or not, we are all related," is a consubstantive appeal based in an apologetic that emanates from the narrative of *The Sun Came Down*. An apologetic can be thought of as a systematic theology, or way of communicating knowledge of the Creator. This can also be thought of as a rhetoric of identification. As Burke (1950) reminds us,

Identification is affirmed with earnestness precisely because there is division. Identification is compensatory to division. If men were not apart from one another, there would be no need for the rhetorician to proclaim their unity. If men were wholly and truly of one substance, absolute communication would be of man's very essence. It would not be an ideal, as it is now, partly embodied in material conditions and partly frustrated by these same conditions; rather it would be as natural, spontaneous, and total as with those ideal prototypes of communication, the theologian's angels, or "messenger"(p.22).

By advancing an apologetic interpretation of the narrative in *The Sun Came Down* I will demonstrate that a systematic theology can be derived from Bullchild's *History*. This in turn will show that the misrepresentation of the Native as savage barbarians is inaccurate. A description of the apologetic contained in *The Sun Came Down* will also serve to provide a more comprehensive sample of the content of Bullchild's collection of stories.

I will employ the model of intercultural hermeneutic that I outlined in chapter two to derive this systematic theology. There are some addition intercultural criticism pitfalls that I have tried to avoid in light of injunctions by both ethnographers and critics alike similar to this one from Shegloff (1991),

The ongoing task for analysts is to provide readers with evidence of the very possibility of social order in the first instance, on its own merits, as relevant to and consequential for the participants themselves as they make available, each to the other, their understandings of the moments and occasions of which they are a part.

And these instructions I paraphrased from ethnographers, Emerson, Fetz and Shaw (1995),

1) Remember meaning is contextual. 2) Even within one community among different groups or families, meaning is contextual. 3) Begin by honoring, respecting the face value of meanings offered by members. 4) Try to be a first hearer of the narrative unencumbered by previous narratives. 5) Allow theoretical and cultural categories to emerge from the narratives.

As a Christian theologian it would be a mistaken anachronism for me to read back Christian understandings into *The Sun Came Down*. From my perspective the theology presented by Bullchild seems to have more in common with my understanding of a variety of other religious systems, Buddhism, Islam and Ancient Tribal Judaism among them. While obvious similarities, like Mudman and Ribwoman as a type of Adam and Eve and the use of a person tied into the fork of a tree as the central figure of the Sun Dance as a homologue of a Christian “Rood Cross,” exist, they are much less prevalent than the elements that distinguish the Native Religion Bullchild portrays. For example the origin and meaning of suffering as it is presented in *The Sun Came Down* has little or no

parallel in Christian theology but it does in Buddhism, the first of the four noble truths being, “All life is suffering.”

More importantly as evidenced above, Bullchild claims precedence for Native Religion. In his view it is the Elder Faith. He explicitly rejects the Bering Land Bridge theory of migration and insists that the first humans were created and lived in the shadow of the Rocky Mountains, Backbone of the World. Archeological evidence is visible at Head Smashed in Buffalo Jump Interpretive center in Alberta, Canada that suggests organized bands of Natives were roaming the North American prairie while Abraham, patriarch of Judaism, still resided in Ur.

Two other pitfalls I could fall into might be to interpret *The Sun Came Down* in the light of a “perennial philosophy” (Huxley, 1970) or to compare Bullchild’s presentation to other Native Religions or other versions of the stories and character’s presented in *The Sun Came Down*. Critics like Aply (1987) and historians like Bennett (1982) and ethnographers like Wissler & Duvall (1909) present these interpretations and comparisons, but they are perhaps more significant to the ethnographer than to the rhetorical critic. If *The Sun Came Down* came down is read as work of rhetoric and Bullchild is seen as a redactor of sacred stories for the purpose of constructing both an apologetic system and an apologia in defense of the Native character then, comparisons, theological or ideological, could be seen as extraneous limitations. Recalling instruction numbers four and five above, “Try to be a first hearer of the narratives unencumbered by previous narratives and allow theoretical categories to emerge from the narrative itself.”

Additionally there is a concern with what can be called Christian technical vocabulary. Words, like “sin, savior and salvation” appear in Bullchild’s narrative. I

would suggest to the critical reader that this is more of a function of Reservation English than a literal American Standard English translation from the thought world of *The Sun Came Down*. To support that suggestion I would invite consideration of the sources of the English Language that was taught on the Blackfeet Reservation. Some of this has been presented above in the discussion of *Translation*, but to reiterate, the early Reservation English language teachers were, by and large, missionaries or Catholic priests and religious. Their use of the English language was unavoidably grounded in their theology, ideology and evangelical purpose.

But there is another more important observation that can be made about literary English in general and that has to do with its earlier formatting around the early 1500s. Two primary documents were tremendously influential to all who wrote in English for the next several centuries, including the centuries of missionary conquest in the Americas, the English translation of the King James Bible and Whitford's translation of Thomas a' Kempis' *The Imitation of Christ*. Their publication followed closely the advent of mass produced texts. The Latin Gutenberg Bible, published circa 1456 is said to be the first book produced on a moveable type printing press (Webster, 1964). Following the development of the printing press, the social and political turmoil of the protestant reformation, the advent of the industrial revolution and the beginnings of European out migration to the Americas, all contribute to the collage of linguistic ideology that has become in our time American Standard English.

Harold Gardiner, S.J. (a'Kempis, 1989), editor of Thomas a' Kempis' *The Imitation of Christ* traces this fifteenth century work through its translation by Richard Whitford from Latin to English and comments,

And More {*St. Thomas*} certainly knew the Whitford version of *The Imitation*. If he did, his impeccable taste and keen judgment would have seen that here was a gem of English style. What more likely, accordingly, than that Whitford's own cadences would have affected More and helped to sharpen his own style, which was in turn to shape the direction of the English language?" (p. 14).

Gardiner goes on to note the influence that the English of this very small but very widely read book had on the translators (More et. al.) who prepared the King James Version of the Christian Bible. It's not a bold claim to maintain that literary English was certainly influenced by these two documents. Along with the syntax and usage would come the Christian ideology that informed the translations. This English was still taught in churches and mission schools when Bullchild was a young person. Words like "abides and sacrifice" have meanings in English that do not have one-to-one correspondence with words or expressions in Blackfeet. *The Sun Came Down* is burdened with the task of reconciling two entirely different thought worlds, or cultural codes or as Stuart Hall would have it, two different ideologies.

Native speakers can usually produce grammatical sentences in their native language but only rarely can they describe the rules of syntax in use, which make their sentences orderly, intelligible to others and grammatical in form. In the same way, statements may be unconsciously drawing on the ideological frameworks and classifying schemes of a society and reproducing them—without those making them being aware of doing so (Hall, 1982, p. 72).

The native speaker of American Standard English can be unaware of the pervasive nature of the ideology embedded in some of the vocabulary and syntax employed by Bullchild. Defining that ideology is beyond the scope of this essay, but it can be said that Bullchild's American Standard English words are also American Indian English and that they have undergone the process of translation that Weatherwax (2000) describes, "We turned the English words into Indian words so that we could say them in Indian." With these two observations in mind I would suggest that it is most fair to Bullchild to search for the meaning of the words like "savior" within the narrative itself, realizing that it has a multivalent "Indian" meaning.

Recalling Burke (1954), "Here is perhaps the simplest case of persuasion. You persuade a man only insofar as you can talk his language by speech gesture, tonality, order, image, attitude, idea, identifying your ways with his." Effectual intercultural rhetoric relies on the ability of both rhetor and audience to meet this task reciprocally. The realization that the American Standard English of much of *The Sun Came Down*'s audience is as burdened with cosmology and ideology as is the dialect of American Indian English that Bullchild uses, is vital to intercultural hermeneutic.

Therefore for the purposes of this analysis I assume that the stories Bullchild relates are sourced in ancient oral tradition, as he claims, and that the translation and exegesis he includes are accurate in accordance with his purposes. With that in mind I proceed to derive a systematic theology from *The Sun Came Down* with as little imposition as possible using the terms and meanings present in the narrative. The categories I have chosen reflect the common concerns of most religious belief systems.

### *Mythos: The Nature of the Creator*

One of the great divides of the modern world arises between human beings who live in an intentionally created world and those who don't. Bullchild doesn't offer to debate this issue; he rather assumes it from the beginning. He is not concerned with whether or not there is a Creator, but is quite clear about the Nature of the Creator and how and why the Creation came to be. "Creator Sun lived alone in a spiritual place for ages, no one else to be with, and naturally he got lonely for some kind of life to be with (p.5)." There is a world of understanding in that statement that will characterize one of the most salient themes in *The Sun Came Down*: The Creator needed us; We need the Creator; We are all related; We need each other. This four-part theme will repeat and develop throughout the rest of the story. From this understanding Bullchild will develop the description of Creator Sun and his intentions for his children. Four broad indicators of this theme recur in the narration; compassion, concern, connection and consequence.

#### *Compassion*

The first image Bullchild provides us is the Creator playing with a ball of mud that he has fashioned from "space dust and spit." There is eagerness and a desire to continually improve his creation to make it more responsive and enjoyable, which characterizes Creator Sun. Underlying his own need for companionship, is a corresponding "compassion" for his creatures. This compassion is both sympathetic and empathetic. It is also unpredictable and negotiable. Things will go awry almost immediately in the narrative and the Creator's reactions will range from harsh and deadly to understanding and reconciliation. "His compassion for his children was great. He did almost anything his children asked for. But once his words were out from his mouth,

those words became law for those children and the rest of his creations...Time couldn't be reversed...What's done is done"(p. 73). When he takes corrective measures it will always be in the best interest of his purposes for his creation even if he has to kill part of it off. These measures will often be in response to a request for help from his children.

Creator Sun's first attempt at living creatures to populate his ball of mud is a failure. He makes snakes and soon there are too many of them. "They went wild. Everything they did went against their Maker. They weren't listening they took everything in their own way" (p. 7). As we shall see this description will apply to human beings as well, but this time the Creator's response was draconian. He made his mud ball boil intending to kill all of the snakes. However as "Creator Sun was walking around to see what had to be done to make up for this...he got a glimpse of the small female snake that was the only one to come out alive. Creator Sun only said, 'From this small snake, let others come from her'"(p. 7). This event, its types and aspects, will recur throughout the narrative illustrating the Creator's compassionate and forgiving nature as well as his fallibility.

One aspect of the Creator's compassion is his ability to make mistakes. He will take uncompleted actions. He will overlook small flaws that ultimately have large consequences. His expression is often rueful as he regards his works, especially his human creations. His sympathetic affinity with his creation and mutuality of emotion, both in terms of joy and satisfaction and sadness and regret will characterize his actions and reactions.

The type of the female remnant will recur throughout the narrative. Each time Creator Sun corrects the course of his creation a pregnant female will survive the



correction. There will always be a survivor. Sometimes it will be overtly intentional on the part of Creator Sun and other times it will be because he has overlooked some important detail. Additionally in regard to human beings, “all females are mine until they find a man who will revere them and their virginity is taken from them” (p.358). He will choose a “very obedient girl, a teenager who was still a virgin” (p.272) to inaugurate the process that would lead to the Sun Dance, the culmination of the narrative.

Creator Sun’s familial compassion is a direct extension of the cosmological sequence of creation and the source of his empathy. His first spouse was the moon, which he created from the dirt of his mudball. The moon was in his image but able to bear his first offspring. His first marriage is a failure. His spouse has an affair with one of the surviving snake people, who have now replenished their numbers. His second or “standby” wife is the Mother Earth. Out of Mother Earth springs the rest of Creation. Human beings are literally the children of Creator Sun and Mother Earth. “Even Mother Earth is alive. She feeds all of us, we all are her suckling children. Things come out of her body the ground, growing up towards our father Creator Sun with their arms held out to him as the growth slowly grows upward from the ground” (p. 291).

His compassionate nature will allow human beings to go against their own best interests and his intentions. Each adjustment and new ordering will ultimately take on a life of its own and “go wild.” In the story that describes how death and illness begins, Creator Sun says, “I made you all so that I would have something that I could love very, very much for time to come. I don’t want to do anything to your bodies just to make you all aware of each other” (p. 71). But he does and immediately regrets it. He allows the

introduction of disease and death. "It was a sad thing for Creator Sun. He alone knew what sadness was all about, he had gone through it all before" (p. 71).

Bullchild portrays the Creator as having much in common with his Creation to the point of embodying its flaws and taking responsibility for his failures. Additionally there is a development of Creator Sun's persona that parallels the life cycle of the human being. At first he is portrayed as playful, impulsive and almost childish. Later he will interact with human beings out of maturity and active participation and finally we will see him old wise and tired. "People say that from this unhappy change in his plans for all his creations (death and illness), as he left his children, the Mudman and Ribwoman, he walked ever so slowly away from them with his shoulders and head stooped over, he was so sad from all of this. And as far as anyone knows, he's still stooped" (p. 71).

### *Concern*

The creation is purposeful. The Creator made it for his own reasons. He never abandons his creation. He maintains an active role in the affairs of this world both directly and indirectly through his presence and through his representatives.

It is my promise to keep them alive with what I have to offer them to keep them alive. It is up to them if they go by my words and do the right things they must do that I have taught them all to keep that life I give each of you. My breathing is yours, it is my own breath that all of you breath in to stay alive. If I didn't exist, there would be no kind of life anyplace. Life is my power, love is my power. No other being other than myself, Creator Sun, can provide anything like this, anyplace, all over (p. 356).

This summary statement follows directly from the unfolding of the narrative. From the advent of humanity, the Creator has shaped his creation to meet the needs of his human children. The buffalo and the other plants and animals are provided so the human can eat. Death and illness comes into existence so that “we might worry about each other.” Creator son’s first child would walk around with him while the Creator taught him how to live in this world. When a need arose the Creator would make something to meet it. The progression from Mother Earth to human offspring to creation of the natural order requires the concerned involvement of the Creator as he adjusts and harmonizes the world until, “each piece fell into place and fitted into that pattern of life”

This progression of concern is also interactive. “Creator Sun always learned his lessons by his previous doings” (p. 60). Implied in this statement is the characteristic fallibility of Creator Sun as well as his ongoing desire to work to make things right. Early in the sequence of creation when Creator Sun was living with Moon, and his seven sons, the stars of the big dipper, he observes his spouse with the snake man and, “Creator Sun sneaking away from there, went to his place of work. He went along sadly and in a deep thought about what took place. Creator Sun knew what he must do, but it was work first at all times” (p.16). At the end of the Story when Scarface seeks out Creator Sun in his abode, Mother Earth and Creator Sun’s son, “Tbi-so-waus-sin (*Hanging Jerky, Morning Star*) told Scarface that he was left alone mostly all day, his Mother Earth and his father, Creator Sun, “were out doing their work all day and every day”(p. 349). This active level of concern for the creation surfaces throughout the narrative and most especially in the various ceremonies described in the section *Honoring Creator Sun*. Their efficacy depends on an active and available response to both personal and intercessory petitions.

### *Connection*

Along with an active level of concerned participation it is in the nature of the Creator to remain spiritually connected to his Creation and to the human beings.

As I have mentioned before in this story, all things of things Mother Earth have lives—be it a rock, tree, lake, river, mountain, high hill, butte, all of the animals, birds, serpents, and even the many different kinds of insect, the stars, moon, clouds, thunder, lightning, wind, and all others (p. 381).

Created things are alive but also have accessible spirits. Communication is possible between all created things because of their spiritual connection.

A spirit is one of the many lives of nature. All things that are visible to the eye are alive—mountains, rivers, lakes, trees, rocks, the birds, animals, stars, moon, wind, thunder, lightning, clouds, and the sun. Creator Sun is the most powerful spirit of them all, it is above them all. The sun has more supernatural power than anything else within this void, as far as your mind can wander in space and earth (p. 337).

The exchange of spiritual powers is a basic part of faith practice. Power comes from the different parts of the creation. “All of these have power that they bestow on those that seek from them. This is a known fact among the Natives all over this world. Many of these Natives still use that power for healing others, or it could be used for hurting others too”(p. 381).

The connection with Creator Sun and consequently with the entire creation is maintained beyond physical death. While early on there was face-to-face interaction between the Creator and the human beings on Mother Earth, as the story concludes the

Creator details the ultimate outcome of human existence to Scarface as he prepares to return to his people with the Sun Dance Ceremony.

Never again shall we ever have any visitors from Mother Earth in their natural human form. People will be able to be with us here in this land that is on the other side of the big water with no end, but! They will only be here when the time comes for them, and that's when their bodies are still and their spirits will leave those bodies. Their spirits will be with all of us that are living in this strange land I live with my own family, and only until that time shall the people of Mother Earth come to live by us (p.359).

While there is a progression to existence from birth to death it is seen as circular. The boundary between spirit and flesh and between humans and other aspects of the Creation is always fluid and at times non-existent. The connected nature of the Creator and Creation provides the means for the efficacy of religious practice.

### *Consequence*

No matter how much compassion he had for all of his creations, somehow those creations had to be punished for what they were doing, being disobedient to him. Going against his rules at times. Not all of them, probably a few of them breaking the rules he set for all of them (p. 57).

Regardless of who breaks the rules all of us receive the consequences. Throughout Bullchild's *History of the World* are numerous examples of the Creator trying to control a creation "gone wild." In an ironic twist, the one being that the Creator imbues with all of his power to instruct his children, Napi, goes wild worst of all. There is something about all of the Created beings that is flawed and causes them to be unable to live in harmony

with the Creator's expectations. "This learning of bad things is known from time untold and it is known among the many people that it is the bad things the little children learn first" (p.51). Bullchild offers many descriptions of this type of intrinsic knowledge, "We seem to know what should be done in all bad things" (p. 50).

Napi provides the primary example of learning by consequence. The Creator allows Napi to continue on his foolish, careless, selfish and often destructive ways and in doing so provides a model of negative behavior. Learning takes place through experience and negative reinforcement and the Creator in his compassionate nature continually allows his children to learn from their own mistakes.

Some ongoing consequences of the disobedience of human beings relate to sickness and natural disasters. The teaching of the Creator often takes the form of, "If you do this right this will happen. If you do it wrong this will happen." Usually lessons are learned by the repetition of mistakes. Mistakes are usually repeated three times with the fourth time being the correct response.

One notable characteristic of immanent consequence that is observable throughout the narrative is the absence of anxiety and ennui. Consequence is an immanent component of the relationship between human being and Creator but its enactment is immediate and the means of repair and restoration are by and large as immediate. With the exception of the consequence of death almost every other set of circumstances can be corrected through intercession and intervention.

Consequences are often as negotiable as they are draconian. This is consistent with Bullchild's portrayal of the Creator as compassionate. The Creator can be sad, disappointed, reluctant to rectify, but never mean spirited, vengeful or whimsical. This

consequential nature of the Creator will inform not only the human condition, but provide the means to set things right as well. The Sun Dance ceremony is an example of this. The consequences of Scarface's desire to marry the betrothed of Creator Sun were personal suffering and hardship, but out of that grew the ceremony that is used to intercede for others and restore relationship with the Creator and the community.

*Logos; As Above, So Below: The Nature of  
the Human Being's Relationship with the Creator.*

“So our faith in the things we see with our naked eyes as they do their work for humanity is the Native's way of life” (p292). This statement characterizes the perception of the relationship between the human being and the Creator. The Creator provides all things for the human being's benefit and the evidence is visible in the way the creation actually works. Even the relationship with the spirits of power manifests itself in visible phenomena. Visions are considered reliable perceptions of reality.

The order of creation attests to this relationship. The human beings were created first in the third eon of creation and following the human came the food bearing plants and animals.

All of the food animals were made and given to Mudman. He was given a lesson how to stalk them, how to kill them, and how to dress all of them out. He was taught how to cook them and how to preserve them for later use. How to preserve the hides for use as clothing and shelter. The smaller animals were for clothing mostly and the larger ones for shelter, but all them were for food. Mudman was taught not waste any part of the

animals, even the bones were used for something, every part of the animal was used for one thing or another (p. 60).

As the description of the human being's place in the culture develops, the virtues that the Creator installs in his children begin to develop as well. By and large as the above passage demonstrates, the human being must be taught how to live by the Creator and the desired behaviors must be instilled as well. This begins the development of the explicit instructional child/Parent relationship of human being and Creator. Throughout the rest of the narrative each development appears as part of a sequence. The wrong act is followed by consequence and then by instruction on how to put it right, followed by the enactment of ceremony or behaviors that exemplify the right way to live. The instruction can come explicitly from the Creator, through a chosen emissary, a spirit, and an elder or by negative example as in the case of Napi.

Early on in the process of Creation all creatures possessed a common language. During the Napi days, things were a little hard to come by. It was bird eat bird, animal eat animal. Mostly everything in those days spoke language, no matter what kind of life it was. People were very hesitant to kill the birds or animals that were edible. It was so hard to kill them because many of them begged for their lives and the people, being very compassionate to all life, couldn't just see killing someone that's begging for its life (p.219).

Made by the Creator to be in relationship, the human being shares the Creator's compassionate nature. This leads to an intrinsic understanding of the relationship of human being to human being.



All of the life was given to find a companion of the opposite sex and the one chose was to last for the rest of our days. We were to bear more of the same as we lived along with one another. Our seeds were to be just for the two of us, the chosen mate. This was a sacred commandment by our Creator Sun. Our father, Creator Sun, gave all of us a commandment to live by... The commandment was just a plain, "*Be honest to life and to all life.*" This one commandment covered everything: Be honest (p. 45).

Just what is meant by "honest" will be developed in the following section. Suffice it to say at this point,

Creator Sun was always looking down on his children. Day and night he was watching them, their daily activities, those that were doing good for themselves and them that weren't doing so good with their lives, to paying much attention to the holy ways of most of the people (p. 272).

As a part of the overall relationship between the Creator and the human being some people were given or obtained more "power" than others.

He would give power to a few certain ones of his many children, the most obedient of all the people that had spread to many parts of these lands. The power was only to a certain extent and it would come to them in a mysterious way that Creator Sun thought of (p. 271).

This power is the ability to move beyond the created order and effect or influence outcomes with spiritual means. By and large power has beneficial uses, for healing and wisdom, but occasionally it can be abused. Again Napi is the prototype of the abuse of power. How this comes about is one of the mysterious questions that have occupied

theologians for millennia. Assuming an omniscient and omnipotent Creator, the existence of Creatures who are at cross purposes both ethically and spiritually is one of the unexplained facts of human life. In *The Sun Came Down* the ability of creation to “go wild” and still remain in compassionate relationship with the Creator is simply assumed. The fallible nature of the Creator permits fallibility in the Creature. From the very beginning the Creator fights a running battle with rebellious and disobedient aspects of the creation. Even when Creator Sun becomes aware of his emissary Napi’s misbehavior,

Creator Sun hesitated to put a stop to this nonsense that Napi was doing. It wasn’t bad, it was just foolishness. After all, he put him here to do good for his children, to lead them to righteousness, and he had done his work very good. So why should he take away that little fun Napi was having. Napi thought his Creator didn’t know what he was doing, he thought he was pulling the wool over Creator Sun’s eyes (p.90).

This element of playful foolishness harks back to the creation of the world as a ball of mud, which the Creator made as a toy with which to assuage his loneliness. Loneliness is worse than foolishness. If correction results in eradication it’s not worth it. Better to let the creation go and hope that things will improve. The absence of anxiety, fear, shame and guilt characterizes the relationship of the human being with the Creator simply because the responsibility for everything the human being knows and is comes directly from the Creator or his representative and therefore it is reciprocal. The Creator needs and wants human beings and vice versa. But that doesn’t mean there are no rules.

### *Ethos: How Should We Then Live?*

The four directions, north, south east and west; the four aspects of a whole human being, mental, physical, social and spiritual, (Beck et.al., 1993); the four material elements, earth, air, water and fire point toward a life of balance and harmony with creation. As noted above the human being is inextricably intertwined with the rest of the created world both materially, “made from space dust and spit,” and spiritually as children of Creator Sun and Mother Earth. Balance is accomplished through “honesty” and careful stewardship of resources. There are specific vices and virtues associated with these two principles. In *The Sun Came Down* much of the narrative is devoted to morality tales, which include a direct object lesson. The virtues upheld can be grouped under the terms, compassion, hospitality, generosity and endurance with their opposing vices, jealousy, isolation, greed, and laziness. Sexual mores, “to find a companion of the opposite sex,” are central to the social order. The virtues are the means to balance and harmony while the propensity toward the vices is the cause of disunity and destruction.

#### *Compassion—Jealousy*

The moral dynamic between Crowfeather Arrow and Belly Fat illustrates the compassion—jealousy dynamic. There are four archetypal characters in this story. An anonymous girl, the daughter of the chief, Crowfeather Arrow and Belly Fat. Belly Fat appears in this story as a rescued orphan afflicted with nearly constant diarrhea.

Crowfeather Arrow, Came mysteriously. No one knew where he had come from, just himself knew who he really was. He knew he had transformed himself into another being. Crowfeather Arrow was really

Oldman, Napi. He was put on Mother Earth to teach the children of

Creator Sun and Mother Earth how to live like them, a sinless life (p. 127).

Crowfeather Arrow is a type of the human being who knows what the right thing is, but allows selfishness and greed to overtake him. He abuses the power he has been given by Creator Sun in a series of misadventures that exemplify by negative example the “sinless life.” Bullchild comments, “But wrong never holds up no matter what, and no matter how much power is entrusted to you, that power never works when you are using it for the wrong purpose” (p. 127).

When Crowfeather Arrow is bested in a contest for the Chief’s Daughter by Belly Fat he turns angry and vengeful to the point of using his power to hide all of the buffalo and cause a famine. In contrast the anonymous young girl has cared for Belly Fat since he was an infant and cherishes him despite his constant diarrhea, which continues into adulthood. Belly Fat wins the contest for the Chief’s daughter but is ultimately rejected by her because of his affliction. The young girl returns to him to remain with him as his wife. Belly Fat heroically retrieves the hidden buffalo and becomes a great man noted for his compassion and generosity, while Crowfeather Arrow evolves in to the mischievous Napi.

In this story the young girl models the virtue of compassion, “This little girl of the old lady never complained, she done her work for their home and took care of the new baby boy too. She had much compassion for others” (p. 117). In this context jealousy is wanting what rightfully belongs to someone else. In this case and others throughout the narrative jealousy is illustrated by the hoarding or withholding of food and the desire to disrupt another’s relationship for selfish reasons as demonstrated by Crowfeather Arrow.

The virtue of compassion by extension leads to the act of self-sacrifice for the good of others. This act will provide the basis for the central religious ceremony of the narrative, the Sun Dance. The vice of jealousy plays out in willful disobedience of the Creator's rules in order to gain advantage.

### *Hospitality—Isolation.*

Hospitality or the welcoming of the stranger or guest is the normative condition of the social order. It is so basic as to be unconditionally assumed and its violation by intentionally isolating another is the ultimate vice and sanction. When Napi attempts to steal Creator Sun's red-winged woodpecker feather fringed leggings, the Creator tells him, "the best thing one should do is ask for something he wanted... 'It wouldn't have been a problem to give you them, as you are a visitor here.'" (p. 194).

Along with the virtue of hospitality, the practice of visiting one another is a large part of the world of *The Sun Came Down*. Creator Sun's interaction with humans is characterized as "paying them a good visit." Visits are an opportunity to eat together, tell stories and experience the joy of family and friends. Strangers are treated as if they were family unless it becomes apparent they are not of good will. The command to "be honest" presumes the assumption that everyone is trustworthy and is who they say they are. Many of the Napi tales are devoted to twisting this assumption to demonstrate the abuse of hospitality.

The worst thing that can happen to a human being is to be involuntarily isolated. Stories demonstrate isolation ranging from the withholding of food resources to the physical location of people 'outside the camp.' Occasionally jealousy may motivate

people to voluntarily isolate themselves and their immediate families, but no good comes of this, “because among the Natives, if you didn’t attend an invitation, you were noted as a stuck-up conceited person, too good for others” (p. 261). An existence apart from others is virtual non-existence. When characters in the narrative are at their worst, their behavior has set them apart from and against others. The most horrific form that moral isolation takes is in the act of cannibalism, which is portrayed in the stories of the *Sliding Woman* and *The Cannibal Chief*. These two evil characters are vanquished by Kut-toe-yis after they have killed and eaten a number of people. Kut-toe-yis kills both of these villains and lays out their remains for appropriate burial, unlike the way their victims were treated. Underlying these stories as well as the story *Napi cooks babies* is a strong prohibition against this form of personal greed and social isolation.

#### *Generosity—Greed.*

While hospitality is the ready sharing of the hearth, the virtue of generosity extends to all behaviors. The period of human history described in *The Sun Came Down* was a time of few possessions. Existence is portrayed as primarily cooperative. Most of the tasks required for survival necessitate the participation of others. Reciprocal giving of support and resources is the desired behavior. “Among the Native people, we have a tradition of love for one another, and it began almost at the same time as the beginning of people. We give to one another gifts to show our love for the other and with no strings attached. We give our most valued possession as gifts to those we love and this still goes on even in these days we are now living” (p. 67). The example of Creator Sun is the model of generosity. The Creator provides everything necessary for a good life, food, shelter, instruction and relationship. He does this to show his love for his human children.

When things go out of balance it requires some form of self-sacrifice to put them right. Intercessory acts are efficacious because generosity is the created norm for related human beings.

The vision quest is a search for spiritual power and enlightenment and the bestowal of identity. It requires a four-day fast from food and water. Often the person who sets out on this search fails to return because the act is so rigorous. When they are successful they return with an enhanced character that benefits the community. “After coming back from a vision quest, if one had luck and received a power from some sort of spirit, he or she will make a debut to let people know of their power achievement. He or she will offer their knowledge of power to the one in need of medical help” (p. 80).

While surface motives may appear selfish, the underlying outcome is intended for the good of all. As noted above, “power never works (for long) when you are using it for the wrong purpose.”

In the story of *Preserving Pelts Pipe Bundle* the young male character is motivated to seek a vision and power by his desire to be well thought of. As the story unfolds his success is his social undoing and jealousy motivates him to isolate himself from his people. Immediately tragedy strikes and the restoration process brings him back to his people with the most powerful and generous of gifts the *Preserving Pelts Pipe Bundle*. This bundle is composed of artifacts donated by all of the creatures of the world that ensure the survival of the human beings.

The wasting, concealing or withholding of resources that characterizes greedy behavior is always portrayed in a negative light. One of the difficulties Bullchild perceives in the world of the whiteman is the centrality of the personal accumulation of

wealth at the expense of the other. “Money is the main thing, money is the white people’s God. The more money the less friends you have. The hell with life, as long as I have lots of money is their attitude” (p. 85).

Napi always wants more than his share, whether possessions or relationships. He engages in dishonest behaviors to get what he wants. The stories are told in a humorous manner, but there is an edge to them. The vice of greed has resulted in the destruction of the world of *The Sun Came Down*.

Comparing this country with the way the first white people found our land and that of today, who would be the filthiest, the dirtiest, the most savage, the witch doctor, and cannibal? I’m sure everyone knows the answer, as much as the guilty party hates to admit this. In the times before the coming of the white people, our lands were pure, all water anyplace in this country was pure, we had more than surplus of all food animals, all of the food fowls, all of the water food, the land itself was pure and most of all, we had pure sunshine from our Creator (p. 84).

Bullchild concludes the Napi cycle with the reminder, “there is always someone looking down at us, our Creator. And with the waste he did, Napi was sure to be punished for it” (p. 222).

#### *Endurance—Laziness.*

Honesty is enduring. Life is hard and the preservation of integrity requires an enduring spirit. Creator Sun tells Scarface, “Remember, from now on, anything you might want in your life by honesty is never easy, it’s tortuous and narrow and easy to fall off course” (p. 353). The terrain features of Mother Earth were formed in an exhausting



epic foot pursuit of Creator Sun and his Seven Sons by Moon seeking revenge for the death of her Snake Man lover. The chase requires the release of great powers to form barriers to Moon's pursuit that result in the formation of the ocean, mountains, forests and violent weather that characterize the world of *The Sun Came Down*. Moon never gives up and Creator Sun never really escapes, but is continuously pursued across the heavens. All of the participants in the chase press themselves past exhaustion.

Both the vision quest and the Sun Dance exemplify the necessity for pushing oneself to and beyond one's limits. Participation in either of these two events requires physical, mental, and spiritual stamina by all who are engaged in the event. While the vision quest can be seen as a solitary endeavor it is supported by the prayers and counsel of at least one elder as well as the seeker's family. The strenuousness of the quest is a large part of its efficacy. The same can be said about the Sun Dance. While the central figure in the Sun Dance is pressed to life threatening limits, the other participants share in a greater or lesser degree, the endurance nature of the ceremony.

The concept of a life without work and hardship is absent from *The Sun Came Down*. The virtue of endurance is central to survival in the existence of the human being. Those who abuse this virtue by the exploitation or enslavement of others are the targets of moral outrage as in the case of the Bear People who are described as lazy and bullying. They enslaved others to do their work for them and it requires the intervention of Kut-toe-yis to put an end to them.

In the story of *Napi and the Bullberries*, Napi is enticed by the idea of something for nothing. He is seduced by the illusion of berries to be had without effort. In pursuit of

this illusion he almost dies. The story is rich with moral implications, but one is certainly that everything worthwhile requires work, perseverance and endurance.

All of the positive achievements portrayed in *The Sun Came Down* come with an enormous expenditure of effort and often immense and tragic suffering. From the creation story to the description of traditional healing practices and the institution of religious practice the endurance of suffering is upheld as a central characteristic of success. Coupled with this endurance is the concept of humor.

Most of the Napi stories are as rich with humor as they are with moral lessons. The humor ranges from the multivalent commentary described earlier to rude scatological references. Even in the midst of horrific events gems of humor sparkle throughout the narrative. One of the challenges any intercultural rhetor faces is the translation of humor, dependent as it is on context, stereotype and wordplay. The existence of the more visible humorous episodes in the narrative points to the importance of humor as a component of the virtue of endurance. If life is truly hard, as it is described in *The Sun Came Down*, and the choices are to laugh or cry, Bullchild presents laughter as a way of enduring and overcoming trials. I suspect that I only understood a fraction of the jokes in *The Sun Came Down*, but my experience has led me to believe that part of the path to success in inter-cultural communication is the willingness not to understand and then to graciously become the butt of more jokes. Furnishing a reason for laughter is a gift to the community. In this sense the refusal to participate in humor is a form of laziness or selfishness that is held up as a vice throughout the narrative. Keeping in mind that the planet was created as a plaything and the purpose of the Creation is to delight the Creator, then laughter is a form of high praise and an expression of endurance.

*Pathos: How Can We Be Rescued When We Stray Off Course?*

Imagine we are in Ireland a century ago. Only let's make the famine ten times worse so that at the end of it through disease, rioting and starvation 90% of the population is dead and those of us that are left are scattered in remnant bands all over the island. Add to that an all-out bombardment of the cities and towns similar to the fire bombing of Dresden in WWII, a bombardment that totally destroys every government building, school, library and church. Make it impossible to communicate with or travel to the outside world. Then send Japanese spiritual leaders from the Shinto tradition to set up faith communities among the ashes. Have them unable to speak either English or Gaelic.

Imagine a few people gathering around a fire in the ruins of an old village church. Hungering to hear Mass one more time, to pray in the way of their ancestors: No Bible, No Hymn Book, and No Priest. Somebody remembers that they always started with a hymn, but they can only remember part of one. Somebody remembers you need wine, but the wine is all gone. Somebody remembers the prayer was in a language called Latin that only the priests knew how to speak.

Imagine the police showing up and arresting whomever they took to be the leaders and imprisoning them where they died. Imagine this going on for three more generations. The Blackfeet don't have to imagine it. They can remember it.

From the very beginning prayers of petition and intercession have been a part of the Native culture portrayed in *The Sun Came Down*.

Early one morning Mudman went out on the plains, just before the sun came up. He waited until the sun just barely started to come into view.

Mudman faced the sun and began to pray to him to come down and check on his children and all his creations here on Mother Earth. He prayed to him as if he was listening. He asked him for more food to use for all of the children. The food they had was almost all gone and could hardly be found any more. He prayed to his father, Creator Sun, that he might hurry and help them all real soon, as hunger was everywhere (p. 57).

A modern version of a prayer in phonetic reservation Blackfeet illustrates some of the central concerns amenable to faith practice.

*Aiyo Ninna Aiyo Iihstisipatitapiyopa isspommokit nohkohtokit issopommokinnan*

Oh Father Oh Source of Life help me please hear me help us

*naakohkits ksiiksisk'katipinaan soipmmaapi Aiyo Ihstipaitapiyopa*

so we may avert the path of wrongfulness Oh Source of Life

*nohkspommokinaan Ksahkomiitaapi Naatosi nohkspommokinaan napioosin*

please help us Mother Earth Sun help us grow old

*ahsaistowaatssimaan miisaamipaitapiisin kaamotaan Ay.*

and fully raise our children long life survival amen. (Weatherwax, trans. 2000).

Going off course, the need for *Noh tis tsis tsi poo kin non* (literally, show us the way around), scarcity, threat and danger have been and will continue to be a part of the human condition as presented in *The Sun Came Down*.

Living was very good to the people for many years, then a few bad things began to appear in the different parts of the land again. People were going against the rulings of our Creator Sun and Mother Earth. They couldn't let well enough alone, they had to follow their beliefs or someone

else's... Whenever these things arise, to get them in some easy way, we forget our great belief of faith. We do evil then, just to get our needs the evil easy way. Even to these days, things still work that evil easy way and it was the same way right from the human beginning. We give up our Creator for the easy way of evil (p. 269).

To remedy this condition the Creator implemented two basic strategies; the presence of teachers and redeemers with supernatural powers and the variety of faith practices that form the "Indian Religion." The two most prominent of the several teacher/rescuers were Napi and Kut-toe-yis. The primary faith practices described revolve around the pipe, vision quest, bundle and Sun Dance. Peripheral to these practices are artifacts, ceremony, iconography and special foods. Song and prayer articulate praise and petition in all practice.

*The Teacher/Rescuers: Napi and Kut-toe-yis*

*Napi.*

Although sent to teach the Creator's children the way to live in harmony with the Creation and one another, "Napi's doings began to get a little crazy," and in the course of the cycle of stories presented in *The Sun Came Down* Napi manages to commit many foolish acts and most of the major crimes against a person, including theft, rape and murder. Napi stories are widely told even today on the Reservation, "We all learned many things from Napi, both the good ways and the bad ways he influenced this world over" (p.228). One of the elementary school buildings in Browning on the Blackfeet Reservation is named "Napi Elementary." While the name of the elementary school may be somewhat ironic (*Na Apis* can be translated as "that white") it is also consistent with

the way morality is taught in Bullchild's recounting of traditional narratives. Children are taught not to emulate negative behaviors on the assumption that they will gravitate to positive behaviors by nature and imitation. Little Plume (2000) described it thusly. A child having burned herself on a hot stove is encouraged kindly, "Good, why don't you do that again," assuming that she is more than capable of figuring out exactly why not to do it again.

Napi stories are consistent with this type of reinforcement and make use of the multivalent humor that is such a large part of the both *The Sun Came Down* and contemporary Reservation culture. Napi does indeed teach about what should and shouldn't be done, by doing what shouldn't. The prohibitions in the Napi stories range from greed and waste to incest and murder. Only rarely does Bullchild explicitly render an aphorism such as, "And the Oldman River is there to remember that a sister and a brother shouldn't get together as lovers" (p. 173). Bullchild refers to these concepts as "precedents" set by Napi. When Bullchild uses the word "commandments" it is in this sense. Morality is empirical and experiential and there are stories of previous behaviors that went awry but they are not formulated in a list of prohibitions or legal code.

Most of the lessons in Napi stories are implied and covered by humor. In the story of *Napi and the Rock*, Nighthawks destroy the rock that is chasing Napi by bombing it with the "gas in their stomachs." Napi expresses his lack of gratitude by mutilating the baby nighthawks and their parents retaliate by blasting him "with all the gas they had" leaving Napi with "nothing left of his clothes or robe. He was plumb covered over with the nighthawks' droppings" (p. 171). Lessons about taking back what has been given and ingratitude can be easily drawn from this story.

Additionally Bullchild locates Napi's chase by the rock, "from Lake St. Frances in Montana at Valier to the present day site of Oka-toks, Alberta, Canada, west of the town. It ended where you could see the rock that chased Napi" (p. 171). This is a reminder of the socio/geographic attachment to place that informs many of the Napi stories bringing them into the instructive present. Recalling Carbaugh's comment that the silence of the Reservation landscape has a voice, the act of standing and listening where the ancestors have stood and listened forges a powerful spiritual connection to the land and to the past. I was struck often by the detailed history of locations on the Reservation that had special significance. I recall the comment made by one Blackfeet when asked by the US Forest Service to identify sacred sites along the Rocky Mountain Front, "It's all sacred." To paraphrase, "It is all a visible sign of the generosity of the Creator and being present in it is an act of worship."

*Kut-toe-yis.*

In contrast with Napi, Kut-toe-yis is an exemplary human being specifically charged to aggressively combat evil. "Creator Sun wanted the wickedness to stop all over, this was the only way they could fight it, with someone to work with the human race" (p. 240). Although he engages in direct confrontation with evil beings, Kut-toe-yis preferred method of dealing with evil is to let it destroy itself. When Kut-toe-yis vanquishes he generally treats the remains of his enemy with respect, laying out their remains in an appropriate funerary manner.

As hard as Kut-toe-yis worked, evil remains a part of the human condition.

Today, this land of ours needs someone like Kut-toe-yis to clean the land out again of all the evil that has come in a mass among the people. If it

was cleaned of the wicked people, this land of ours wouldn't have much over a couple of dozen of good people and for darn sure, I could bet, they would be all Natives of this country" (p. 262).

While Kut-toe-yis possessed some supernatural powers and mysterious origins He was not another Napi. His teaching occurs by his action and he remains consistent and faithful to his mission throughout. The villains he confronts are archetypes of evil, "pitiless, selfishness, murdering." They range from monsters and mythic creatures to humans who have lost their humanity such as the "Bear People" and cannibals. These are the primary evils lifted up again and again in the narrative. Kut-toe-yis does not play games with his adversaries but moves quickly and efficiently to destroy them completely. In most of the stories there is someone who is suffering from a grave injustice that Kut-toe-yis rescues as he eliminates the evil ones.

People say the Kut-toe-yis is still out looking for the wicked. But if he is, he's done a very bad job of it because today wickedness is so abundant all over the world. So Kut-toe-yis must've passed on after he done away with the mean Cannibal Chief. Creator Sun and Mother Earth must've took him back to the place of good spirits (P. 266).

With the departure of Kut-toe-yis the institution of formal religious practice begins.

#### *Meeting the Creator: The Bundle and the Sun Dance*

*The Sun Came Down* offers a comprehensive portrayal of both the origins and practice of two important religious ceremonies, the Bundle opening and the Sun Dance. He provides both rationale and rubrics for these ceremonies stopping



short of providing a rendition of the songs and prayers that make up the bulk of the ceremony. The remedy for *Pathos* or suffering is presented quite visibly in both ceremonies. The artifacts that are used have a sacred value in and of themselves.

### *Bundles.*

A genuine bundle would have historical origins and be treated with the respect and honor due any object imbued with spiritual power. While the objects themselves may be said to be a commonplace part of the world of *The Sun Came Down*, through the intentions of the Creator, their mysterious origins and their historical use they acquire both a power and a catechetical value that transcends their humble material nature. Examples of this would be pipes, feathers, animal pelts, native tobacco, sweetgrass incense, red earth paint and lodge-cover iconography. Some of these objects are included in the Bundles described in *The Sun Came Down*. Bullchild tells us that, “This ancient Pipe Bundle comes from a long ways back, it is a gift directly from Creator Sun to sanction our thoughts of him always so we would not do bad things” (281). The combination of pipe and tobacco facilitates communication with the Creator, “As the smoke from the tobacco curled its way upward, the smoker prays and the smoke carries the prayers to our Creator Sun” (270).

The very first pipe given the first people of Mother Earth was a complete package deal—pipe, tobacco, and the full instructions for the use of it. It was from the body of Mother Earth and made in a red color from Creator Sun’s element, its rays. Creator Sun even taught those first humans how to make a pipe out of the soft stone that was left here for that purpose and

especially made for the people from the two divine being's elements, Mother Earth's and Creator Sun's (271).

The bundle containing the Ancient Pipe would be opened accompanied by its songs and prayers at appropriate times including the times when it would be transferred from one keeper to another. The Bundle Holder is a position of honor and respect in the Native community and transfers come with stipulations and what Bullchild calls "restrictions" or specific instructions for the efficacious dispensation of its power.

The "Preserving Pelts Pipe Bundle" is a hide-wrapped collection of naturally occurring artifacts representing the spectrum of life in the Creation. Again it is a gift from Creator Sun and Mother Earth for the edification of their children. The initial creation and transfer of the Bundle takes place as a ceremony of restitution and forgiveness between a young couple and Beaverman. Couples from representative animal species make voluntary contributions of their "clothing" to this bundle. Bullchild includes lists of the animals included in the bundle (p. 292) noting that some of the animals have become extinct since the inception of the Bundle transfers. He recalls a bundle transfer ceremony that took place when he was five years old. It was a four-day ceremony with songs for each animal sung four times.

To summarize, Bullchild describes the mysterious origins of collections of sacred artifacts that have been transferred down throughout history from the original holder or creator to people of high esteem. The opening and transfer ceremonies of these bundles are meant to be both edifying and efficacious in facilitating communication between human beings and their Creator Sun and Mother Earth.

*Scarface: The story of the Sun Dance.*

The culminating story of *The Sun Came Down* is the description of the institution of the Sun Dance, a communal ceremony of sacrifice and intercession. While accompanied by vision quests, pipe ceremonies and selected “holy” individuals the Sun Dance involves the entire community of the faithful. One or more groups of people (clan, band, camp) participate in this four-day event. “All of the men and older boys and women and older girls were all so interested in this great ritual that all wanted an active part in it, so anyone called to do something towards this ceremony didn’t hesitate to do so. Everyone was happy to help in some small way” (p. 371).

The saga of Scarface and his meeting with Creator Sun has been alluded to above. This story is rich in heroic endurance. It is the story of individual persistence in the face of an impossible task and overwhelming obstacles to achieve a goal that transforms into a rite, which serves the entire community from then on. Within the story of Scarface and the Sun Dance are the establishment of marriage norms, coming of age rituals, definitions of purity, holiness and honesty and the establishment of the central form of communal worship engaged in by the children of Creator Sun.

While the ceremony is complex and its preparations lengthy its central theme is efficacious self-sacrifice, the offering of one’s own life for the good of another or the restoration of right relationship with the Creator. The Creator’s desire is expressed, as simply, “He had to keep their minds on him every day” (p. 328). After trying a variety of interventions ranging from his own direct presence to Napi and Kut-toe-yis the Creator settles on religious practice as a way of remaining in effective and reciprocal relationship with his Children. He has been disappointed in the past and remains concerned. He

desires his children to live in harmony with the Creation and each other for their own good. He believes this is the best way to accomplish this. What situates this institution as unique among the establishment of the variety of religious practice is the relatively self-seeking and simple motives of the innovators that transform into a practice that benefits everyone. The Creator chooses his initiators and lets their own desires guide them toward the goal that the Creator has for them.

The Sun Dance evolved from the special engagement vows and marriage ceremony of the young woman who was betrothed to Creator Sun. In his desire for the young woman Scarface seeks out Creator Sun and is given a special set of “restrictions” and instructions that will heal the breach caused by this affront to the Creator. These instructions require a special arbor to be built with a center pole consisting of a forked tree. Scarface is tied into the fork and left for four days without food or water. If he survives he will have healed the breach with the Creator and be allowed to marry the young woman. Others in the community have supporting roles of prayer and preparation during the four days. Bullchild describes the Sun Dance as evolving into a generalized ceremony where individuals may make good on “vows” made on behalf of others by feats of punishing endurance and prayer. Sun Dances are still enacted today.

*Summary.*

The Creator Sun made the Mother Earth and everything on it to assuage his loneliness. He created the human being for delight and companionship. Through the human being’s own propensity to disregard the Creator’s instructions and expectations, death and evil abound in the Creation. After employing several intervention strategies the Creator settles on forms of religious practice that can be participated in by all and serve to

permanently maintain the relationship between Creator and human being and solicit specific help in desperate circumstances. These religious practices and the people imbued with special spiritual powers have existed from ancient times.

So from that time on to the 1930s, this Ancient Pipe Bundle had existed, and the particular religious ceremony that went with it was always conducted in the same way. But then came the whiteman with its foreign religion that the native didn't understand, even to this day. It is so corrupting to humanity (p. 289).

There is a world of anguish in that statement, a lament echoed more recently by spiritual elder and Bundle Holder, George Kicking Woman, "I don't think anyone will ever learn these songs again" (Tribal Tradition, 2000). At least one critical reader of *The Sun Came Down* (Abley, 1987) has noted the "elegiac tone" of Bullchild's description of traditional ceremonies, going on to say, "as though the author were, against his will, making a verbal museum, a repository for the old faith." *The Sun Came Down* could certainly be taken like that, but the overwhelming amount of narrative evidence, including the absence of transcribed songs and prayers, points in an entirely different direction. Bullchild's description of traditional theology, "the old faith," is a lively, vital part of his rebuttal of the misrepresentation of his Native People of the Americas. His Apologetics are a significant part of his *Apologia*.

In the light of the criteria established for intercultural hermeneutic Bullchild's apologetic may be unsettling. The ease with which a system of belief can be derived from this text is a salient feature of *The Sun Came Down*. The narrative does cause this

interpreter and critic to reflect radically on my own culture. I have been prompted to “critically investigate the conditions under which cultural meaning is created.”

In regard to the logic of good reasons, I am impressed by the consistency with which *The Sun Came Down* reflects my own experience on the Blackfeet Reservation. My understanding of the text was in dialog with my perceptions and they informed each other. But most importantly this apologetic lays a solid rhetorical foundation to consider more specifically the historical misrepresentations of the character of the Native. Bullchild has presented a belief system that, while specific to the Piegan, addresses universal concerns. It raises a transcendent morality, which, at least nominally, is shared, to a greater or lesser degree, by human beings all over the planet. The virtues and vices highlighted in this system are a part of many other systems. The truths surrounding the meaning of suffering and endurance and the centrality of compassion are common to most religious systems. The question of first or last, better or worse is not as important as the recognition that if the theological rhetoric of the Sun Came Down is accepted as it is presented by Bullchild, the culture it speaks from has an equal place in the family of human cultures and their attempted murder is a crime against humanity.

In the following chapter I will develop the remainder of Bullchild’s apologia and take a critical perspective on how he accomplishes what he set out to do. His apologetic will be seen as a part of his overall argument and his redaction, translation, exegesis, commentary and allusion will be seen as argumentative strategies.

## Chapter Four

### Apologia: Defending the Culture

From the first contact shrouded in the mists of history through the encounter with Meriwether Lewis, the loss of the Land Base, The Smallpox Epidemics, The Bear River Massacre, The Starvation Winter, up to and including daily frustrations with government imposed health, education and welfare programs the Native People of the Americas known as the Blackfeet have survived the Argument for Remaining Quiet. But survival is not enough. For a people to flourish, their community and that of their many brothers and sisters all over the globe must accord them human dignity, honor and respect. Stories have been told about the ancestors of the people we know as the Blackfeet. “Most of these are so false and smearing that it get’s me mad. That’s the reason I’m writing now” (p. 2). If the stories were true it is doubtful the Blackfeet would have survived the centuries since first contact as an intact self identified people. In fact the Blackfeet Reservation is home to more than 15,000 tribal members, at least seven times the remnant of the Starvation Winter.

Part of their survival can be credited to a tenacious retention of at least some of the mythos, logos, ethos and pathos described in Bullchild’s apologetic. Driving onto the Blackfeet Reservation from any one of the four directions, one of the first visible signs is the fine-art quality sculpture of Blackfeet warriors on horseback made from discarded car parts. Blackfeet artist Jay Laber is a nationally known sculptor with one of his major pieces displayed at the University of Montana. Coming into Browning from the east, one sees Browning School District’s digital message board. It proclaims “Browning School District, Home of Indian Pride.” Browning School District supports a Native American

Studies program that includes Blackfeet language and culture. Traditional songs and dances are a part of community events from basketball games to funerals. Carbaugh's (1996) work on the rhetorical construction of identity reminds us how critical social narrative is. Burke (1950) tells us, "Here again we confront the ambiguities of substance, since symbolic communication is not a merely external instrument, but also intrinsic to men as agents. Its motivational properties characterize both 'the human situation' and what men are 'in themselves'" (p. 33). In this sense our songs, prayers and stories can be considered the expression of our reason to live and keep on living.

Among us few of the older ones, left, we shall never forget these holy pipe bundles, all of them. They had brought to us such a wonderful life of existence, all clean life, almost sinless existence among our people of the Natives during the many, many years of the holy pipe bundles' existence. The whiteman came in the last few hundred years, but with him came a turbulent life that still exists in these days. What kind of faith or what kind of religion did they bring to this Native land of calm and love to make it become as it is today? Full of hate to one another, among the people and among all nations. Each one trying to outdo the other at this, their greed for money and their inventions of death (Bullchild, 1985, p. 324).

Between a calm and harmonious existence and the turbulence of invasion, disease and death; between the purity of the creation and the Creator's expressed intentions and the corruption of greed and violence the argument continues. While Bullchild frequently acknowledges the fallibility of both Creator and creation and observes the propensity of human beings to "go wild" and our uncanny propensity to "learn the bad things without



having to be taught,” the polarization in Bullchild’s dialectic serves to distinguish the best of the Native from the worst portrayals of “white historians and the depredations of “whiteman.” After all, he dedicated *The Sun Came Down* to his wife, his son and his white editors SanSouci and Brashear, he knows there are real human beings among “our white friends.”

In this section I will explore the structure of Bullchild’s apologia, his rebuttal. I will demonstrate both its complexity and its subtlety. Bullchild’s spiraling combination of translation, narration, exegesis and commentary comes at the attack on his culture from at least four directions. His consubstantial apologetic as outlined above supports his claim to commonality, “We are all related, ” and can be considered the centerpiece of his argument. Secondly, his rendition and portrayal of evil can be taken metaphorically as a characterization of the behaviors of whiteman. A third direction locates his short and lengthy commentaries and explicit analysis of the history of the relationship between whiteman and Native. And finally the point-by-point rebuttal of the characterization of the Native offered in his preface, “savagery, murdering, dirty, lust to kill, unclean, warlike, human sacrificing, lying, hatred, and many more” (p. 2) and in his conclusion, “war mongers, barbarians, bloodthirsty people, cruel, brutal, filthy, dirty, lousy with human ticks, savages and murderers” (p. 389), extends through his entire narrative. I will also propose the overarching dialectic of purity and corruption as a focal plane of Bullchild’s presentation. Having examined the theology of *The Sun Came Down* as a part of Bullchild’s *apologia*, I will examine the instances of metaphor.

*Metaphor: Never Trust the Most Trusted One.*

One of the aphorisms that may have the most rhetorical implications of any statement in *The Sun Came Down* is, “This was another lesson to learn: Never trust the most trusted one.” This epigram concludes the story of *Napi Cooks Babies*. As a stand-alone precedent it reinforces the necessity for accumulating personal experience and wisdom. In the world of *The Sun Came Down* things are not always as they seem. Recalling Bullchild’s presentation of the guiding moral imperative, “Be honest” we can see how these two statements present a dialectical dissonance. This statement invites reading the Napi Stories as argumentative allegories or metaphor. I have no way of knowing whether or not Bullchild intended this and I hesitate to offer this interpretation, but there are inescapable allusions and parallels between the Napi stories and the history of the relationships between the whiteman and the Blackfeet. These stories abound in the narrative and they invite the remembrance of conditions that range from exterminated Buffalo, broken treaties, spoiled and stolen rations to the cutting of the children’s hair. Even a cursory reading of *The Sun Came Down* would reveal that Bullchild is capable of the subtlety of intent and possesses the multivalent language skills, which would be required by an allegorical presentation.

Aristotle tells us that, “Liveliness is specially conveyed by metaphor, and by the further power of surprising the hearer; because the hearer expected something different, his acquisition of the new idea impresses him all the more. His mind seems to say, ‘Yes, to be sure; I never thought of that’” (Roberts, 1954, p. 102). The Napi stories are unquestionably lively. They are filled with surprising events and outrageous humor. There are many, many of them and Bullchild includes twenty-four in his argument. As

explained above the Napi stories support a comprehensive ethical system, but they also can be seen as a metaphor. If the central dialectic of *The Sun Came Down* is Purity—Corruption and Purity stands for life before invasion, with Corruption being all the things the invasion brought that have resulted in the death, disease and destruction of the Native and the Land, then Napi's terrifyingly destructive behavior can be seen as metaphorical.

Osburn (1967) and Ivie (1987) argue for metaphor as central to some types of argument. Recalling both the central thesis of Bullchild's argument that Native culture and history has been misrepresented and the above comment in regard to "seeking to find the lost part of that once precious way of our ancestors," I would suggest that there is a parallel current of negative reinforcement in the descriptions of the behaviors of Crowfeather Arrow, Napi and the assorted villains in the narrative that portrays the conflict between the European invaders and the indigenous Americans.

To support this interpretation I will offer specific examples that respond to the two vice lists noted above that Bullchild offers in his preface and conclusion. Recalling Bullchild's claim "All of these things the Native never even heard of until the whiteman came to teach us of them..." (p. 2), we see Napi and evil characters enacting many of the things that history lays at the feet of the invaders. I will also point out the themes of the selection of stories that implicitly or explicitly address the purity—corruption dialectic.

The first thing Crowfeather Arrow (Napi's precursor) does is to steal and hide all the buffalo and starve the people. Throughout the narrative the theme of withholding food and famine will loom over evil behavior. Bob and Scotty Zion (Piegan, 2001) of Choteau, site of an early Blackfeet Indian Agency, recall the corruption of the Methodist Indian Agents who stole rations and sold them, provided spoiled and rotten rations and lined

their own pockets at the expense of the Blackfeet. Other historians (Farr, 1984) have offered similar accounts. The Starvation Winter of 1883 was a result of the disappearance of the buffalo and the failure of the United States government to insure the delivery of promised rations. In the story of the initial appearance of Kut-toe-yis, his adoptive guardians are reduced to subsisting on scraps from the floor of the *pis-kun* (buffalo jump or impound) because of their villainous son-in-law's greed and meanness.

Napi's duplicity is a part of nearly every story. He steals Creator Sun's leggings, he lies to other creatures to get them to put themselves in jeopardy and he cheats at contests in order to accomplish his goals. This is the origin of the saying, "Never trust the most trusted one." Beginning with the commitments made by Lewis and Clark on behalf of President Jefferson and extending to the mismanagement of Indian Trust Land funds, promise after promise has been broken. Bullchild includes a map of the "Piegan-Blackfeet aboriginal hunting area" (p.64-65), to locate the Napi stories, but a quick glance at a territory that extends north to south from the North Saskatchewan River to present day Yellowstone National Park and east to west from east of the present day North Dakota-Montana Border to the Continental Divide reveals just how vast this area is. The current Blackfeet Indian Reservation occupies less than one percent of this area. It took continuous force and duplicity to reduce it. The map of the Napi stories is a map of loss. Each time the Agent, Government Representative or Missionary says, "trust me," we can remember Napi.

Napi murders, rapes and boils babies. Beginning with Meriwether Lewis history records the killing of Blackfeet by whiteman. The account of the Bear River Massacre that opens this essay is murder on a very large scale. The stories told of infants thrown

into fires still haunt the Blackfeet. A historical recollection by Major Downing of the first Colorado cavalry, in reference to a similar massacre of the Cheyenne, reports, “ ‘We commenced shooting. I ordered the men to commence killing them...I burnt up their lodges and everything I could get hold of. The *women* and one hundred ponies, captured, were distributed among the boys for the reason they had been marching for nearly three weeks.’ This was done, the officer said, ‘because it was usual’” (Gibson & Hayne, 2001). From the description of the Cannibal Chief in *Kut-toe-yis and the Mean Cannibal Chief Bullchild* echoes, “He takes women by force, married women, single women, and even the youngest girls that are still unknown by men. He forces them to his tipis and keeps them as wives. The husbands of these women, he kills them and eats them” (p.263).

The evil ones enslave people. They restrict their movements and impose involuntary servitude on them. One of the oldest church buildings in North America, San Miguel Mission, in Santa Fe, New Mexico, was constructed in 1610 by Yaqui Indian slave labor (Travelguide, 2003). In the Pueblo Rebellion of 1680 this building along with most of Santa Fe was burned. The building was restored in 1710 and still stands, the bricks of its wall silent witnesses to involuntary servitude. The history of South America and the west coast of North America contains a multitude of examples of the use of the indigenous people as slaves. When the present day boundaries of the Blackfeet Reservation were established it required the permission of the Superintendent to leave. Cheap gang labor has been available since the inception of the Reservation from a people kept penned up and at the edge of starvation. In the story of *Kut-toe-yis and The Bear People*, the Bear People have enslaved an entire camp when Kut-toe-yis arrives. “People who act like the real bear are known as bears. These are the human beings, but they are so

mean that they bully their way to gain whatever they need. They are lazy and would rather just take things so they won't have to work" (p. 241).

Ironically Napi does some good things. He teaches, he heals and he provides. Historically on the Blackfeet Reservation these functions have been carried out under the sponsorship of church and government institutions, the Montana State Office of Public Instruction, The Indian Health Service and the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Usually when Napi does something good it is part of an overall strategy by which he will benefit.

Recalling Bullchild's comment,

"Today this land of ours needs someone like Kut-toe-yis to clean the land out again of all the evil that has come in a mass among the people. If it was cleaned of the wicked people, this land of ours wouldn't have much over a couple of dozen of good people and for darn sure, I could bet, they would be all Natives of this country" (p.262).

Therefore whiteman and those corrupted by them would be gone.

The themes of the Napi stories can be seen to speak to the relationship of whiteman and Native and their ancestral home. These themes include withholding food, abuse of power, duplicity, captivity and slavery, cowardice, renegeing, lust, rape, infanticide, misrepresentation, impersonation, greed, theft and waste. Napi stories abound in number and diversity; some are primarily amusing, many are quite positive and worthy of emulation. The choice of the 24 stories in *The Sun Came Down* with these particular themes can be taken as a multivalent indictment of whiteman and the evil whiteman represents. If Bullchild's purpose was merely to recount important examples of traditional morality tales this particular selection may or may not be the most

comprehensive. If, however, he intended the portrayal of the “most trusted one” to be a part of his refutation of the claims made about Natives, then this group of stories serves quite well.

### *Internal Commentaries*

Instances of commentary, or explanation that go beyond exegesis of the narrative context to provide application and implication abound in *The Sun Came Down*. A simple page count reveals that perhaps as much as ten to fifteen per cent of the text can be considered commentary. Some of the sections of commentary run to several pages. While this is a part of traditional storytelling practice it is also an effectual rhetorical support strategy. Commentaries range from explicit applications like, “He cooked the fresh meat on an open fire, which was the way our ancestors cooked their food, and a much healthier way too” (p. 105), to lengthy segues and departures from the narrative such as his descriptions of South American pyramids and temples (p.326). Bullchild justifies these comments by saying, “I write these things because they do pertain to my story and our original beliefs or faith (p. 327). They also serve to advance his argument that the Native of the Americas has been corrupted and misrepresented. Bullchild’s commentaries can be divided into two categories, application and implication.

### *Application Commentaries*

The above short comment on cooking is an example of the application type of commentary. These comments serve to bring the world of *The Sun Came Down* into the present. They serve as a reminder that “this stuff still works.” If the “pieces” could somehow be reassembled the culture could be made whole. Bullchild presents the fragmentation of the culture as a function of experience not as an ontological change in

the nature of the human being. Traditional knowledge is still accessible and can be put back into practice. A significant key to these comments is the use of phonetic representations of traditional Blackfeet language throughout the text. These representations are numerous ranging from single words to complete sentences. It is important to remember that all of the stories in *The Sun Came Down* were told to Bullchild in the Blackfeet language. His translation is his interpretation and as mentioned above it is also part of his argument as well as a part of language recovery. As Kipp (2000) has it,

Keep in mind that the language is the key. There is nothing else. There is no other priority. There are no other issues. There is no reason to defend your motives, your actions, or your vision. You do not defend yourself, your own language fluency, or lack of fluency. You do it. Action is the key. Native children who are actively speaking the language are your only result (p. 1)

*The Sun Came Down* is not a handbook on how to live like an Indian. It is not a book of Indian lore and survival tips nor is it a language primer. There are however a significant number of glimpses into the rationale and practice of traditional native ways to substantially undergird the portrayal of the Natives and their world. These glimpses make possible the insights that can occur to the person somewhat familiar with modern Native culture. They serve as explanation for some of the salient norms and behaviors readily observable to the sensitive visitor. Most Northern Plains Pow Wows contain at least one give away ceremony. Bullchild addresses this practice in his commentary; “We give to one another gifts to show our love for the other and with no strings attached. We



give our most valued possession as gifts to those we love, and this still goes on and on even in these days we are now living” (p.67). Bullchild encourages his audience to visit a Pow Wow and see this for themselves. Other commentaries reference food preservation, the calendar, camp organization, and leadership hierarchy, while the content of these asides may appear somewhat idealized, the practices and attitudes still exist and are observable. Bullchild devotes considerable text to traditional health care and intervention practices. He testifies to their efficacy. His chapter *Medicine, Power to Heal and Prolong Life* describes in some detail the origin and practice of traditional therapies. More than one contemporary non-Indian health care administrator has experienced considerable frustration around treatment protocols and dispute resolution. These difficulties prompted Crowshoe and Manneschmidt (2002) to prepare a “structural approach for presenting North Piegan administration model deriving from traditional Blackfoot cultural practices” (p. 3). *The Sun Came Down* is a part of their bibliography.

#### *Implication Commentaries.*

The implication commentaries carry the bulk of Bullchild’s explicit rebuttal. Some of these border on the polemical while others have the force of mystery. He offers a traditional view of the creation of Mother Earth, explains the diaspora of the human beings and disputes the theory of the Bering Straits land bridge that accounts for the pre-columbian presence of human beings in North and South America. He also disputes theories that use language forms to locate Indian tribes. His position is simple; the Natives were created here and have always been here. The origin of humanity took place on the east slope of the Backbone of the World (Rocky Mountains).

Opposing theories in their archeological and social anthropological form also

have political implications, which is one reason why Bullchild cannot allow them to stand unchallenged. A political implication of immigration and linguistic theories of population dispersal is that the Natives themselves were merely earlier immigrants and that the Piegan and Cree migrated from the Great Lakes and displaced previous occupants of the Great Plains. Therefore whiteman is just the latest immigrant. Bullchild's explanation takes the anthropological high ground, claiming that the Piegan were created in place and it was the Creator's intention that this should remain their home. The Creator set up everything for the specific benefit of his human children, the ancestors of modern Blackfeet. Bullchild's consubstantive thesis, "We are all related, " could be taken to mean. "You are related to us," rather than, "We are distant and subservient relations of yours." As Bullchild puts it, "I have read many books on the Native of these countries. Our white friends done much smearing in those books. In most cases we were called almost everything except our true name, Natives" (p. 84).

In the above section on Napi as a metaphor for whiteman's evil behaviors, I have referenced several of the commentaries in which Bullchild makes the relationship between whiteman and evil or corruption explicit. In reference to medical practices and traditional healing Bullchild claims,

The medicine and the supernatural power has been around for many, many hundreds of years, since Creator Sun gave it for the good of his creations. For several years it was lost with much of the native culture. From around the 1880's up to just a few years ago, much of our culture was forbidden to use by our friends the paleface, who wanted to rule the Native people. Many Catholic missionaries came into these Native domains in influence

them into their way of Christianity, which to me is full of corruption (p. 84).

This commentary also includes the claim, “money is the white people’s God” (p. 85). This theme is alluded to throughout *The Sun Came Down* explicitly at times and implicitly in reference to traditional understandings about purity of the land and water, right relationships between human beings of both sexes and careful, frugal stewardship of the Creator’s gifts.

Bullchild opens many of his chapters with summaries that serve to reinforce and restate the precedence of Native culture. These summaries are brief paragraphs that usually contain a reminder of the process of creation and the intentions of the Creator. In the closing pages of *The Sun Came Down*, Bullchild offers a series of comparisons and correspondences between the Christian church and Native religion. While pointing out commonalities in regard to origin stories, and practices like baptism and the use of incense, Bullchild makes it clear that Native practice is more experientially coherent, efficacious and older. The systematic theology that I outlined above is the cornerstone of this argument. By the time the reader has processed the lessons contained in the stories, the conclusion is quite obvious; the words, “savagery, human sacrificing and barbarians” do not apply. And if the reader manages to avoid those implications then Bullchild simply tells us in his commentaries, “The Native lived a serene life before the coming of whiteman...The Native can only pray to our Creator Sun for deliverance from this wicked onslaught and robbery of our lands and now the waters” (p.389-390).

### *Point-by-Point Refutation.*

“Savagery, human sacrificing and barbarians” are among the terms that *The Sun Came Down* sets out to refute as misrepresentations or “smearing” of Native culture, the *kategoria*. They speak directly to the character of the Native. They are listed in the preface and in the concluding pages of Bullchild’s argument. These terms reference the purity—corruption dialect in that the Native stands accused or attacked as unclean, dirty, lousy with human ticks and filthy.” Additionally the corruption of the nature of human beings appears in ‘human sacrificing, warlike, savagery. Murderers, cruel, brutal, bloodthirsty people, lust to kill, war mongers. These indicator terms can be collated into three categories, the nature of the Native, the pursuit of aggression and the practice of interpersonal hygiene. All these refer to the purification of character that is a classic approach to apologia (Fisher, 1970, Ryan, 1982).

#### *Native Nature*

I have addressed the nature of the human being earlier in the description of Bullchild’s apologetic, suffice it to say that, “Whether we like it or not, we act very foolish many times. About half the time, we act the way we should in the first place. For this is the true way we were taught by Creator Sun’s disciple Napi. ( who often acts foolishly) These are the precedents he taught us to live by” (p. 165). Bullchild’s ‘half the time,’ puts him in the camp of anthropological and theological optimists. His view of natural human behavior admits to foolishness and both acts of commission and omission that run counter to the Creator’s intentions. Usually the consequences for these actions are immediate. Usually the individual pays. According to Bullchild the organized pursuit of evil is not a part of the Native nature or way of life. Foolish self-indulgence, most

certainly, but only the corrupted human is capable of evil such as rape, murder, theft and slavery.

### *Pursuit of Aggression*

The corruption that gives rise to all of these is the pursuit of aggression, warlike behavior. Bullchild unequivocally disputes the image of the Plains Indian as “*Raiders of the Northwest*” or horse-stealing and destructive warriors. It is simply not in their original nature. Bullchild claims that a large part of this is due to circumstances.

“Fighting was unheard of until after horses came into the Native life. Life was love... All Natives loved their brothers and sisters of other tribes in those dog days. Communication just took too long between those many tribes of Natives and our foot traveling was just too slow. Native tribes met very seldom, and they met with their love for one another and never a hard feeling between any of them. There wasn’t any reason to be mad at one another. Camping together whenever a meeting happened and departing from one another with gifts for one another, maybe never to meet again for many years to come (p. 387).

Bullchild claims that this love for their brothers and sisters extended to the first white people and that without it they never would have made it past the high tide line. “You say that they might’ve sneaked to land from those ships or swim to shore unnoticed? No chance not by an Indian. We lived like the wild, as our Creator Sun had taught us. We had very keen hearing and an eagle eyesight, no chance for that. So this alone proves that we loved and welcomed anyone, even the non-Indian that came in those times” (p. 390).

Those of us who have images of burned out homesteads and wagon trains, raids

on pioneer communities and rape, theft and murder in our stereotype of the indigenous Americans tend not to think about what the pre-columbian Native culture might have looked like. Even the images we have of intertribal warfare, or horse raids and territorial disputes are actually set in a period of history that includes the whiteman. Pressure from European immigration clamped the continent from east and west, north and south, reaching the Blackfeet and other Plains Indian tribes during the three centuries after European landfall in the Caribbean. The horse, the gun, alcohol and decimated buffalo herds were a factor in Plains Indian existence before Lewis and Clark shot their first Blackfeet.

There is no written history of the Dog Days. The Native has been represented as inherently savage, cruel and barbaric, but Bullchild's rebuttal at the very least gives us pause. Is it possible that the nomadic hunter-gatherers of the Great Plains lived at peace with one another prior to the invasion that put them in a defensive posture? Is it reasonable to assume that much of what characterizes the stereotype of the Plains Indian "warrior culture" came into being in the centuries after Columbus? How would we know? One way would be to observe the contemporary culture of the Blackfeet through the lens of *The Sun Came Down*, looking for evidence of peaceful intentions, cooperation and conflict resolution strategies that include forgiveness, gentleness and humility. At least from my perspective in the six years I observed the Blackfeet Reservation community, these indicators of character were not hard to find.

### *Interpersonal Hygiene*

"Unclean, filthy, lousy with human ticks." These indicators speak to a lack of concern with personal and social hygiene. Keeping in mind that a broad definition of

hygiene would include the areas of mental, spiritual and physical health, personal and community sanitation and interpersonal interactions such as sexual behaviors and living arrangements. Again the purity—corruption dialectic that Bullchild proposes addresses these character descriptions. In terms of the amount of support in Bullchild's argument that is devoted to extensively rebutting these misrepresentations we could say that this particular area is a major focus of *The Sun Came Down's* refutation. From the descriptions of the sweat lodges to sexual norms Bullchild addresses virtually every area of hygiene. Camps are moved, relationships are governed and individual behaviors are in large part defined by health and nutrition concerns. Consider the effect on health and nutrition of concentrated human populations in a small area such as a modern city and contrast that to the way the people of *The Sun Came Down* move within the created world seeking what is best for them and in harmony with the Creator's intentions. I once asked Joe SwimsUnder how the traditional Blackfeet managed to get together enough firewood to make it through a northern plains winter in below zero temperatures and winds of over 100mph. Joe said that in the first place they didn't stay out on the prairie but down in protected river bottoms closer to the southern part of their territory and secondly they pitched their lodges in a thicket of wood and moved them when the close and easily available fuel was exhausted. The fact that this had never occurred to me is emblematic of the gulf caused by even the simplest of inter-cultural assumptions.

The sweat lodge has an important function in all areas of hygiene. Of course it is an excellent and effective way to clean one's body, but it has a larger dimension in relation to spiritual and social health. Bullchild notes that when the young man returns from the vision quest, "The great sweat was to sweat off evil powers that might have

come onto the young man at the time he was alone. This sweat was done before he mingled with the crowd too much” (p. 303). This addresses its community mental and spiritual health functions. Traditionally the sweat is “done early in the morning with the first rays of sun inviting Creator Sun to take part in the sweat.” The sweat is a prayer, an opportunity for the human being to communicate with the Creator. These practices focus on personal and social purity. They are holistic in that they do not separate body, mind and spirit.

Public confession is a part of the Sun Dance ceremony in keeping with the Creator’s injunction to be honest. “Others of the crowd came to confess before this huge crowd to let these other people know of their honesty. All of these people spoke with their loudest voice to be heard during confession” (p. 374). Confession like this is form of community cleansing, it demonstrates the intention to live together in harmony, regretting the tears in the fabric of social existence. These tears as in any human community are a result of norm violations.

Marriage and family norms, relationships between children and elders, between the leadership and the community are spelled out in considerable detail in *The Sun Came Down*. As noted above in the analysis of the apologetics of *The Sun Came Down* there is an ethos. What is clearly disturbing to Bullchild is the assumption that the Native would chose to live a filthy, undernourished, alcohol ridden, promiscuous existence in violation of that ethos. What human culture would? Again, are the stereotypes of Native communities as ungovernable, littered and dangerous a function of the character of the Native? Or is it reasonable to assume when one observes Bullchild’s hometown that much of what is visible is an overlay that was not here before the whiteman arrived. This



includes the visible effects of the destruction of the family structure through death, disease and exile, diminishing of traditional spiritual leadership and practice, the erasing of the language and the importation of automobiles, drugs, guns and alcohol. Social scientists, educators, missionaries and administrators have all written at length attempting to explain current conditions on Indian Reservations. Few if any choose the perspective of *The Sun Came Down*, which stands outside of and removed in time and space from what exists and insists that before judging and intervening we look at what existed before. It is a fact of history that American Indian Reservations have more in common with concentration camps devoted to cultural transformation than they do with large areas of land devoted to the protection and preservation of the human culture that existed prior to the invasion of whiteman. It could be said that the elk and grizzly bears are better protected from corruption in Glacier National Park than the human beings who used to call the mountains of the Park, the Backbone of their world.

Both Bullchild's consubstantive apologetic and apologia in defense of the character of the Native support his thesis that the Native of the Americas has been historically misrepresented and that in fact "Like it or not we are all related." We can see that he has provided a comprehensive theological narrative from which can be derived a systematic theology. This theology addresses the Nature of the Creator (*mythos*), The Nature of the Relationship of the human being and the Creator (*logos*), The answer to the question, "How shall we then live?" (*ethos*), and the means of restoration when we have strayed from the Creator's intentions (*pathos*). We can also appreciate that possibility that his renditions of Napi stories serve as a metaphor for the evil behavior of whiteman that has brought about the destruction of the Native culture. His short and lengthy

commentaries add explicit support to his implicit claims about the character of the Native and his point by point rebuttal that refutes the stereotype of the Native as “unclean, lying and warlike runs the length and depth of his narrative along a dialectic of purity and corruption laying the cause of corrupt behavior at the feet of whiteman.

There is a story, perhaps apocryphal, about Brother Vann, a turn of the twentieth century itinerant missionary in the Montana territory. He spent time among the Blackfeet and was given the name that translates as “Great Heart.” When asked what should be done to address the “Indian problem,” he is reported to have replied, “Civilize the white people.” He then went on to establish churches in Havre, Great Falls and throughout the territory. Whether or not this story actually happened exactly like that is open to debate, but it is still a true story.

In the next chapter I will compare this presentation with the intercultural hermeneutic developed in chapter two. I will show how Bullchild uses a rational narrative apologia supported by strategies of allusion and refutation to rebut the misrepresentation of the character of the Native.

## Chapter Five

### Critical Understandings for the Interculturalist

A serviceable critique of an intercultural text can be framed using principles derived from the hermeneutic outlined in chapter two. Recalling the definition of effectual intercultural rhetoric: Effectual intercultural rhetoric foregrounds the consubstantive nature of human beings while representing the distinct meanings traditions and cosmology of diverse self-defined speech communities, we can examine and evaluate a text in the light of this definition and in consideration of these eight critical understandings for the interculturalist.

#### *Locating the Text in Time and Space*

*The Sun Came Down* exists as a distinct cultural text. It is a product of an indigenous oral tradition that existed for centuries prior to first contact with representatives of European culture. It includes ancient understandings of the origin of human culture represented in a modern vocabulary. It reaches from the past to the present and from a people distinct from the implied audience.

The text was composed and redacted in Browning, Montana and San Francisco, California. Browning is the seat of Blackfeet Nation. Browning is also located on the 1.5 million acre Blackfeet Indian Reservation home to 15,000 members of the Blackfeet Tribe, a political entity recognized by the United States Government. The Blackfeet Reservation shares a border with Canada and a confederacy with two other Bands located in southern Alberta. Bullchild's ancestors have occupied the location of the reservation and the surrounding aboriginal hunting territory for as long as there are oral or written

records. The people known as Blackfeet, properly *Pikuni* or *Piegan* inhabited this territory at the time of first contact.

As Carbaugh (1999) explains the landscape has a voice. In one sense the location of *The Sun Came Down* is in and of itself a rhetoric. It speaks to those who live there. The referents for considerable discourse are visible to the senses. Bullchild remains faithful to this understanding as he presents his intercultural rhetoric from within its location.

### *Contextualizing the Critique*

The social context of the speech community echoes throughout *The Sun Came Down*. Historically the fabric of the world described in *The Sun Came Down* began to tear and unravel, with the arrival of horse, gun, smallpox and alcohol. Hostility between European immigrants and the Natives of the Great Plains played out in increased hostility between bands and tribes as pressure increased and the available resource base decreased. The relational world of fellowship described in *The Sun Came Down* exists no more. As I have noted above this is not a unique event in the history of the world, but there is a uniqueness to the Reservation communities that remain as reminders of all that has been lost.

The terrible almost schizophrenic tension between the surrounding world of whiteman and the preserved remnants of traditional history and culture results in a social context that exhibits visible symptoms of that tension.

When I first read *The Sun Came Down* I found it delightful and comforting in its dignified humanity, because the community from which it came was a historical and social abstraction. After six years of contextualizing the narrative in the place it grew out

of, I find it more disturbing than comforting. The *ethos* and *pathos* of the Blackfeet Reservation, *the Indian way* and the suffering in the community combined to add depth and breadth of application to a critique of *The Sun Came Down*. I submit that this is the function of contextualized critique, not to delight but to disturb, to expose the tension in dialectics and polarities that causes enough unease in the universal and critical audience that some form of positive action will result. I would not have seen this without living among the Blackfeet. It would have been much easier to remain ignorant.

### *Radical Reflection*

I noted the virtual impossibility of critically engaging an intercultural text and emerging with all of my assumptions intact. Having had the privilege of comparing the text to its speech community of origin and rereading it in the light of six years of participant observation, I was able to experience the reflective process directly. I said earlier that I missed a lot on my first reading. I caught the consubstantial appeal and noticed the influence of American Standard English and its several ideologies, but I missed much of the force of the argument due to lack of a context. This ignorance allowed me to make assumptions about Blackfeet culture that would later prove to be incorrect. The experience of correcting these assumptions was powerful enough to cause me to rethink my own systematic theology and the culture from which it sprang.

Others who have served the Blackfeet people as health care or educational professionals have noticed a similar process. I have heard it related like this. “You come to the Reservation and right away, you want to write a book or tell stories about all the unusual things you see and hear and experience. After a while, you begin to grasp a little of the reasons behind the visible behaviors and it makes you humble and quiet. If you

stay here long enough it will be hard to talk about it to people who have never lived here. When you think about what folks here are really up against it makes you want to weep. If you stay even longer you get to laugh with the folks that live here.”

Critically examining *The Sun Came Down* caused me to critique how I process all intercultural messages especially messages that characterize or essentialize the other culture. While consubstantiation and human family are a part of my theoretical reality I haven't always wanted to claim all my relatives. *The Sun Came Down* presses me to listen harder now for the stories that bring me into deeper relationship with my brothers and sisters.

The level of arrogance and cultural superiority I grew up with astonishes me. *The Sun Came Down* helped deconstruct some of that by demonstrating that my criteria for intelligent behavior were skewed toward the things I valued, like personal achievement, recognition and material success. Changing values can dramatically change the perception of intelligence, which changes the perception of the superiority on which it is based. I like to say I learned three important things about intercultural communication on the Reservation. 1) I am ridiculous. 2) Everybody is smarter than me. 3) There is no real reason for anybody to tell me the truth about anything.

These are not whimsical understandings; the process of learning them was costly. Phrasing it more formally, I come from a low context, fast moving, results oriented culture and immediately begin to stumble on the different rhythm of interaction. This is a source of humor for those who are observing me. It's intercultural slapstick. I realized I had no knowledge of how to communicate effectively, what words and gestures to use or what the words meant to the receiver, even though at first I thought we were both

speaking American Standard English. That meant that even small children could interpersonally outsmart me. And finally I realized that given the history of extermination, enculturation and now cultural exploitation, these very intelligent people were more than a little wary of telling me anything I might make use of to continue this history. Truth norms are very high on the Reservation. In that sense it behooves the outsider to earn the right to hear the truth.

I could say I really didn't understand myself as an American until I tried to understand Indians. For me this process began with my first reading of *The Sun Came Down*. It held up well in my experience of the Reservation speech community not because I got it the first time, but because it encouraged me to reflect on what I was hearing and seeing. In this way the text expanded for me the longer I lived with it. It continues to do so. This is what effectual intercultural rhetoric is supposed to do.

### *The Right to Speak*

I quoted Benton Juneau above commenting on how Percy told the truth and could be trusted. *The Sun Came Down* is one of very few texts composed by an author who is a member of a Native American Tribe, retains fluency in his or her indigenous language, and has the interpersonal and intellectual resources to compile a comprehensive portrait of pre-columbian culture and relate it to contemporary relationships between the descendants of that culture and the culture that surrounds them.

Given the difficulty of this task, remembering it took eleven years and ten rewrites, the motive or rhetorical situation of the rhetor must have been a powerful incentive. Bullchild himself reports his anger and frustration at the historical misrepresentation of his culture. Other critics have noted the elegiac or melancholic tone

that lingers around the text. Quintillian (Ryan, 1982) tells us that any apologia must of necessity have its origins in an attack. The attempt I have made to describe just a small part of the overall attack on the culture of the Native, pales before the experience of it. The pervasive nature of the historical collateral damage done by the attack can be seen and heard today; it is visible in the Reservation School System, Indian Health Service and Bureau of Indian Affairs law enforcement. If I or my ancestors had experienced an attack like this, I shudder to think of how it would color my outlook. One thing is certain, just like Bullchild, thinking about it “gets me mad.”

The rhetor has several motives or rhetorical situations in which to express this anger and the choice is most likely determined as much by the personal reaction of the rhetor as it is by circumstances. Bullchild could have created an image and in a sense he did, given the fact that very few indigenous American authored descriptions of the history of the world exist. He could also have reaffirmed an image, but this becomes problematic in view of the endemic nature of the stereotypical misrepresentation. He could have chosen subversion, he could have responded to the attack with an attack of his own. He could have written a retaliatory history of the whiteman world. He does some attacking in *The Sun Came Down*, but it is certainly not the focus. He chose purification. To my mind this is the decision that resulted in the effectual nature of *The Sun Came Down* as intercultural rhetoric.

I could characterize this type of motive as soft persuasion, but that would touch only a part of what Bullchild does. While he does lift up an array of positive human values and delightful imagery; his plot, characters and action are anything but soft. They lived, as he tells us, a hard life and often responded to it with hard behavior. Rather, I



would characterize the purifying apologia in *The Sun Came Down* as gracious and dignified.

Realizing that gracious has many, many meanings I would offer this definition: Gracious applies to people who retain a sense of humor, perspective and hope in the face of insurmountable odds. Dignity is the expression of graciousness by thought, word and deed.

From his position on the moral, historical and theological high ground Bullchild dispenses a gracious portrayal of the Native of these Americas and while demonstrating transcendent values that support a global understanding of human dignity, he highlights the uniqueness and complexity of Native character.

This type of argument is not a question of fact although facts are used in support. It is not a question of policy because he does not ask for a policy change from his audience. His closing plea is directed to the Creator. The rhetorical question is one of values. Bullchild describes what it is that makes a “real human being” and in doing so purifies the image of the Native.

#### *The Presence of the Redactor*

The author serves as a redactor of traditional stories. Bullchild credits a large group of tribal elders by name as sources for his stories. In this context they are not to be considered as authors of the stories, but keepers of the oral tradition. Bullchild’s pool of potential narrative was vast. Indigenous storytellers have preserved oral history and tradition for centuries. Accuracy of recall is assumed as well as observable in the high communication context of the present day Reservation speech community.

It can also be assumed that Bullchild's assembly of individual stories, their translation and redaction was purposeful and strategic. If *The Sun Came Down* is read as a rhetoric there are no extraneous stories. They all serve to support his consubstantive claim; "we are all related" as well as furnishing support for his rebuttal of the misrepresentation.

Bullchild is a redactor and a rhetor. *The Sun Came Down's* editors at Harper and Row made redactive decisions that preserved the texture of Bullchild's language and format; by that act they become rhetors as well.

I have redacted the text for this study. I have my own rhetorical purpose which I hope is quite clear. I intend to support this gracious argument for human dignity in the construction of my own argument. To me both Bullchild's and SanSouci's integrity is beyond question. I can only hope that I have presented their work faithfully.

#### *The Tasks of Interpretation and Redaction*

I have addressed strategic translation at length in chapter two. I could have and probably should have summed up the whole thing in one sentence: When you listen to people talk on the Blackfeet Reservation even though they are speaking English they are consciously or unconsciously speaking an expanded version of the traditional Piegan language. Aware that this is a facile overgeneralization I would still insist that one of the critical assumptions that I could make in intercultural critique would be a grievous error. That would be to automatically assume I recognized meaning in the words I just heard. This understanding was for the greatest gift of *The Sun Came Down*. Bullchild's use of language, his translation and presentation, expanded my vocabulary and enhanced the meanings of familiar words and syntax.

In the preceding chapter four I explained how Bullchild develops his intercultural rhetoric by engaging the tasks of exegesis and internal commentary. Suffice it to say in conclusion that these tasks are clearly performed strategically. I was my critical task to be aware of this and to be able to sort out the evidence. For the intercultural critic this work is essential.

Bullchild performs these tasks as a rhetor and it behooves me as a critic to work just as hard at my own exegesis and commentary. The fruit of both Bullchild's effort and my critical undertaking is an increase in understanding. *The Sun Came Down* is especially amenable to this type of enterprise because of the large amount of material for exegesis and commentary and the great care with it is presented. I suspect that even the smallest intercultural artifact or text could yield similar fruit with similar critical effort.

#### *The Multivalent Nature of the Intercultural Audience*

Bullchild appears to have targeted at least four audiences in addition to his prayer to the Creator. These audiences, the intracultural, opposing, universal and critical readers have all been addressed at some level. The question of audience effect that arises when considering *The Sun Came Down* critically is referred to Black's long term view of influential texts. I would only add that this is an American text. Regardless of the way we configure our history we have all been thrown together as a people who share some political, social and economic understandings. We are in continual dialog with each other. Our responses to one another are multivalent and often misunderstood. *The Sun Came Down* records a particular part of our shared history from a particular perspective. When we read this book as Americans it can only help us to understand ourselves and that can only help us to understand the other cultures of this Mother Earth.

In that sense, just like Bullchild claims, the audience for his text is global. “Some of these stories may sound a little foolish, but they are very true. And they have much influence over all of the people of this world, even now as we all live” (p. 3)

### *Simultaneous and Multivalent Strategies*

I have demonstrated how everything from the selection and assembly of stories from the oral tradition through their translation, exegesis and commentary has been done strategically to advance Bullchild’s gracious consubstantive claim, “we are all related” and to support his rebuttal of the historical misrepresentation of the Native. I illustrated how Bullchild uses allusion, direct refutation, metaphor and enthymemic commentary as components of his overall argument. As I noted, ascribing metaphoric meaning to part of an intercultural rhetoric is problematic for two primary reasons; 1) lack of knowledge of the author’s intent and 2) dissonant historical and literary meanings. So in view of this problematic nature I would like to increase the risk of being wrong and offer the entire text as a metaphor in its most classic sense.

Bullchild’s portrayal of the Native is a metaphor for the real human being. It is more than a simple recognition of cultural similarity or theological correspondence. In the words of the cartoon character Pogo, “We have met the enemy and they are us.” We have everything within our hearts and the language of our hearts to create and respond to both the image of the Native and the image of whiteman and we are all both. We are more than all related. We are each other. This is the critical understanding I will take away from a reading of *The Sun Came Down* as a work of intercultural rhetoric and that is the project.

*The Project of a Global Understanding of Human Dignity*

I know about the Nestlé's infant formula debacle and Nike's Asian labor problems. I know about Wounded Knee, South Dakota, Bear River, Montana and MyLai, Vietnam. I'm hearing about smart bombs, ignorant leaders and dead children as I write. I know it's all persuasive discourse of one form or another. But it's not effectual intercultural rhetoric, as I understand it, unless it is a critique that contributes to the overall project of human dignity.

Quite a few years ago I visited Dr. Martin Luther King's home church in Atlanta, Georgia for Sunday worship. It was still a viable Baptist faith community with a wonderful music ministry and a dynamic preacher. I thoroughly enjoyed the service and the sense of pilgrimage to a cultural shrine. What I remember specifically about that experience didn't have anything to do with the rhetoric of preaching or the theology proclaimed. It was the behavior of the ushers. These ushers were seating an awful lot of tourists and sightseers, myself and my wife among them. I hope I never lose the image of the gracious courtesy, dignity, honor and respect with which they did it. They were old enough to remember Bull Connor, George Wallace and Dr. King's assassination. Old enough to have been jailed, beaten and attacked by dogs. Old enough to have relatives who remembered slavery. The message they communicated in every word and gesture was. "Yes, we know how we have been treated, but we are not like that. We would never treat another human being the way we were treated, even the ones who look like the ones who persecuted us." As I left the Blackfeet Reservation after six years of using *The Sun Came Down* as a guidebook, I remembered that experience in Atlanta. Percy Bullchild's

*The Sun Came Down: A history of the world as my Blackfeet elders told it* is a portrait of human dignity.

Aristotle reminds us that, "Rhetoric is useful because things that are true have a natural tendency to prevail" (Roberts, 1954 p.22). Where and when is the question? I don't think Percy Bullchild would mind closing in the words of one of the great intercultural rhetors of our time.

I know you are asking today, "How long will it take?" I come to say to you this afternoon however difficult the moment, however frustrating the hour, it will not be long, because truth pressed to earth will rise again.

How long? Not long, because no lie can live forever.

How long? Not long, because you still reap what you sow.

How long? Not long.

Because the arm of the moral universe is long but it bends toward justice

(King, 2002, p. 111).

Critically engaging *The Sun Came Down* brings us closer.

## Appendix A

This appendix contains an excerpt from the chapter entitled *Creator Sun's Gift of Food to His Children* in order to illustrate the distinct strands of argument that make up *The Sun Came Down!*. The Black Times New Roman 12 font passages are narrative. *The green italics Times New Roman Passages 12 Font are translation.* The Red Arial 12 font passages are exegesis. The Blue Bookman Old Style 12 font passages are commentary.

Sickness was unheard of, life was just one long existence here on Mother Earth. At this particular time, it was only the shortage of their food. In time they would all get weaker and wouldn't be able to get around so good, but there wasn't any fear for them to die.

Creator Sun went directly to their place of camps and there he was welcomed by all of the children. He visited with all of them as soon as he arrived. Afterwards, he singled out his son, Mudman, and took a walk with him out into the open fields. He had to talk with him. He told his son, "Son! You have brought many children unto Mother Earth and they are also mine. Creator Sun told his son, the Mudman, "This thing, we shall name it after how its going to be treated by you and the other children when you take it for food. We will call it *eye-i-in-nawhw.*" This new food fell back down, it was very exhausted from trying to stand and walk. It had to rest for awhile as it laid there... Creator Sun soon took the advantage of this. He told his son, the Mudman, "We will have to make them so they too will become many, just as you children are made, a place for a seed and come out as a growth, an image after its own kind. It will become many. It

won't take them long to bring out their images so there will always be enough around for food."

He knew he had given ample supply of food to those children of his this time by giving them flesh to eat along with the vegetation. That was his way of thinking.

As this thing laid there from exhaustion, it fell asleep. While it slept Creator Sun took out of it a rib bone, like he done to Mudman, and from this rib bone he made the female. Telling the Mudman, "This one shall be for the seed which will be planted in her by the first one I made and they will become many. You and all the other children shall use them for food."

This was the first flesh food given to Mudman and all of their children to supplement those roots, berries, and the barks of food, which they ate for a very long time.

This particular creature of flesh or the first flesh food became the food animal known as the buffalo. The word buffalo came from the first whiteman that came into this country. Probably named it after the water buffalo of Asia.

*The true name that was given them by Creator Sun was eye-i-in-nawhw, or as it's translated, "shall be peeled." All the killed buffalo were peeled or, as we know it, skinned, to get at the flesh for food.*

As the two new food things got on their feet and got steady, they began to graze around. They were eating the grass and the many kinds of foliage growing all over.



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