

SELF-INSCRIPTIONS: ETHNIC, INDIGENOUS, LINGUISTIC AND FEMALE
IDENTITY CONSTRUCTIONS IN CANADIAN MINORITY LIFE WRITING.
A COMPARISON OF APOLONJA KOJDER'S MARYNIA, DON'T CRY AND RITA
JOE'S SONG OF RITA JOE.

by

JOANNA KORDUS

B.A., The University of British Columbia, 2006

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

(Comparative Literature)

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

(Vancouver)

August 2008

© Joanna Kordus, 2008

ABSTRACT

Despite Canada's official policy of multiculturalism, until recently, the perspectives of the country's lesser-known, marginalized writers have not been usually taken into consideration in mainstream discussions on the nature of Canadian identity and its socio-cultural mosaic. Specifically, minority life writing narratives had generally received little critical attention in Canada. This paper aims to fill this slowly-decreasing gap through the exploration of two texts whose female writers negotiate their distinct ethnic and national selves within the cultural dominant of Canada. The essay compares Apolonja Kojder's Polish-Canadian memoir, *Marynia, Don't Cry*, to Rita Joe's Mi'kmaq-Canadian autobiography, *Song of Rita Joe*. The analysis of these texts sets the Polish and Aboriginal communities into conversation, and yields a discussion on the nature of cultural, national, linguistic and female identity. It argues that identity is political, relational and always in-process. Since much of the personal narrative writers' identity struggle in an alien land and language often unravels as a translation of the self into another world, the two personal narratives add nuance to our understanding of the contradictions found in institutional policies. The study creates awareness of the literary and discursive strategies by which writers of disadvantaged communities challenge and subvert cultural oppression, identity misconstructions, and the exclusion of ethnic and women's histories from within mainstream society. However, through the textual hybridization of cultures, languages, histories and life experiences, Kojder's and Joe's intention is to facilitate understanding across groups, create respect for diversity, propel social participation and induce socio-political transformation. This paper means to shed light on the Canadian experience in its unique variations, and to add to life writing studies on ethnic and national individuals' personal encounters with and within the Canadian socio-cultural and political milieu.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....	ii
Table of Contents.....	iii
CHAPTER I Introduction: Nations, Communities and Self-Writing.....	1
CHAPTER II Cultural Identity Constructions in Canadian Minority Narratives.....	5
2.1 Polish Ethnic Invisibility: A Transnational Reading.....	9
2.2 “I’m going to write the truth” – Writing Indigenous Identity.....	19
2.3 Cultural Identity in Summation.....	36
CHAPTER III Words of Difference: Framing Linguistic Identity.....	37
3.1 Dusza (Soul) in Apolonja Kojder’s Memoir.....	39
3.2 Kisulkw (Great Spirit) in Rita Joe’s Autobiography.....	50
3.3 Linguistic Identity in Summation.....	60
CHAPTER IV The Female Self in Relationality.....	62
4.1 Mothers and Daughters.....	63
4.2 Womanhood and Solidarity.....	69
4.3 Female Identity in Summation.....	73
CHAPTER V Conclusion and Recommendations for Further Work	75
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	86

CHAPTER I: Introduction: Nations, Communities and Self-Writing

Although prior to the 1990s, little critical attention had been granted to Canadian minority life writing (Buss, *Canadian Women's Autobiography* 163-164), scholarly studies of ethnic and indigenous autobiographies in Canada have been gaining some momentum in recent years (Karpinski, *Tracing the Autobiographical* 323). Eva C. Karpinski writes that, "Currently, one can observe a growing interest in non-canonical texts and multidisciplinary models, a trend ... clearly visible in Auto/biography in Canada" (*Tracing the Autobiographical* 325). Anthologies of minority life writing (immigrant as well as indigenous) have been published in Canada since the late 1970s (Karpinski, *Multicultural 'Gift(s)'* 112). While Native publishing in Canada has been minimal in the first half of the twentieth century (Ruffo 211), for contemporary Native Canadian writers, autobiography has become an important and budding genre. However, after conducting my literature review, I find that there is still an insufficient amount of critical work that deals specifically with the topic of Canadian minority life writing narratives. Much more needs to be done. The gap, as Karpinski calls it, widens further when it comes to studies conducted on minority women's personal narratives. Indeed, Karpinski writes earlier that, between the 1970s and 1990s, Canadian immigrant "women's life writing ... has been largely neglected by mainstream critics, even [by] those who write about ethnic minority authors" (*Multicultural 'Gift(s)'* 111). Likewise, for Native Canadian women, due to their status as wards of the Canadian government, the 'woman question' did not exist until Maria Campbell's 1973 memoir, *Halfbreed*, openly addressed the political issue of being a Native woman in Canada. Though in recent years scholarly inattention to these life writings has begun to abate, it is my goal to attend to these concerns and to contribute to the still-developing study of Canadian minority life writing narratives.

In effect, this paper explores and compares immigrant and indigenous constructions of identity and their textual representations within the Canadian socio-political context. Though social scientists tend "not [to] talk of First Nations and immigrants in the same breath," my intention here is to do just that (Abraham 42). I write with a belief in the cultural togetherness that underpins Canadian national identity. The

two life narratives that I have selected take part in my conviction. The negotiations of cultural subjectivity are aptly described by Apolonja Kojder, a Polish-Canadian memoirist who in 1995 wrote *Marynia, Don't Cry: A Mother's Legacy*. The same can be said for Rita Joe, whose 1996 Mi'kmaq-Canadian autobiography, entitled *Song of Rita Joe: Autobiography of a Mi'kmaq Poet*, discusses being Mi'kmaq in Canada. Since both authors exist and write in the in-between spaces of two different languages and cultures, their personal narratives are of great value to my study. I feel that these two works help me fulfil my goal to present a broad and diverse scope of personal, Canadian female minority texts and experiences. While one of my objects is to relate these books' literary value, my overall goal is to convey these two writers' messages and perspectives and to engage the reader's and the critic's interest in the genre as well as in these two texts themselves.

My focus on the life writing genre is particularly suitable since textual space in autobiographical writing is often used as a site for identity (re)production and transmission. The levels of selfhood construction that I discuss consist of cultural, linguistic and female identity and I argue that these three facets are intimately intertwined. I also show that the representations of identity function subversively. My comparative reading of Kojder's *Marynia, Don't Cry* and Joe's *Song of Rita Joe* analyzes these authors' respective, socially liminal positions and their (re)constitution of those positions within Canada's majority society.

This paper argues that Kojder and Joe effectively rewrite history as well as cultural and national identities. In *Marynia, Don't Cry*, Kojder composes her own identity through the history of her family, specifically through female history. This allows her to challenge official, exclusionary histories and to carve out an authentic image and (hi)story of herself, her family and her ethnic group. Kojder's memoir is a personal manifesto of honouring and representing women's experiences along with ethnic cultural differences within the multicultural and transnational space of Canada. *Song of Rita Joe* echoes many of Kojder's themes, though not without some distinct divergences. Written as a survivor's story, Rita Joe's autobiography means to transcend all borders – physical as well as mental – within her Canadian readers. In fact, I argue that Joe's positive outlook is a deliberate

strategy of resistance against negative mainstream views of Native history and presence, as well as a way of inspiring positive progress for the Mi'kmaq peoples' self-definition and Canada's relationship to them. It becomes clear that both women's identities are very much dependent upon the history, stories and cultural uniqueness of their respective ethnic or indigenous groups. Ultimately, both Kojder and Joe present themselves as Canada's distinct 'others' who, though they champion cultural diversity, nonetheless insist on their firm embeddedness within the Canadian socio-cultural landscape.

This essay takes Francoise Lionnet's postcolonial literary concept – called *métissage* – as its foundational reading methodology. I choose to employ *métissage* in order to highlight the ways in which Kojder and Joe insistently participate in the hybridization of the ethnic and Aboriginal self with the Canadian socio-cultural space. That is, the textual practice of *métissage* suggests the insistence that one is both Canadian and Polish or Mi'kmaq, rather than one but not the other. *Métissage* is particularly fitting for my use because the concept both foregrounds diversity and unites cultural differences against any oppressive structures and ideologies. Lionnet takes the term from the work of Edouard Glissant, who defines *métissage* as a practice of “cultural creolization [that] establishes a cross-cultural relationship ... among [various] histories” (Glissant in Lionnet, *Autobiographical Voices* 4). As a word, *métis* symbolizes a ‘mix,’ such as a “cloth made of two different fibres” (Lionnet, *Autobiographical Voices* 14). Lionnet expands on the literary meaning of *métissage* by stating that, for her, the concept functions as an act of “braiding of cultural forms through the simultaneous revalorization of oral traditions and reevaluation of Western concepts [that] has led to the recovery of occulted histories” (*Autobiographical Voices* 4). It is important for me to note here, however, that I derive my themes and reading strategies directly from *Marynia*, *Don't Cry* and *Song of Rita Joe*. I do not attempt to impose *métissage* or any other kind of reading strategy onto these texts in order to yield some pre-determined results. *Métissage* has become a complementary reading and aesthetic methodology for my project, and I choose to use it as it befits these two texts, especially because I see it operate within the pages of Kojder's and Joe's works. As concept and practice, then, *métissage* “demystifies all essentialist glorifications of unitary origins, be they racial, sexual, geographic, or cultural” (Lionnet, *Autobiographical Voices* 9) and takes solidarity as its “fundamental principle” (Lionnet, *Autobiographical*

Voices 6). *Métissage* is thus further valuable because it transforms hegemonic orders by performing various literary acts of hybridization. The culturally distinct yet deeply plural selves of Apolonja Kojder and Rita Joe ultimately merge minority cultures, languages, histories and life experiences with those of the mainstream and, as such, they reflect the “creative *métissage* [that is] grounded in the historical and geopolitical realities that motivate and inspire” these two writers (Lionnet, *Autobiographical Voices* 19). By resisting “hegemonic poetics” and multiculturalism’s “planned authenticity,” to borrow Shirley Neuman’s words, Kojder and Joe’s life narratives ultimately represent the power for the narrating self to “choos[e], inscrib[e] and make a difference” (225).

CHAPTER II: Cultural Identity Constructions in Canadian Minority Narratives

It is said that identity is the current means of structuring socio-political dialogue between and among cultural groups (Cronin 1). In our contemporary world, discourses of ethnic and indigenous marginalization can be seen to be mediated through representations and discussions of cultural identity. Because I believe that Canada's multiethnic makeup is held together by its minority cultures and identities, it is pertinent for me to explore within this chapter the marginalized voices that speak so urgently and profoundly about their cultural experiences in Canada.

Before I proceed, I feel that I must briefly examine the historical and current socio-cultural situation in Canada so as to properly contextualize the two personal narratives that will be discussed. In *Multicultural Citizenship*, Will Kymlicka discusses "patterns of cultural diversity" (10) and outlines the three groups or hierarchies of people that today constitute Canada's social makeup. Because Canada today contains more than one nation in the form of national minorities (these are the Quebecois and the Aboriginal communities) who existed prior to but were incorporated into the larger (English) Canadian state, and because it contains ethnic groups made up of "individual and familial immigra[nts]" (Kymlicka 6), the country is both a multination state as well as a polyethnic state (Kymlicka 17). According to Kymlicka, a multinational state arises after the conquest of national communities by another group, while a polyethnic state suggests a state that is composed of culturally diverse, incoming settlers (17). Kymlicka explains:

Canada's historical development has involved the federation of three distinct national groups (English, French, and Aboriginals). The original incorporation of the Quebecois and Aboriginal communities into the Canadian political community was involuntary. Indian homelands were overrun by French settlers, who were then conquered by the English. (12)

The majority society in Canada is therefore defined as "Anglophone" (Kymlicka 22), although this demographic, Kymlicka states, is presently shrinking due to the constant influx of new immigrants to the country (23). Grouping the Quebecois and the First Nations into culturally diverse, national groups, Kymlicka calls immigration the "second

source of cultural pluralism” in Canada (13). While national minorities such as Canada’s Aboriginal groups and the Quebecois have for a long time vied for self-government within the Canadian state, ethnic minorities or immigrants usually aim for integration as well as, frequently, the recognition of their cultural differences within the host nation (Kymlicka 11). While displays and celebrations of cultural diversity are encouraged, Canadian institutions do not generally make them into a state priority. Canada’s multiculturalism in practice, critics state, is therefore characterized by an attitude of negligence (Kymlicka 3). The contradictions found within Canada’s policies of multiculturalism and cultural tolerance will be discussed below.

I feel compelled to position myself in the midst of Canada’s liminal interstices. Myself inhabiting a cultural diaspora – having immigrated over a decade ago from Poland to settle in Canada – and feeling that I too am defined by the stories and experiences of my ancestors and homeland, which acquire special meaning in the host nation, I feel an urge to understand and attend to the Polish and First Nations diasporas. As an ethnic Pole who emigrated to Canada at the age of thirteen, I come to understand myself better by reading Apolonja Kojder’s Polish-Canadian memoir, *Marynia, Don’t Cry*. Being a recent settler in Canada, I feel the instinct to learn about, understand and sympathize with the First Nations people, to whom Canada has always belonged, long before the first European settlers arrived five hundred years ago. Rita Joe’s autobiography, *Song of Rita Joe*, offers the perfect opportunity for me to explore the indigenous diaspora. I will argue that both Kojder and Joe occupy similar though unique marginal positions within the Canadian landscape. While Kojder represents the Polish cultural diaspora in Canada, Joe writes from the position of a First Nations live-in exile writer.

I am aware that the term ‘diaspora’ is not usually applied to the First Nations of North America. I was able to come across one Native scholar, namely Bonita Lawrence, who uses the term ‘diaspora’ in her study on the lives of urban Natives, specifically on “mixed-bloods,” as she terms them. Their experiences, Lawrence writes,

are indelibly stamped by processes of diaspora created by government policies designed to sever Native peoples from their communities, such as forced removal

from lands in the face of settler encroachment, displacement through residential schooling and adoption. (6)

Later, Lawrence writes that Aboriginal “diasporic experiences that individuals and families carry must be seen as part of their nations’ history” (203-204). Although Lawrence uses the term ‘diaspora’ quite sparsely in her study, the link she makes between diaspora and Aboriginal experiences empowers me to use the term in my reading of Rita Joe’s autobiography. Fundamentally, I choose to use the term ‘diaspora’ universally because I feel that it speaks to the global, multifaceted experiences of territorial losses and cultural displacements of groups of people. That is, I do not view the term ‘diaspora’ as a concept that solely applies to immigration or immigrants. Rather, I follow the example of Robin Cohen’s and Stuart Hall’s use of the term ‘diaspora.’ Hall applies the concept to the socio-cultural environment of the African descendants of their slave forefathers and foremothers who were moved during colonial times from Africa to the Caribbean. Diaspora, in this sense, can be applied to the socio-cultural and socio-political situation of peoples who have experienced forceful conquests and involuntary land dispossession at the hands of an invader. I see similarities between the Africans who were enslaved by their Euro-American counterparts and moved for imperial and labour purposes to America and between the First Nations of North America who were also conquered, subjugated and forcefully removed from their traditional lands onto lands of lesser quality, and where they faced open attacks upon their cultural identities. Although the First Nations did not have to cross seas and continents, I believe that forced migration within a nation can also create a diaspora. The First Nations of the North American lands, I feel, therefore exist in a live-in exile; that is, though they still inhabit the Canadian landscape, they exist, as a result of colonization, on the margins (on reserves or in poor neighbourhoods) of greater society. The term ‘diaspora’ therefore allows me to form an important link between Apolonja Kojder’s and Rita Joe’s respective texts and cultural experiences. ‘Diaspora’ links both writers in their individual experience of Canada from within the nation’s peripheries. However, my goal is not to erase the specificity of the First Nations experiences and of the Polish immigrant experiences through my use of ‘diaspora’ on both texts. In order to maintain similarities as well as distinct differences between Kojder’s and Joe’s circumstances, I will take my example from Will Kymlicka to treat Kojder as an ethnic,

immigrant individual, and to treat Joe as a member of a national, Aboriginal group (Kymlicka 19).

With this approach in mind, I will explore the extent to which Canada's official institutions allow its ethnic voices to speak out for themselves, and the ways in which minority authors in turn resist being consumed by mainstream society. In these two life narratives, issues of resistance acquire the face of empowerment and survival (Akiwenzie-Damm 91). Importantly, rather than celebrate, Kojder's and Joe's respective texts challenge Canada's image of itself as a multicultural paradise. In fact, both texts confront the exclusionary trends of official histories and privilege family or oral history as a way to destabilize wrongful conceptions about their respective cultural groups. Yet both authors initiate an exchange of ideas rather than provoke conflict between margin and centre. These are the reasons why both authors present their identities in relation to their ethnic histories, communities and conceptions of the Polish and Mi'kmaq self. As cultural difference becomes pertinent in the full composition of the minority writer's self, the author's voice deliberately cuts into the dominant group's centre with the goal to presence truth, achieve self-actualization, and privilege diversity. Hence, both Kojder and Joe carve out a new cultural space in Canada that they believe can come into fruition; while Kojder presents a vision of the possibility of an authentic, consistent multiculturalism, Joe vies for an intercultural space within which genuine cultural respect and communication can occur between Canada and its First Nations peoples. Through a practice of cultural *métissage*, or hybridization, both authors insist that identities, both ethnic and mainstream, are interdependent and are founded upon cross-cultural relationships. Because identity can be used as a strategy, these authors' strategy of *métissage* may be viewed as "the fertile ground of our heterogeneous and heteronymous identities" (Lionnet, *Autobiographical Voices* 8). That is, writing the self enables the creation of an identity that is based upon diversity and multiplicity. Kojder and Joe ultimately foreground the importance of ethnic identity so as to articulate a vision of the future that is based on cultural solidarities between margin and centre, on respect for diversity, and on an opposition to prejudice and cultural misunderstandings.

Polish Ethnic Invisibility: A Transnational Reading

I begin this section by discussing the construction and negotiation of Polish diaspora identity within the Canadian space. I feel that Apolonja Kojder's memoir is particularly important in depicting Polish-Canadian cultural tensions and in illustrating the ways in which the writer retains her heritage and identity as a child of Polish immigrants. Kojder's text is unique because it operates from a state of liminality – that is, outside the national literary canon. I believe that reading Canada's minority literatures is important in attaining a full vision of the Canadian experience, especially if Canada defines itself as a multiethnic space. As I consider the socio-political circumstances that surround Kojder's memoir, I use a transnational reading methodology. Because the concept of transnationalism comprises persons of multiple nationalities and signifies the movement of people and cultures within and across nations, it is particularly suitable to my analysis of Kojder's strategic representation of diaspora identity. As such, transnationalism is used here to represent the multicultural and multiethnic space of Canada. But because the concept of transnationalism is highly complex and because the purpose of my essay is not to engage with the meanings of the term, I use the concept selectively to tease out particular transnational elements in Kojder's text.

Apolonja Kojder was born in Saskatchewan to her Polish immigrant parents in 1948. She currently holds a Ph.D. in Education. Her memoir, written in 1995, explores her family's history from the First World War all the way to their immigrant life in Canada. Forced to abandon their Polish home in present-day Ukraine during World War Two, Kojder's family is taken to a Siberian labour camp, which, after several years, they leave for India, England and finally Canada. Kojder characterizes her family as "homeless wanderers" until they are able to settle down in Canada (86). *Marynia, Don't Cry* focuses largely on the traumatic history of the women in the author's past. In fact, Kojder structures her identity through the history of these women – a theme that I expand on in my third chapter. The author's dependence upon these women for her own self-understanding is evident in the fact that for about three-quarters of the memoir, Apolonja does not 'exist.' Because Kojder only gets to her own birth and story relatively late in her memoir, the structure of her text implies that, before she can come into being, her female

predecessors must first realize themselves. Thus, the reader comes to understand that “out of the intimacies of one generation ... the next generation emerges” (Hoerder 4).

Kojder therefore finds meaning in her cultural heritage by identifying herself with the stories of her family. She writes, “All these stories ... made a place for me in the family scheme of things: I was ... a part of the saga” (132). While she successfully incorporates gender history into her immigrant family’s transnational movements and involvements, Kojder also utilizes personal history to undermine and challenge the official, exclusionary versions of history that have been transmitted by Canada’s institutional powers. What upsets Kojder in particular is how, at the time when she attended Canadian school, students were only taught half-truths about World War II, where the reality of forced labour in Siberia was completely overlooked. The author writes: “Why did they” in history class “devote one sentence to Poland? ... There was no mention of the deportations to Siberia” (125). She states that her family “considered the blatant denial of our personal family histories an affront to our integrity” (129). This historical omission pushes Kojder to use her text as a space within which to redress that silence and within which to bring awareness to her family’s transnational migrations and experiences. She writes that “In school,” as in greater Canadian society, “nobody ever asked us about where our parents came from or how we were living,” and that “there was never any talk in history class about our ethnic roots” (135). Thus, because she speaks extensively about the conditions her family suffered in the Siberian labour camps, Kojder in a sense reclaims her family’s history and raises it from the realm of the invisible to the realm of the visible. “Actively engaged in an urgent historical confrontation” (Harlow 100), she thus carves out a textual space that creates counter-hegemonic revision of this part of world history. She allows her readers to understand the exclusionary trends of Canada’s dominant discourses during the mid-twentieth century. She writes:

My family often said that no one wanted to listen to what had happened to them during the war. Canadians would immediately say that they had suffered a lot too, because sugar and other kinds of food had been rationed during the war ... I wanted to see something on television that was like what had happened to my parents, but

I never did ... They'd only mention that Poland's military system was antiquated ... they never showed the Polish people in Siberia waiting to escape. (134)

She continues, "in school I'd look at the history books and they never said anything like the stories my family told, and ... I'd get mad" (135). Historians help clarify this predicament by writing that Western "scholarly literature has largely focused on Soviet policies, not on the way they affected and were interpreted by those to whom they were applied;" they also point out that various factors contributed to the silence that surrounds this part of history, such as the quieting of public discussion of the topic in Communist ruled Poland, and the atrociousness of the Holocaust, which overshadowed the topic of Siberian camps (Jolluck xii).

Interestingly, during the time that Kojder writes her memoir, Smaro Kambourelli states that, in Canada, between the mid-1980s and mid-1990s, the literary productions of minority writers addressed Canada's cultural terrain and argued that "history should not be seen as a silent archive that has been packaged away" (*Making a Difference* xii). Indeed, Kojder inscribes herself "within and against the culture that subtend[s] the[se] experiences" by making sense of her past (Lionnet, *Autobiographical Voices* 192). When speaking of growing up in Canada, Kojder regularly refers to the historic Polish presence in Germany, Siberia, India, and so on. For the first one hundred pages of her memoir, the author defines her ethnic origins by focusing on her family's past. By doing this, Kojder also raises herself from the position of an invisible minority (that is, from the position of a group that is not usually included in Canadian textbooks, which is unlike the common use of 'visible minority' in Canadian legal and institutional documents), to a visible presence within Canada's cultural landscape. In this sense, Kojder employs an aesthetic form of *métissage* in her text to "illustrate the relationship between the historical, [the communal] and individual circumstances" (Lionnet, *Autobiographical Voices* 29). *Métissage* therefore serves as Kojder's model for the relationality between and among these facets (Lionnet, *Postcolonial Representations* 4). That means that Kojder's presentation of family history establishes her identity as a first-generation Polish-Canadian who inhabits the Polish diaspora and who is defined by her family's transnational migrations and diasporic experiences. In fact, Kojder's textual focus on Polish displacements during and

after World War II illustrates that “The Polish post-war diaspora had already become a reality during the war” (Jaroszynska-Kirchmann 8). Writing of her father’s death in Canada, Kojder remembers once again that “he had survived a German bullet, Siberia, and Monte Cassino” (127). Observable in Kojder’s text is the fact that “transnational processes are located within the life experience of individuals and families” (Schiller et al. 50), and that her diasporic identity is dependent upon “all the fossil identities” of her predecessors who will always somehow “float around in [her] psyche” (Holst Petersen and Rutherford 185).

What Kojder’s historical recuperation aims to figure is the idea that the sufferings from various forms of ethnic discrimination against immigrants did not stop within the borders of Canada itself. Especially in the first half of the twentieth century, Canadian “public opinion and attitudes towards Polish immigrants reflected their position as a ‘non-preferred’ category” (Radecki 46). At a time when Kojder’s family arrives in Canada from England in 1948, Polish immigrants were still viewed as uncivilized and largely inassimilable (Radecki 45), although these sentiments began to abate and sympathy became extended to the Poles as a result of their sufferings in World War II (Radecki 48). Nonetheless, before Canada’s state implemented the official policy of multiculturalism in 1971 (Karpinski, Multicultural ‘Gift(s)’ 111), the Polish ethnic community was made aware that, if they did not assimilate and “accede to the expectations of their hosts,” they would be “stigmatized by negative stereotypes, discriminated against in the economic market, and shunned socially” (Radecki 213). Kojder does not shy away from echoing this reality within the pages of her book. She writes that, upon her parents’ and grandmother’s arrival to Canada, “nobody cared about immigrants or gave them anything” (106). The author also enunciates the prejudice that her parents and she herself suffered as immigrants in Canada. Illustrating her mother’s awareness of her cultural otherness, Kojder writes that “even though she had a broad range of experiences and training [in nursing], [her mother] felt that she had to prove herself [at work] because as an outsider, the staff watched her more closely. She felt isolated and ill at ease” (110). Likewise, Kojder’s father suffers from discrimination. The author writes:

father would tell about how some English man at work would say that Canada gave DPs (displaced persons) like Tatu everything. Tatu would be angry because he said Canada never gave him a cent, but he had to work by the sweat of his brow ... to get anything we had. (136)

For her own part, as a little girl who enters the Canadian school system, Kojder finds her sense of ethnic identity attacked by the mainstream's cultural pressures to mould her into an image of the dominant group. Kojder writes that, at school, kids and teachers "started calling me Paula or Pauline ... but I knew that wasn't my name so I'd just ignore them" (199). Remarkably, Kojder's sense of cultural self is so strongly carved out by her family at this point that, already at this young age, she resisted the "Canadian system of 'whiteness'," which aimed to 'swallow' its European immigrants into its once "white cultural establishment" (Padolsky 31). Kojder exposes the school system's urge to pin her down as an urge to contain her. Clearly, the author never desires a "national subject status" that is "identical to the mainstream" (George 178). Rather, she wishes to enter Canadian culture as an ethnic individual who will eventually hybridize the Polish and Canadian cultures within herself. The author resists the erasure of her cultural diversity and proceeds to highlight her subversive mood by interjecting Polish words and phrases into the body of her otherwise English language text. Kojder discursively enhances her status as an ethnic subject and therefore reveals the challenges that an ethnically invisible woman faces in trying to project her cultural diversity. As an invisible minority, rather than face a perpetual awareness of her racial otherness, Kojder must actively resist her visually white, Caucasian self's dissolution into ordinariness (in the sense of her struggle to maintain cultural diversity, not in the sense that dominant Canadian culture is banal). Writing against Canada's previous actions that aimed to "homogenize whiteness" (Karpinski, Multicultural 'Gift(s)' 120) in the country, Kojder's literary strategy of braiding her Polish linguistic identity with her Canadian linguistic identity can be viewed as a strategy of the transnational writer to insist on preserving and respecting ethnic diversity. Indeed, in actively transferring her Polish language from the homeland location to the Canadian socio-linguistic location, Kojder hybridizes the face of Canada's cultural space. As she identifies with her non-Canadian self, Kojder can be seen to "accept the privileged difference of *métissage* and to recognize the value of cultural hybridizations"

towards her self-definition (Lionnet, *Autobiographical Voices* 193). I elaborate more in chapter two.

While the Polish group began to and continues to experience “the rapid assimilation of its members into the predominantly Anglo-Saxon cultural group in Canada” (Radecki 216), Kojder proudly illustrates that she and her family chose to participate in acculturation rather than in blatant assimilation. Kojder’s parents and grandmother teach her to maintain a strong connection to her Polish language, identity and traditions. To illustrate just one example, Kojder writes that her “Tatu ordered a Polish primer from a Polish newspaper ... and from that he taught me” things Polish (121), and he would tell her stories about the time he fought in the Polish Army in World War II (123). He thus imbues his daughter with a sense of historical and cultural awareness and installs in her “the framework of the postwar Polish diaspora” (Jaroszynska-Kirchmann 9). Her father’s strong bond to the family’s postwar diaspora is reflected in his eager participation in debates about past and current events that deal with the Polish exile condition in Canada. Kojder writes that her father “took me to meetings when [Polish men] were trying to form [a Polish] organization, and he even bought me a membership” when she attended grade seven (124). Anna Jaroszynska-Kirchmann writes that exiled Polish men “embraced notions of an organized transnational community deriving from a common historical experience and of the exile mission that guided and motivated this community” (8).

As a result of her family’s efforts and Kojder’s welcoming response to them, the author identifies herself first and foremost as a member of the Polish diaspora in Canada. To illustrate, writing of her visit to Chicago’s Polish district, Kojder feels embittered that in Canada there are no “monuments of Kosciuszko and Pulaski, Polish street names, and many reminders of the Polish immigrants who had settled there” (127). In inhabiting a cultural diaspora by living outside her “(imagined) natal territor[y]” (Cohen ix), Kojder feels in her early womanhood a pressing “urgency to connect with [her] ethnic roots” (128). This urgency is brought on in particular by her father’s and grandmother’s sudden deaths in Canada, deaths that suddenly threaten Kojder with a sense of cultural loss and disconnection. She writes, “I felt that in the deaths of these people who were so much a

part of my life, something in me was also dying. I had to keep alive their memory in order not to lose an important part of myself. I had to retrace my roots” (128). The author “knew I had to go to where my parents and grandma had lived” (128). Kojder’s multiple returns to the Polish homeland thus become a necessary way for her to strengthen her connection to her ethnic heritage and to ensure its continued survival within the host nation. And although for the diasporic writer home “is not a fixed origin to which we can make some final and absolute Return” (Hall 113), for Kojder, home-coming is important in that it signifies a meeting ground for her ethnic identity. Indeed, she writes that “In all this searching and returning to the country of my ancestors, I was seeking a direction for my future” (129). Kojder thus builds her sense of home in Canada by “building on familial and communal ties” (George 179), and she seems to illustrate that, to feel at home in her parent’s host nation of Canada, one “may not require assimilation” (George 186). Indeed, in remaining loyal to her cultural heritage, Kojder retains her “ties to home and ... memories of transnational connections” (Schiller et al. 51).

Inhabiting the cultural space of both Poland and Canada, Kojder is thus capable to voice her unique position and, at the same time, she is able to insist that Canada’s own cultural nature is as dependent upon its hybrid elements as is her own. The constant transnational movement that Kojder engages in between languages, physical spaces of Poland and Canada, and between their intertwined histories seems to embrace the idea of Canada as a site of transculturalism. Even her family’s transnational history attests to the transnational character of Canada as a space that is continuously traversed and inscribed by multinational cultures and identities. According to Homi Bhabha, immigrants are “themselves the marks of a shifting boundary” within a modern nation (qtd. in George 186). I thus believe that Kojder constructs her own vision of Canada as a multicultural or transnational space that is made up of a variety of immigrants who should be allowed to participate as Canada’s esteemed citizens. Kojder’s text bears testament to the fact that cross-cultural exchanges and the categories of ethnicity continue to be at the heart of Canadian socio-cultural space (Padolsky 35).

I must now consider Canada’s response to Kojder’s memoir. Although *Marynia, Don’t Cry* has received very little response from the academic world, the text is fully

featured on an internet website called “ourroots.ca: The Canadian Digital Local Histories Site.” This website is concerned with providing scholars, students and historians a library of digital texts that are relevant to the topic of Canadian identity, and it is easily accessible to all. Sponsored by the universities of Laval and Calgary, as well as by Canadian Heritage, this website can be said to acknowledge Polish-Canadian identities as part of Canada’s national, multicultural make up. In addition, Kojder’s text has also been published as a book by the Multicultural History Society of Ontario under the Ethnocultural Voices Series. This Society is directly affiliated with Ontario’s Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Recreation, as well as with the University of Toronto. This would suggest that these publishers acknowledge Polish-Canadian identities in the 1990s as part of Canada’s national, multicultural make up. However, the problem that arises out of this memoir’s appropriation by these two mediums is that they may in fact naturalize the text and limit its potential for resistance. In other words, as it is brought more into the center, Kojder’s text may only have value for its publishers insofar as it serves to enhance Canada’s image as a multicultural nation. Interestingly, critics say that “how we conceptualize difference has significant consequences for how we might respond to it” (Cronin 47). I believe this holds true for Canada’s attitudes towards its minorities, since, at its root, cultural difference is experienced by mainstream society and institutions not as a simply unproblematic presence. Rather, in many cases, differences are often “invested with valuations and emotions of hierarchy and unacceptability ... [and may be] seen as a threat to one’s way of life” (Brah in Cronin 47). Many critics of Canada’s policy of multiculturalism in fact agree that minority literatures hailed by the mainstream as ethno-Canadian “benefit those in positions of power by subtly reinforcing already-existing structural or systematic forms of inequality” between Canada’s minority and majority groups (Jakubowski in Karpinski, Multicultural ‘Gift(s)’ 114). The consensus among these critics is that, in Canada, “multiculturalism is a term that can so easily be manipulated to mean nothing more than state-defined and controlled ethnic chic/kitsch” (Kulyk 99). On the same note, others write that “diasporic literature circulates within the Canadian literary tradition as a symptom of difference, as a designated margin, and as a sign of cultural excess” (Kamboureli, *Scandalous Bodies* 132). I begin to feel particularly uncomfortable when I think of Slavoj Žižek’s argument that subversive movements against the hegemony

of any power that have been given a voice actually function within society as controlled and normalized transgressions. "Power is always already its own transgression," writes Žižek; "if it is to function, it has to rely on a kind of obscene supplement" (qtd. in Beauregard 26-27). Could Kojder's subversive voice function as Canada's 'obscene supplement'? Perhaps. I am inclined to believe that Kojder's text may not have been published by these two university presses if Canada's multicultural policy had not been set in place to begin with. So, if *Marynia, Don't Cry* is a mere supplement to Canada's political goals, then that suggests that Canada allows itself to admit to its past wrongs only because of the multicultural image that it tries to project upon the international arena. If such is the case, then Kojder's cultural 'otherness' becomes a commodity. It becomes "condensed to the point of invisibility" (Kamboureli, *Scandalous Bodies* 165). As a result, this author's subversive voice is simultaneously embraced and silenced. Her ethnic text is released by a center that affirms "the magnanimity of the majority culture whose celebration of diversity becomes yet another way of containing it" (Kamboureli, *Scandalous Bodies* 164).

Ironically enough, since Kojder's text has been largely unheard of in the mainstream society and within her own ethnic group, it remains contained and confined to a peripheral position. One critic may help to untie this paradoxical problem. Mark Wegierski writes that Canada's multiculturalism policy has really been based on a multiracial policy, "where the focus of concern was to be not the longstanding 'white ethnic' minorities, but the newly arrived visible minority groups" (Wegierski 520). He writes that "what we are seeing in Canada today is the dominance of one, hyperliberal culture, combined with multiracialism, rather than a pluralism of true cultural diversities" (Wegierski 520). This would suggest, then, that Canada's invisible minorities such as the Polish community occupy a new liminal space within Canada's alleged multicultural nation. Yet even if this is the case, Kojder's work, in my view, is therefore important in and of itself in its projection of the idea that the transnational story of Polish women and men in Canada must be seen as part of Canadian history and identity. Kojder's power lies in the fact that she has been allowed to represent her own vision of what multicultural Canada should be – embracing of cultural diversities, histories and identities; a space that allows its immigrants to "live their *métissage*" (Lionnet, *Postcolonial Representations* 17).

Francoise Lionnet writes that even “the ‘inferior’ or subaltern elements contribute to the evolution and transformation of the hegemonic system by producing resistances and counterdiscourses” (*Postcolonial Representations* 9). Indeed, one must remember that Kojder embraces the transnational space of Canada and therefore invests hope that, one day, multiculturalism will be a truly active force in Canadian life. I believe this is the place that she writes from. That is, the author concludes:

The [family] story tells me that one should always strive and not give up hope but be persistent. And with that hope come dreams. For [father] the dream was Canada. He also had a deep-rooted belief in fundamental human goodness ... It was vital to keep in touch with the outside world. If you lost hope there was nothing to live for. (137)

As a second generation Pole in Canada, Kojder feels that it is up to her to maintain the memory of her family, the story of Polish migrations, and of carrying and continuing Polish heritage within the Canadian host nation. Though she occupies a more central position within Canadian society than her parents and grandmother, Kojder feels in a way much more connected to her Polish diaspora identity. By writing about her family’s connection to other diaspora communities in Canada – whether Ukrainian or German – Kojder reveals the extent to which she feels a part of these immigrant groups’ social position (114). Yet, while trying to uphold her own cultural identity, the author presents a self that is liquid, suspended between two cultures, where the ethnic part of her is always under threat due to the socio-cultural influences and interruptions from the host culture.

Importantly, Kojder, at two points in her text, also compares her marginal position to and feels an affiliation of sorts with the First Nations’ own outsider-status. This is shown particularly in relation to the Canadian school setting and Native land-claims issues. To illustrate the comparable positions between Polish immigrants and Canada’s aboriginal peoples, Kojder writes that, “In elementary school ... We had some kids who were Indian or half-Indian, and they had a hard time, too ... like us immigrant kids” (135). Her statement suggests that, despite cultural differences, there are many similarities across the social marginal status that inevitably joins those who live on the mainstream’s outskirts. A second parallel that Kojder draws between her ethnic immigrant group’s

struggles in Canada to those of the indigenous groups is the land claims that First Nations vie for in the country. Kojder compares these claims with the grievances for lost Polish lands during World War II that actually remain unaddressed by and within Canada's educational and social system. She writes:

Sometimes I heard on the radio or television that the natives wanted compensation for the land the white people had taken from them. And I'd wonder why nobody talked about the land that had been taken from my parents and grandmother by the Russians and why nobody cared and nobody asked that the Polish people be compensated, too. (136)

Her observation once again points to a continued historical exclusion of the Polish past. I believe that Kojder's project of coming to terms with this reality and national attitudes towards her ethnic group draws in the plight of Canada's First Nations (and other immigrant groups) as a way to link and highlight their common relationship and marginal status within greater Canadian society. I feel the author thereby intends to resist the continuation of both groups' status as strangers on their shared land.

"I'm going to write the truth" – Writing Indigenous Identity

Likewise, Rita Joe's autobiography, *Song of Rita Joe*, is written from a liminal position within the Canadian socio-cultural landscape. The text is utilized as a creative tool aimed to effect political change in Canada's relationship to the Mi'kmaq peoples of Nova Scotia. Like Kojder's memoir, Joe's autobiography presents not only the life of the author but it also actively re-constructs the identity of her indigenous community. Joe's text speaks to both the Anglo-Canadian and Native audiences about the pain of racism and the need for mutual respect and recognition. Braiding the two cultures and their shared histories together, Joe foregrounds Mi'kmaq oral traditions not as a way to isolate but to include and invite her readers to honour cultural diversity and to recognize its potent presence within Canadian society.

Born on Cape Breton Island in Nova Scotia in 1932, Joe became a recognized Mi'kmaq poet and writer at the age of thirty. Her autobiography was written in 1996. In her text, Joe constantly works with her past and cultural traditions as she describes the struggles and bleak conditions of poverty, racism and sexism she had endured as an orphan, residential school student, young mother, abused wife, and creative writer. Importantly, while the author uses her life narrative to bring awareness to the pain caused by discrimination and indifference to other cultures, she structures her autobiographical self in relation to her Mi'kmaq culture and community. But the author also situates herself within mainstream Canadian society by linking her lineage to the old Anglo-Canadian settlers of the land. Writing about her great-grandmother Mary Ann Gould, Joe states that her great-grandmother's father was a white sailor who passed his "light features" onto his daughter, Mary Ann (17). Joe establishes an ethnic connection between First Nations and Anglo-Canadians, and she writes that "Still, right down to this day, there are a lot of blue and hazel eyes in my family" (18). Stating that, "in my heart, I care about where I come from" (18), I feel that Joe takes time to define her identity in these terms to highlight the collective and interconnected experience of Canadian identity. I read Joe's discursive mode as an act of *métissage* that insists on the historical and contemporary connections of Euro-Canadian and First Nations communities. Joe's Native identity can thus be said to be political or have political goals in her negotiation of Aboriginal selfhood in relation to the collective Mi'kmaq and Anglo-Canadian societies.

The colonial effects of the displacement of First Nations peoples in Canada following European contact may be said to have created both an imperial and homeland diaspora that Rita Joe and her Mi'kmaq community continue to experience within Canada today. Symbolizing "the voluntary or forcible movement of peoples from their homelands into new regions" (Ashcroft et al. 68), diaspora is often hinged around the process of western colonization. And Joe addresses these issues in her text. Mi'kmaq historian Daniel N. Paul writes that "the subjugation of the Northeastern ... Native American nations by the English Crown" (3) was performed in the form of the de-territorialisation of the Mi'kmaqs from their native homelands in Eastern Canada. Indeed, this "unethical seizure of Amerindian lands by the colonials," which began as a series of European policies in the 1700s, ignored the Mi'kmaq's rights to their very own land space (Paul 186). Because

these colonizing efforts in Canada resulted in the loss of “land, freedom, dignity and means of support,” and in the lack of “human or civil rights” until the mid-twentieth century (Paul 193), Rita Joe’s work is important in representing this reality. The author occupies a peripheral position in Canadian society; she writes, “being strangers in our own land is a sad story” (14). Utilizing her cultural voice to maintain her unique heritage, Joe builds upon the traditions, experiences and perceptions of her original culture. She writes, “We Native people must use our own way, use what our own hearts tell us, no matter what we talk about – welfare, housing, problems in marriage, spirituality” (14).

Joe’s autobiography is structured visually to show its readers the hold that the traditions of the Mi’kmaq nation have on its author. Beginning her prologue with an image of herself as an old woman dancing in a powwow, Joe features many traditional Mi’kmaq dances and poems in her text. The reader notices that the entire autobiography is structured according to songs and poetry. From “Song of my Girlhood” to “My Song (The Spirit Path),” Joe frames her chapters and through them her sense of cultural self according to her Mi’kmaq culture. The appendices at the back of her book consist of six songs, along with musical notes. Using this literary strategy of interposing traces of oral Native expression into the midst of her written text, Joe, by “marrying two traditions of personal narrative” (Wong, *Sending My Heart* 199), enacts a *métissage* of the bi-cultural nature of her story. Indeed, the ability to reach people through song, music and verse enables Joe to depict “the teachings and value of my culture, our hope that we can rebuild our loss of spirit,” she writes (159). Thus, the “process of active self-discovery through self-invention” can be achieved “by means of the folk narratives,” histories and ceremonies that are embedded in the writer’s indigenous interest (Lionnet, *Autobiographical Voices* 98). Joe’s songs seek to produce progress and change. For instance, in the song “Five Hundred Years,” Joe sings about reconciliation and about being seen for who she and her Mi’kmaq people really are: “I tried to know my ways and rights ... Dear Ca-na-da the hon-our there we gain as one” (176-177).

What is particularly distinctive about Joe’s literary approach to the socio-political situation that she finds herself and her community in is her discussion of social injustice in the poems that frame and stitch together her text: “Justice has to make me see / Hear, feel.

/ Then I will know the truth is like a toy / To be enjoyed or broken” (121). While a poem opens and closes each one of the book’s chapters, the themes of Joe’s poetry range from history and identity to childhood memories and spirituality, among other topics. All of Joe’s featured poems enhance the emotional impact of a particular event that she partially recounts in prose-form. Some are issues of open discrimination: “Justice... / does not want to play if my skin is not the right hue,” she writes (120). Many poems are of a political nature as they address Mi’kmaq values, concerns, histories, struggles and mainstream prejudice: “We are like the moon— / Born, / Grown slowly, / Then fade away, to reappear again / In a never-ending cycle” (90). Joe’s poems therefore etch out a “self in time [that records] a process of personal becoming during a period of historical change” (Schenck 290). Taken selectively from Joe’s published collections of poetry, some of the poems lament the loss of certain cultural traditions as a result of Canada’s colonial past: “I lament forgotten skills... / Companion wind bewails over the hills / That fall from our customs and heritage” (28). Joe’s poetic expressions thus act as a strategy where, “in the political sense,” they occupy a “literary space in which issues about representing the self [are being] fought out” (Schenck 288). Joe’s stern tone can only be found in her poetry, which actually balances the gentle and hopeful content of her prose. In this sense, Joe’s poetry expresses creatively the longing, pain and sometimes even frustrations of being a marginalized human being. In fact, Joe’s Mi’kmaq identity, as presented from her perspective, is made visible, audible and becomes authenticated through her emotionally-charged, truth-seeking poetry. “Poetry,” one reads, “is about life ... The truth that poetry embodies ... is a whole truth” (Olney in Schenck, 287). In other words, the presence of poetry and song – that is, oral life expressions – is strategically placed so as to revalorize traditional Native self-expression, force recognition of its presence and value, write Mi’kmaq identity from the Mi’kmaq angle, and to celebrate its existence. Writing alone – without poems that are meant to be recited, without images of Mi’kmaq dances, and without songs that are meant to be sung – is insufficient in and of itself to project an authentic, full image of Joe’s cultural identity.

Rita Joe’s entire sense of self is bound to the past, present and future of her Mi’kmaq community. She writes: “My moccasin trod on lonely trails, / I needed to learn about life / Where my country failed. / I made them see I never died” (61). In writing

about herself, Joe writes for her people: “Today, it is the image of my people that is uppermost in my mind” (14). Joe feels compelled to write about her feelings and her community’s experiences and the problems they faced and continue to face as they “experienced immersion into an alien nation” throughout the twentieth century, particularly within the residential school system (101). She writes, “When I began to write, if I saw something negative, I put that down; writing about the negative was therapy” (98). Joe repeats throughout her autobiography that she “wrote about what I had experienced and what I now saw my children experience – the feeling of being immersed in an alien nation and culture” (113). Alien is the Anglo-Canadian culture that had for decades separated Native children from their Native homes and had forced them to adopt mainstream values. Ben McKegney writes that, tragically, even today, “the legacy of the residential school system ripples throughout Native Canada, its fingerprints on the domestic violence, poverty, alcoholism, drug abuse, and suicide rates that continue to cripple many Native communities” (34).

The legacies of Canada’s colonial institutions are openly addressed by Joe. Suffering from poverty, lack of education (“although available on paper, education ... was all but denied until recent times” (Paul 282)), brief alcoholism and physical abuse in her marriage, Joe succeeds in transcending the side effects of residential school by taking her experiences and shaping herself into a survivor.

Joe begins her autobiography by stating that she only focuses on the positive (14). In effect, the silencing of the negative speaks loudly. Having entered Shubenacadie residential school and having spent several years there, Joe openly excludes many of the painful episodes she faced in that institution: “Where I felt fear / A beating heart of episodes / I care not to recall” (58). As the quote shows, Joe does acknowledge the cultural and psychological pain that her negative experiences have caused her. She writes: “Over the years, so much trauma had happened in the residential school – so many people were hurt – that it played itself over and over again” (Joe 57) long after the schools were abolished in 1986 (McKegney 33). The off-Reserve Shubenacadie residential school, opened in 1930, was a result of the Indian Acts of 1876 – which were a form of legalized racism that aimed to assimilate the Mi’kmaq and other First Nations by eradicating Native

identities, cultures and languages (Paul 282-283) in order for Natives to attain “complete Canadian citizenship” (Paul 286). Joe unsurprisingly states that “the place had bad memories for me” (64). Indeed, Joe admits that “our anger is still there. But I do not like to dwell on the negative if I can help it,” and she adds that “The positive outlook that I have worked on for so long now turns me off the negative” (48). Joe allows herself minimal discussion on the abuse she witnessed at the school: “we were told, ‘Stop your barking!’ That’s a negative thing to hear when you are a child coughing, not barking like a dog” (50-51). But she takes care to balance these experiences out by highlighting the kindness she received by some nuns, particularly by one who gave young, orphaned Rita anonymous Christmas gifts: “she never took credit for the parcel; she wanted me to feel good,” Joe remembers (54). Episodes such as these, as McKegney writes, “helped instil in Joe the power of love and conciliation (as opposed to anger and retaliation) to aid the healing of the wounded, a realization integral to [Joe’s] ideological outlook” (42). It is true that Joe “looked for beauty – even if it came out of a negative or hated structure” (Joe 98). The author is particularly clear about the power of the positive outlook as the only way to attain authentic reconciliation between Canada’s mainstream society and its First Nations people: “My message is gentle: If one wishes to be healed, one must dwell on the positive” (14). Optimism is a deliberately chosen strategy for Joe because it allows her to focus on the possibilities of progress, rather than on the setbacks that can act as a way of continued social imprisonment or internal colonization. Addressing her Anglo-Canadian audience, she writes, “Look at us and you, too, will find the good” (14).

Joe’s negative experiences at Shubunacadie empower her to embrace her diaspora identity and to fight, through her writing, for her culture’s survival. Indeed, Joe writes that the years at residential school “have given me strength. / My life to this day has gained courage. / I know who I am, and my people are the prize” (50). She remains honest in presenting a reality of general “animosity” between Canada and the Mi’kmaq, as she writes, and she states that “This experience of belonging to an alien nation made a permanent impression on me. Even today, I use the method of peaceful confrontation to fight it” (40).

Joe's literary technique of positivity extends to her determination to redress the past and present wrongs that the Mi'kmaq people continue to experience at the hands of Anglo-Canadian society. Joe redresses official history in order to bridge the socio-cultural gap between Canada's indigenous and majority cultures. Addressing Canada's institutional attitudes towards the Mi'kmaq, she writes, "Your history tells our children / what you want them to learn / That the Indian is the violent one... / Their bravery ... are but a myth / But this / You do not record" (97). Pained by the false images applied to her people, Joe writes, "We have to tell our lot ... We have to be the ones to record our words" (97). Calling herself "the Indian," and writing that "the burden / Lies yet with me" (117), Joe is keen on "unravel[ing] the mistake" of "Stories told / Of Indians and white men" (117). Joe's text induces her Canadian audience to listen to a past that has been silenced and deformed. Recalling the bored faces of an Anglo-Canadian audience during a discussion on Native matters, Joe writes, "You have to listen to us. If we want to tell you something, it must be heard. If it's not heard, you won't know what's going on with my people – or with any culture, I imagine ... we're taking matters into our own hands" (120). Joe aims to undo the cultural damage inflicted upon her people's sense of self by countering colonial history as it was written by mainstream historians. For instance, while Canadian historians affirm the extinction of the Beothuck tribe in 1819, Joe, after conducting her own research within her community, finds that "the Beothucks did not all die" (130). Rather, the Mi'kmaq, she finds, are the direct descendants of the Beothucks. Like Kojder, Joe, using communal and oral history, challenges the authority that is granted to officially written, discriminatory histories. In this sense, by understanding her people's past through the community's oral stories, Joe imagines her own self in an unbroken chain that is tied to the ancestors who preceded her and whose continued survival Canadian history denies. In a way, the mainstream's denial of Joe's ancestral roots can be viewed as "central to the construction of White selves" (Kremer 7) as the dominant group attempted to cut off the sense of rootedness and identity in its indigenous 'others.' Paul writes that many actions by the English Crown, for example, have also "been studiously ignored or downplayed by most Caucasian male historians" (3). Joe describes the image Canada has placed upon her people as an artificial "role ... / A character assumed wrong," someone who is caged in the "continuous misinterpretations / Of a life / That is hurting" (116). That

is why she writes, “I’m going to write the truth” (137) because, after all, “we are the ones who know about ourselves” (131).

Joe’s indigenous voice thus speaks to the centre. Significantly, the author works with Mi’kmaq history in relation to Canada’s own versions to imply their mutual interdependence. Mi’kmaq history belongs, after all, to Canada’s collective history. Joe writes that “The brave part is in taking on history and leaving your own story ... This is who I am. I want to share it with you” (170). Joe’s text performs a *métissage* or braiding of Canada’s history and the history of the Mi’kmaq peoples (Lionnet, *Postcolonial Representations* 174). That is, Joe’s interjection of the Mi’kmaq version of history into mainstream understanding tends to “facilitate the evolution of a system of interdependencies and interrelations, a *métis* life-world where disparate traditions cross over and interrogate one another in the complex diachronic and synchronic field of discourse” (Lionnet, *Postcolonial Representations* 170). Indeed, in Joe’s text, Canadian “History emerges ... with a difference – it now includes its own nervous double” (Kamboureli, *Scandalous Bodies* 173). Joe’s past is to be understood as a story that belongs not to historians but to those who give it a face, shape and meaning.

Seeking “to create a space in which indigenous ... notions are no longer presented in a banal imperial parade” (Kremer 7), Joe emancipates a lost and misunderstood past and culture for the purpose of recreating and empowering her community’s own identity. Joe uses her cultural voice to encourage the Mi’kmaq to nourish and nurture their cultural heritage: “We must move like the rivers / Moving and protesting. / The understanding of our heritage is / Our history we continue” (80). Joe’s choice to live on the reserve in Eskasoni in Nova Scotia allows her to feel a deep connection to her Mi’kmaq identity. The author writes that “My joy is here on the reservation / Where my part remains true” (80). While in the nineteenth century reserves were initially “intended to shelter the Indians from White society until ... they were ready to take their place in non-Indian society,” since the twentieth century, “Reserves constitute a permanent land base that is crucial to their social, political, and cultural survival and growth” (Paul quoting Reserve lands policy 228). The reserve is, importantly, also an emblem of Joe’s live-in exilic condition, for reserves arose during Canada’s colonization and were legalized by the Indian Act in

1876 (Paul 221). Inhabiting the Mi'kmaq diaspora, Joe is aware that if it is not properly nourished and tended to, her cultural heritage may one day pass away altogether. There is a sombre tone in many of her words: "There are tales told / Of what life was before / Of wigwam in the wood / With deerskin for a door / ... It will never be the same again / Only in our minds and elderly tales" (105).

As a woman born into an imperial diaspora, Joe retains a sense of (be)longing to her Native homeland in Nova Scotia. Her autobiographic poems refer countless times to Mi'kmaq land and nature: "A winding bay embraces the land / With spirited hills a protection. / The giving seas and the prize / My hunger ease, lifelong" (80), she writes about Eskasoni. Historians write that "prior to European settlement the Mi'kmaq ... had developed a culture founded upon ... the supremacy of the Great Spirit, respect for Mother Earth and ... the democratic principles of their society" (Paul 7). Much of the natural world was also associated with the Great Spirit and supported by Mi'kmaq religious beliefs (Paul 14). Mi'kmaq lands – past and present – are therefore not only a place of abode but a symbol of the people's cultural rootedness and identity. Joe writes: "I like living close to nature / My ancestors did... / The essence of my being original, / In my instincts" (153). Joining the principles of people power with earth-based spirituality, Joe features these elements as an integral part of her self-identification: "This is my life ... / My soul in expectation / of the Great Brave. / I am his Indian / And my native song / Echoes through the hills" (95). Joe's cultural identity is thus inseparable from Mi'kmaq culture, land, community and spirituality. She writes, "I am an elder in the community ... Even today, I would not trade the best place in the city for the home I now have on the reserve" (167).

In fact, Mi'kmaq spiritual beliefs and practices are of great importance to Joe's self-construction and self-understanding. Well before First Nations welcomed European newcomers to their land, the Mi'kmaq, like many other Native communities, granted the highest respect to the Universe and to all living beings. One reads that, in the Mi'kmaq communities, "Religion was blended into daily life – it was lived" (Paul 14). Joe's text is a profound testament to this tradition. She writes that "Spirituality is a way of life for Natives. It is not a cult or a show" (154). The author grants so much importance to her spiritual self that she devotes an entire chapter to her life-long spiritual journey.

Spirituality encloses Joe's entire text – it opens the autobiography with her performing a spiritual dance in a powwow, as mentioned, and closes it with her entire last chapter. By doing this, Joe projects Mi'kmaq spirituality in order to claim her heritage and identity, and to educate her audience about the values and continued existence of her spiritual ways. She writes:

I walk the lane stemming from my roots: on the one hand, the crying part of me, begging you to understand how good my people are; on the other, the spiritual part of me remaining uppermost in my mind, reminding me of my path. More than anything else, I have been afraid to write about the spiritual part of things; Native spirituality is not easily understood. (146)

The author speaks several times about the sweatlodge and her spiritual experiences within it. In a sweatlodge – a small, enclosed area heated with rocks (“It is where we pray and where we find our own answers” (Joe 151)) – Joe experiences purification of the mind, hears answers to her inner questions, and, profoundly, finds herself experience supernatural phenomena (147). Joe is also frank about the need to pass on spiritual knowledge to young Mi'kmaq generations: “We tried to teach our children about religion but also about our Creator and Native spirituality” (150). It is important for Joe to highlight and teach Mi'kmaq spirituality particularly because, as she notes, it has been, historically, feared, eradicated and misunderstood in Canadian mainstream society, as well as in Native societies themselves due to Canada's old colonial system: “Some of my people are still afraid of [Native spirituality] – our brainwashing has been thorough” (154). Addressing the losses of spirituality, Joe writes that “During the time that I was living on all the different reserves, we did not do powwows and the traditional dancing like we do today, but I used to hear Native singing and talking, and Native hymns” (149). In this statement, the author reveals that Canada's attack upon First Nations cultures and identities extended beyond the residential school system. In fact, Native “ceremonies and dances were once prohibited by Canadian law” (Monture-Angus 142). Joe therefore takes it upon herself to show that “The true sense was always with my people, / Only my rituals were banned. / Today, the value begins to grow” (156). Though Joe's act of foregrounding Mi'kmaq spirituality strengthens and recovers the tradition, the author is still saddened by

her people's cultural losses – no fault of their own. She writes, "Some of us had never done the sweatlodge before ... There is nobody to teach us what was traditionally done. We have to discover it for ourselves, by observing and listening to others" (146).

Being a Catholic as a result of colonial-era conversions to Christianity, which the Mi'kmaq seamlessly adopted (Paul 15), Joe merges her Christian beliefs with Mi'kmaq spirituality. She writes, "I am both a Christian person and a traditional person. The traditional part is what I was born into; understanding it reminds me whether or not what I am doing is right" (153). The author does not believe in sacrificing one religion for the other, but rather believes in unifying both traditions in order to have a full sense of the spiritual self. On this point, she writes, "I feel an emptiness where I wish traditional experiences and practice could be part of church activities ... Just think what would happen if traditional ways were used more often" (152). Though she disagrees with Christian tradition that tribal Mi'kmaq shamans went to "a bad place, or limbo, in death" (155), Joe feels that, at their spiritual cores, Mi'kmaq and Christian traditions "are not that different" (156). This can be ascribed to a fundamental, harmonious Mi'kmaq belief that "if the same God is worshipped by all men, the mode of worship is incidental" (Paul 15). Countering imperialist misconceptions, Joe draws on another spiritual similarity between the two dogmas by asserting the age-old existence of Native religions; she states that "the sweatlodge was our church before the Europeans came" (115). The parallels that Joe sketches out here are intended to inspire acknowledgement and appreciation for Mi'kmaq spirituality within her Canadian audience: "If you try my core bond, / You, too, will feel the song," Joe offers (156).

By honouring two spiritual worlds, Joe essentially celebrates cultural differences. In fact, by insisting on the equal value of both the Christian and Mi'kmaq religious traditions, the author can be said to argue that "Equality is really a celebration of difference" (Monture-Angus 14). Indeed, Joe writes that "the Indian way of thinking" is founded upon the conviction that "The other person is on the same level as you" (157).

Joe's autobiography thus forces the author's and the mainstream's attitudes to face one another. The following quote sums up Joe's experiences as a cultural minority in Canada:

I explained [to a group of young Aboriginal girls at Shubenacadie residential school] the hardships Native people experience with the white majority. I pitied the students because they had so much hope for when they got out of school. Already, I knew the losing game of having little education and being a minority. (64)

Although, since the 1980s, the Mi'kmaq people came to assume control over their children's education at the closing of residential schools, commentators write that "the impact from this [change] will not be felt to any substantial degree in First Nations communities until 2010 or later" (Paul 292). Joe's poems echo these sentiments. Addressing her Canadian audience, she writes, "I know we are different / Though we try to be like you. / We live in a world of make-believe... / We live in your world of speed and roar... / We survive, at the edge of overman" (69). The "edge of overman" signifies Joe's painful awareness of existing at the margins of Canadian society. Deeply pained by the "poverty-stricken state that Canada's First Nations are still in" (Paul 190), Joe jolts her readers into an awareness of this dire situation by describing her personal experiences of lack as a young mother who for a time lived on the edge of mainstream society in Halifax: "I could see ... the people shopping, carrying their parcels. Santa Claus was standing on the opposite corner. And I remember feeling envy – there was nothing for us, not even dinner" (77). By describing the daily pain felt by all First Nations people, Joe sensitizes her audience to "The reality of five hundred years of control by others [which] is still evident," as she writes (157).

Joe's literary goal is, actually, to help pave the way towards destabilizing and hopefully ending all structures of prejudice. Recounting her experiences at various speaking engagements, Joe writes:

I was often lonely and thinking to myself, 'Will *they* accept my opinion?' ... I wanted to feel *attachment* to the group, to explain my perspective. Many times there would be interest, and sometimes I would feel shut out. If I was shut out, I always knew why; it was because the people *did not know much* about my culture, and whose fault was that? Still, I would try to tell as many stories as possible, try to fill the *gap*. (emphasis added 128)

Candidly expressing her personal feelings here, the author exposes the existing binary opposition between “they” and “me” and immediately reveals her dissatisfaction with this social structure by stating that she longs for “attachment” to mainstream society. That is, Joe wants mainstream society to accept her and to honour her cultural distinctions: “the basic reason for my writing and speaking is to bring honour to my people,” she writes (157). Indeed, she continues, “I vented my anger about what the world chooses to deny of my people’s expression and history. I talked about what I knew to be true” (128). Celebrating her individual achievements – her published works, prizes received – “*in relation to the community*” (Wong, *Sending My Heart* 22), Joe writes that, through her works, she is

at war – but it [is] a gentle war ... I try to sway people to see my point, to see my views concerning the Indian. I call my words a chisel, carving an image. Our image has been knocked down for too long by the old histories and old chronicles. The beauty in our expression and culture is there if one looks for it. (128-129)

The author insistently invites mutual respect and greater communication: “If you pass by on your way please / Come see Eskasoni, near mountains, waters and trees” (98).

Being a peaceful “warrior poet” (129) who aims to eradicate the “inconsistent attitudes of non-Natives” (159), Joe writes, “I wish my country would wake up and look more thoroughly at the Native people of today” (158). Grieving over the fact that “society ignores the beauty of our culture,” Joe asks her audience to “look at my people without the negative image, and listen to our voices” (158). The author carves out a prominent, well-deserved and long-overdue place for First Nations within mainstream society. She writes, “We have something to offer, in arts, sciences, philosophy” (158). In fact, Joe drives the message home that “Our land is here, as far as one sees... / The trades we know a way of release / To offer our country our achievements” (98). Conscious that “we are a wronged nation,” Joe writes from the Mi’kmaq perspective so as “to move my audience ... by using what I have learned from my cultural background” (159). Although she feels alienated within Canada, Joe nonetheless refers to this nation as “my [and our] country” (158). Deeply disturbed and emotionally shocked by the events of the Oka Crisis in 1990 (which Joe feels was akin to “civil war” (158)), Joe composes the “Oka Song” (174-175). Written

not to blame but to “make amends,” Joe writes, “our hand is still offered – please take it and be friends. This is Canada, and unity is needed by all of us ... This is my country!” (174). Her message is that to “love people” (168) is to build a land of survivors who can transcend both racism and, on the other side, superiority. Indeed, Joe’s text shows that, by refusing to put into practice oppositional disavowals, “only by imagining non-hierarchical modes of relation among cultures can we address the crucial issues of indeterminacy and solidarity” (Lionnet, *Autobiographical Voices* 5).

But the path towards solidarity and reconciliation takes sharp curves between progress and stagnation. Joe is quite frank about facing racism in mainstream Canadian society. Recounting her fainting spell as a result of haemorrhaging at a local market store outside the reserve, Joe writes that “the store clerks had assumed I was drunk” (87). Further, feeling grateful and joyful before obtaining the Order of Canada in 1989, the country’s highest award, Joe again meets with bigotry at an off-reserve store, where she goes shopping the day before the ceremony. Upon entering the store, Joe is faced with a painful experience, which she describes as follows: “The clerk in the store sees my face, the rugged clothes... / She has immediate ideas of the poor Indian, / The stereotype in progress / She does not know I sense ill will” (139). The author is taken aback by the clerk’s derogatory question whether Joe had ever gone to university and by the clerk’s refusal to accept Joe’s extended hand. She writes poignantly that “the dreary war never ends” (139). Nevertheless, she finishes on an optimistic note. Rejecting confrontation, she writes, “maybe someday I will be brave and offer my hand again” (139). Insisting that “Prejudice is something we can do without,” and addressing her Anglo-Canadian audience to “Accept me just as I am... / and my identity” (140), Joe refuses to tolerate unjustified attitudes. She hopes that, one day, she or at least her people will be seen authentically through the eyes of the Anglo-Canadian beholders.

Joe does feel hopeful throughout the pages of her autobiography that, through Canada’s recognitions of her cultural voice, a better future for First Nations can be imagined. She writes, “I felt good inside. To me, the acknowledgement from my country meant that they were returning a gift to me. It was a salute to the Aboriginal people of the land” (139). Yet while Canadian literary institutions honour Joe’s work, the last pages of

Joe's autobiography speak to the open slight the author continues to receive at the hands of Canadian officials. Writing about her invitation to speak at the Museum of Civilization in Ottawa, Joe questions why she had been asked to speak there not on but after Canada Day: "They asked me to speak on July 2 ... So, when I spoke, I asked, 'Why have I been asked to speak in second place, on the day after Canada Day? Who is more Canadian than I am?'" (169). I believe Joe offers no comment upon this incident so as to allow the weight of her statement to linger. I feel she wants the reader to feel the profundity of Canada's multicultural contradictions, especially since her autobiography, *Song of Rita Joe*, has been published with the support of The Canada Council and the Department of Canadian Heritage, Multiculturalism. As is the case with Canada's relationship to Apolonja Kojder's memoir – a relationship based on the simultaneity of inclusion and exclusion – so too is Joe's work and persona simultaneously embraced and rejected by mainstream institutions. Could it be said once again that Canada's inclusion of minority writings into the centre is thus a strategic farce? Is ethnic difference embraced only as far as it does not come in excess? As I write these words on this historic day, on June 11, 2008, I feel convinced that Canada's apology to its First Nations people for the implementation of the residential schools, as uttered today by Canadian members of parliament, would please Joe. However, apologies are clearly not enough; what needs to happen is a joint revival of First Nations cultures and identities. Here, I also wonder whether Canada has really come as far as it claims to in its speeches and apologies. With the condescending remark uttered on the same day by Conservative MP Pierre Poilievre, who said that "Canada's aboriginals need to learn the value of hard work more than they need compensation" (*CTV.ca*), the road to true understanding and appeasement seems to be both a rocky and a long one. I believe Joe's text exposes these deep contradictions as she writes: "the humiliation of Aboriginals continues today, just as it has at any given time of contact with non-natives" (176). Discussing the social marginalization of Aboriginal peoples in Canada, Paul writes:

although many politicians who had publicly displayed racist tendencies were still in positions of power [in the mid-twentieth century], Canada did its utmost to promote an image of itself as a champion of the movement for worldwide

protection of human and civil rights [while] domestically they much preferred the status quo. (323)

While citizenship was granted to the First Nations of Canada in 1956 (Paul 324), voting rights were instituted only in 1960 (Paul 328). Unsurprisingly, despite her positive attitude, Joe concludes her autobiography on a mixed note of sombreness and hope, writing, “I am just an Indian on this land / I am sad, my culture you do not understand. / I am just an Indian to you now / You wrinkle your brow” (170). Her words show that Canada somehow continues to disregard its First Nations people at the time of Joe’s writing, despite the transformations she seems to have achieved through her recognized literary work.

The fact remains that renowned Canadian literary works remain “a reflection of national culture” (Seiler 49). By having rejected Joe from participating at Canada’s national day, the nation continued to dislocate and devalue the importance and presence of Native peoples and cultures well into the 1990s and beyond. While Joe’s work has been accepted by mainstream culture and while some are optimistic that her “legacy will be found in classrooms and universities where people are studying her poems” (Marshall in Barnard, *danielnpaul.com*), it can be said to have been appropriated for the purpose of “bear[ing] the burden” of the nation’s own cultural representation (Seiler 52). That is, while acknowledging the presence of Mi’kmaq stories and grievances, the mainstream may not be ready to fully accept the weight of Joe’s political voice. In this sense, much like Kojder’s text, Joe’s can thus be viewed to serve as Canada’s “obscene supplement;” her work may be acknowledged only as a safe transgression insofar as it supports Canada’s new image of itself as a tolerant and multicultural nation that acknowledges its past mistakes – though to a degree. I feel that the kind of multiculturalism that separates one ethnic group from another (Kamboureli, *Scandalous Bodies* 149) – and that separates margin from centre – is one that Joe writes against.

Yet because her voice has been admitted to speak to mainstream culture, despite Canada’s inconsistencies, Joe’s literary work leaves a mark and a transformative impact upon Anglo-Canadian culture. Indeed, her body of work serves a “paradoxical function” where, “on one hand, [it ratifies] by default the very tradition that has disregarded ethnic

literature; on the other, [it moves] beyond that tradition and draw[s] our attention to its margins” (Kamboureli, *Scandalous Bodies* 134). Even if restrained and held back, Joe’s work is a testament to Canada’s inability to refuse, at its core, the cultural voices that shape its future and its hybrid, ethnically multifaceted identity.

In the face of profound adversity, Joe’s autobiography leaves the reader with a sense of belief in the power of healing and reconciliation. The author writes that, “For being friends is our goal. / Today I will show you I am just like you / Today I will show what is true” (171) ... “The road of tears must end somewhere ... accept me as I am, not as what you want me to be” (176). Constantly maintaining that “My world is like your world” (132), Joe reveals, much like Kojder, not just the bi-cultural nature of her own identity but, importantly, of Canada’s national and historical makeup. Practicing cultural *métissage*, she writes, “Today, it seems like I walk down the middle lane of many roads” (146). She continues: “I am glad to be here, to know that my words might have helped somebody, no matter what their culture ... My load was heavy, but now I feel good” (167). Since “the autobiographer has a culturally defined audience in mind” (Wong, *Sending My Heart* 16), Joe’s personal narrative implies that Canada’s margin, in the form of its Aboriginal peoples, always-already lives inside the centre. That is, her text helps the reader understand that, as a result of colonialism, “all cultures are involved in one another; none is single and pure, all are hybrid, heterogeneous, extraordinarily differentiated, and unmonolithic” (Blaeser in Seiler 61).

Joe’s text shows that Canada’s national identity is fluid by being a product of both its settlers and its First Nations peoples. I would say that, in contradistinction to multiculturalism, Joe seems to embrace the concept of interculturalism. This approach “promotes interaction, understanding and integration among and between different cultures, with a focus of attention on the interaction between the dominant and minority ethnic communities” (Ging and Malcolm in Cronin 48). Undoubtedly, as I have shown, Joe’s literary strategy promotes intercultural communication “in relation to questions of power [and] constructions of ‘the other’” (Jensen in Cronin 48). Standing on the side of the oppressed, Joe inhabits a diasporic space that overlays the borders of Canada. Her message is that intercultural exchanges can lead to reconciliation, and that diversity should

be based on cultural interrelations rather than solely on autonomy (Lionnet, *Postcolonial Representations* 15). Joe seems to want Canada to live its *métissage* “in the most original, ingenious, and beneficial ways” for both sides of the camp (Lionnet, *Postcolonial Representations* 17).

Cultural Identity in Summation

Canadian literary scholars write that, since the 1990s, Canada’s minority voices began to communicate with one another across the pages of their literary works (Kamboureli, *Scandalous Bodies* 161). I feel that Apolonja Kojder and Rita Joe converse with and echo one another as their words fracture Canada’s public discourses on history, identity and multiculturalism. Their unique cultural voices give life and meaning to “the submerged [and] repressed values of our [mainstream] culture” (Lionnet, *Autobiographical Voices* 5). The two authors present their lives and identities by holding up a mirror to Canada, asking it to take a closer, more realistic perhaps look of itself and of its cultural and political values. Both authors refuse to contribute their creative powers to a concept of an ideal Canada. Rather, they carve out, each in her own way, a new cultural space that is marked by the possibilities for the existence of an authentic, transnational multiculturalism and of a truly lived interculturalism. Both *Marynia, Don’t Cry* and *Song of Rita Joe* ultimately illustrate that, to borrow Michael Cronin’s words, “equality without difference [is] merely inequality with a difference” (47). And finally, Kojder’s and Joe’s life narrations can be read as two important enunciations of an unflinching dedication to a process of liberation, one that has the potential to redefine political boundaries.

CHAPTER III: Words of Difference: Framing Linguistic Identity

Since “Native writers share with ‘ethnic’ writers the goal of subverting the racist hierarchy that Canada’s history as a European colony has bequeathed us” (Seiler 59), both the indigenous and ethnic writer employ a particular linguistic strategy to achieve this goal. Because a carefully planned use of language is able to “refigure the real” (Lionnet, *Postcolonial Representations* 46), Apolonja Kojder in *Marynia, Don’t Cry* and Rita Joe in *Song of Rita Joe* both employ the power of language to redress the silences of mainstream history and to challenge the cultural images that have been placed upon their ethnic and indigenous communities. The memoirist’s and autobiography writer’s choice to interweave words and phrases of another language into the midst of the English text thus carries a meaning that is affixed in human experiences and institutions. These discursive strategies and motivations, in turn, allow the reader to understand those experiences and establishments. What is the effect on the reader and what is the author’s purpose in interrupting the English flow of words with a foreign word such as *dusza* (soul) or *Kisulkw* (The Great Spirit)? In order for me to provide a richer analysis of the significance of Apolonja Kojder’s and Rita Joe’s respective interjections of foreign words into their English language texts, I approach this topic by using certain linguistic concepts from frame semantics. Frames are relevant to my investigation because a writer’s and a reader’s “general human cognitive capacities appear to include the ability (and the need) to set up frames;” and frames, in and of themselves, are ultimately “structured understandings of the way aspects of the world function” (Sweetser and Fauconnier 4). That is, frame semantics will allow me to uncover Kojder’s and Joe’s uses of language by way of analyzing the writers’ organization of words and their meanings. However, in wishing to go deeper in my observation that both Kojder and Joe literally frame their identities with their native tongues and cultural heritage, I must point out that I apply some elements of frame semantics theory only insofar as they are relevant to my investigation, for the space of this paper does not allow for an elaborate linguistic analysis. In particular, I use Charles J. Fillmore’s as well as Eve Sweetser and Gilles Fauconnier’s expert articles on frame semantics to guide my analysis on the presence of ‘other’ words in these two Canadian life narratives. My approach of contextualizing events as they are expressed through words is

also advantageous to my examination of the significance of braiding multiple languages for the purpose of constructing a cultural identity.

With this method in mind, this chapter will analyze the relationship of language to identity and it will explore the writers' deliberate insistence on highlighting difference. By merging two languages, Kojder and Joe both depict their culturally plural identities to value and express new, hybrid cultural forms and languages that exist within Canada. For Rita Joe, blending her native Mi'kmaq language with the dominant English is a form of "translating into the colonizer's language a different sensibility ... a means of transforming the dominant conceptions circulated by the more standard idiom" (Lionnet, *Postcolonial Representations* 13). Likewise, Apolonja Kojder's insertion of Polish words and phrases allows her to claim both the English language and her Polish-Canadian identity as her own. Since, as I mentioned, Kojder's memoir and Joe's autobiography are written in English, the linguistic *métissage* the two authors perform makes contact with the Anglo-Canadian readership in order for this audience to perceive these writers' respective worlds in the way that the authors experience them. Importantly, writing in the dominant language, Kojder and Joe do not sacrifice the chance to privilege their respective mother tongues. This blending practice of linguistic *métissage*, then, also acquires political characteristics. Namely, as "an art of transformation and transmutation" and as a vehicle for subversion (Lionnet, *Autobiographical Voices* 18), *métissage*, seen to operate in these two texts, foregrounds a kind of solidarity that "becomes the fundamental principle of political action against hegemonic languages" (Lionnet, *Autobiographical Voices* 6). The goal is to destabilize binary forms of thought and break social borders. And, finally, the strategy that both Kojder and Joe adopt in their respective texts is one of translational accommodation, where, to use Michael Cronin's definition, "translation is used as a means of maintaining [these writers'] languages of origin though this does not rule out limited or indeed extensive acquisition of the host-country language" (Cronin 52). Kojder's and Joe's foreign words serve as powerful tools towards enhancing difference and promoting intercultural communication between Canada's minority and majority groups, while their translations also function to illustrate the evolution of Canada's own hybrid cultural landscape and identity. Hence, the analysis of the power of translation is central in my

investigation on the significance of presencing indigenous- and ethno-linguistic identities within the Canadian context.

Dusza (Soul) in Apolonja Kojder's Memoir

Because a word can be understood as an expression that builds its meaning on cognitive frames of reference, “we can say that the frame structures the word-meanings” (Fillmore 117). In other words, a lexical item evokes particular frames of reference or mental spaces. A writer can thus use a word meaningfully, to use Barbara Dancygier's words, “if there is an established link between the expression and a contextual frame structured by the speaker's/hearer's knowledge of a person, location, document, etc.” (to appear in *Language in Action*). Cognitive frames, then, are the spaces that hold referents and allow connections to be made in the reader's mind. Because a frame “is a system of categories structured in accordance with some motivating context” (Fillmore 119), frame semantics is particularly helpful in understanding Apolonja Kojder's communicative goals.

The fact that the author who writes from between two cultural spaces chooses to presence, intersect and set into dialogue two different languages within the space of a text carries an important implication for the construction of selfhood through language. Consciously writing from the peripheries of the Canadian cultural landscape as an invisible minority, Apolonja Kojder's memoir is permeated with the sporadic blossoming of Polish native words. Spelled in the original way with proper Polish diacritics, the words are chosen carefully not simply because they seem more fitting or because they add aesthetic value to this ethnic-Canadian text, but, rather, because they cover a unique identity and reality that are not always easily translatable. Had Kojder used only the translation for the word *szlachta* – “nobility” (21) – or the word “songs” for *przypiewki* (33), she would have erased the presence and cultural visibility of her Polish self, language and heritage. In his work on language, translation, culture and identity, entitled *Translation and Identity*, Michael Cronin writes that “Culture allows us to translate and Cultures make us translate” (47). And since language is bound up with culture and

identity, the presencing of different words translates into presencing difference. After all, “If everything is the same, there is no difference and if there is no difference, there is no identity,” continues Cronin. “Consequently, difference is essential to the construction of identity” (Cronin 50). It can also be said that Kojder adopts this mode of discourse “specifically because [her] frames of reference are cultural worlds apart” from their English counterparts (Lionnet, *Autobiographical Voices* 21). That is, a word such as *oczepiny* is culturally specific – a synonym for it in the English language simply does not exist.

In the mind of the Polish speaking reader such as myself, for example, the word *oczepiny* can evoke immediate cognitive frames of an upcoming traditional Polish wedding, of wreaths, of dancing, and of matrimony. In the English speaker, however, this particular word, standing as such in its original form and without translation, lacks a direct and immediate connection to cognitive frames of reference. Kojder does, however, translate her Polish words into English (usually in brackets), allowing her Canadian audience to gain relatively quick cognitive frame access into her world. She explains the word *oczepiny* as “the traditional capping ceremony” that is performed before a Polish wedding (5). Foreign words that highlight ethnic difference are intended to structure new schematic conceptualizations within the minds of the audience. The word *oczepiny* can structure the awareness in the Canadian reader of a unique cultural tradition, a nuptial tradition that does not normally occur in Anglo-Celtic Canadian culture. Likewise, *szlachta* refers to a specific class in Poland that indicates a culturally and historically specific group of Polish elites. It is a reality that is unknown in the mainstream Canadian socio-cultural setting. *Przyspiewki* too signify a culturally specific type of sing-song that is found distinctively in Polish culture. Highlighting these ethnic words therefore has “a meaning and a reference” that Kojder selects “in a manner intelligible [to the reader] – as being concepts at all, for example, rather than mere exclamations” (Benhabib in Cronin 72). That is, these words, immersed in the Polish culture, are intended to foster greater cultural understanding and appreciation in the Canadian reader. Likewise, though there are direct translations for such Polish words as *duśza* (soul) and *stodola* (barn) into their English counterparts (Kojder 28), in English, “being brought up in a barn” is actually a phrase of insult. Though it may appear at first that there are no cultural discrepancies

between some Polish words and their translations, their presence in the native form, first and foremost, suggests that for the writer they hold a special cultural meaning. By writing *dusza* for soul, the author suggests that her religious or spiritual experiences are fundamentally dependent upon her Polish culture or Catholic upbringing, I believe. *Dusza*, therefore, comes to mean not only 'soul' but an aspect of the writer that is deeply embedded in her cultural traditions. *Stodola*, or barn, on the other hand, carries the connotations of Polish village life and of a place that often housed friends or neighbours who were in transit. The word 'barn' would thus be incapable of representing the cultural entity of a real Polish barn that is architecturally, historically and culturally tied to the writer's Polish homeland. This way, simple words that have direct translations in the English language are presented for the English reader in the original form so as to paint a culturally specific and unique experience of those entities, be they soul or barn. This introduces an 'other' perspective and invites the reader to view the world from the author's cultural position. For Kojder, native words and their subsequent translation thus also signify a way to "maintain native language usage rather than a practice to eliminate it" (Cronin 58). This is important because the original word and its translated counterpart become "blended and hybridized," and this is intended by the author to bring these two "languages and cultures into closer contact" (Cronin 59). Kojder's discursive strategy thus encourages cultural exchange. In this sense, too, Kojder reveals her transnational position by, as Cronin would say, "the fact of being attached to or experiencing two places [and languages] simultaneously" – that is, the Polish and Canadian worlds (Cronin 61).

Using *oczepiny* in its original native version sets the Polish writer and reader into an intimate understanding and cultural identification with one another. However, I wish to just briefly mention that this understanding between the Polish diaspora writer and Polish diaspora reader may not always occur. An interesting, discursive situation can develop if the Polish writer has one conception of a word such as *oczepiny*, while the Polish reader's understanding of the same word may not match or agree with the writer's own. This is a point whose depth I cannot develop in this paper, but it is worth noting. In terms of the English-speaking reader, he or she is forced to stop at the point of encountering the Polish word and to ask the question: What does the presence of the word *oczepiny* signify? The Anglo-Canadian reader is thus dependent upon the writer to gain an interpretation of the

foreign word. The effect of intruding upon the English text with an alien word is designed by Kojder to prompt those very questions and to force the audience's attention to linger upon the linguistically 'other' word. That is, to force the reader's attention upon an ethnic word (assuming that the reader will pay attention) is to force the reader's recognition of an ethnic cultural 'otherness' that is deeply embedded in the midst of the English-Canadian textual and physical space. This way, the author intends to situate her ethnic presence within a larger, cultural frame (Fillmore 120). Kojder's descriptive framework, then, is culturally relevant because it is motivated by her status as an ethnic minority. In presenting her position within her world and by disturbing the English text with Polish words, Kojder sets up a unique mental model of Canadian identity as culturally hybrid. Since Kojder's plural self refuses to assimilate the Polish language into the English, her linguistic strategy, in fact, insists that any ideology of culture as homogenous is an illusion in and of itself. Kojder therefore structures her text in such a way so as to "allow expression of a complex mental space construct involving cognitive linkups between maps of geographic areas [and] social identities" (Sweetser and Fauconnier 24). In other words, Kojder's English-speaking reader is invited to understand his or her national domain as also being occupied by the minority writer's Polish culture. The entrance into Kojder's world includes experiencing life as a culturally hybrid woman who, in inhabiting those two cultures, must find herself within them. She writes, "I'm thinking first in Polish and then doing the work in English ... I was fascinated that I could think in different languages ... That was an important discovery for me" (122). Equally important is the message Kojder's discursive mode sends to her Polish speaking readers. I believe that the author's deliberate presencing of Polish words and phrases within her text is intended to highlight the value and importance of nurturing and openly projecting Polish cultural heritage within the Canadian social space. Kojder's linguistic strategy can act as an encouragement to her Polish-Canadian reader to choose acculturation over total assimilation. As a Polish-Canadian woman myself, I know from personal experience the desires of contemporary Polish immigrants to simply assimilate their children into mainstream society as thoroughly as possible, which often comes at the price of forsaking their ethnic language and heritage. This is a reality that I believe Kojder works against by highlighting her family's role in maintaining her connectedness to her Polish identity: "Looking back on

my formative years, I think of all the family stories that my parents and grandmother told me about the old country, and I realize how these stories nurtured and shaped me,” she writes (129). Kojder can thus be said to encourage the pursuit of the same venture in her Polish speaking readers; her linguistic strategy is intended to trigger cultural self-reflexivity (Cronin 62). Intended to go straight into the Canadian and Polish reader’s hearts and meant to evoke an entire cultural reality, the Polish ethnic word thus has the power to affect the two larger worlds that the writer and her readers inhabit.

Clearly, the inclusion of Polish words fundamentally assists Kojder in inscribing her ethnic self into the Canadian landscape. As a child of Polish immigrants, Kojder remains closely connected to her Polish roots: “Even before my father died, I had become more and more interested in my Polish heritage,” writes Kojder of her university years (128). Cultural diaspora is replicated in the writer’s employment of the Polish language. The insertion of foreign words into the midst of her English language text has the effect of foregrounding difference and visibility of otherness. To further develop this point, I wish to look at the structure – or, discursive framing – of Kojder’s memoir, *Marynia, Don’t Cry*. While it opens with a foreign name, *Marynia*, the memoir closes with a famous quotation by Adam Mickiewicz, her father’s favourite, placed there in memory of his life: “*Bez serc, bez ducha—to szkieletow ludy*” (“Without a heart, without a soul—a man is but a skeleton”) (Kojder 138). This way, Kojder frames her entire memoir with her native tongue in order to state that her identity is essentially framed by her Polish heritage. The memoir’s title itself deliberately features a highly visible, alien, Polish word. The ethnic name *Marynia* directly presences a foreign element in this book and establishes Kojder’s Polish-Canadian sense of self. Although Canadianized and communicating in the dominant language, the author implies that she is defined by the cultural significance of her ethnic language, as the title and the body of her text suggest. Kojder’s deliberate markings of linguistic difference further work as a strategy to subvert any existing assumptions that second generation ethnic writers have thoroughly assimilated into Canadian culture and have effectively forgotten their native roots. Indeed, highlighting her incomplete assimilation, Kojder writes, “I felt the urgency to connect with my ethnic roots” (128). Studies in immigration have shown that “if the children of immigrants were tending in the direction of translational [or linguistic] assimilation at one stage in their

lives, they were signalling a move towards translational [or linguistic] accommodation at a later stage” (Cronin 62). Michael Cronin helpfully observes that “the desire to ‘look for roots’ involves the foregrounding of the translational nature of the experience of the immigrant child moving from the source language of home to the target language of school and back again” (62). While Kojder illustrates her acquisition of English as a little girl in Canada – “I didn’t understand all the words exactly because they were English, but we kids guessed what they meant” (Kojder 116)” – as a grown writer, she features the Polish language in her text to privilege her ethnic roots. This “cultural self-consciousness or awareness implies the wish not to make translation invisible but rather to make it more visible, to acknowledge that there are two languages, two cultures ... which come to determine ... the self” (Cronin 62). The insertion of foreign words into the English text, then, is not only a celebratory marker of ethnic identity but a symbol of the cultural diaspora that ties Kojder to her status as one of Canada’s minority writers.

When it comes to retaining Polish names and phrases as a way of retaining a sense of her self, Kojder elaborates her deep need to nurture the language of her ethnic group. The author’s memoir delineates her time as a Polish child in Canada who grew up knowing how to communicate only in Polish and who learns to face the linguistic struggles and barriers that both her parents and she herself encounter in an English-speaking Saskatchewan: “The teacher told Mama that I was shy. My mama was very angry and told her, ‘What do you mean she’s shy? She doesn’t understand English!’” (120). I can personally identify with Kojder’s anecdote. In my first year of school in Canada, my German/ESL teacher told me (with a German dictionary in hand) that I too was ‘shy,’ a remark that unsettled me in a similar way. Kojder’s quote reveals the misconceptions that, I feel, Canadian English speakers have of the linguistic and cultural challenges new immigrants face. Immigrants such as myself or Kojder and her family may appear in a particular way to the mainstream. But this is not because of some innate characteristic that the ethnic ‘other’ possesses (as some Canadians see it) but because of the result of struggling to find one’s voice and identity in a new cultural and linguistic world. Linguistic inability sets up an invisible barrier that prevents the foreign speaker from fully and truly expressing herself. As a little girl ushered into the Canadian school system, Kojder felt, even at this early age, she writes, that her Polish identity was under

attack. The first time Kojder comes face to face with her cultural otherness is the first day at school when her teacher is unable to pronounce her name correctly: “She couldn’t even say it right,” writes Kojder, “But I knew she meant me. She was staring at me. What did she want? I looked blankly at her” (119). Asking her parents to teach her how to spell her proper name, since, she claims, “the teacher couldn’t even say my name right, so how could she teach me how to write it?” (119), young Apolonja disconnects herself from the dominant norms and asserts her Polish identity at an astoundingly young age.

Understanding no word of English, Kojder’s young self suddenly finds herself in a gap between two cultures and chooses to hold on to what she knows best: her Polish sense of self. Yet, since the first contact with the unknown Canadian culture, Kojder’s identity continues to be threatened by that cultural split. In fact, Kojder experiences identity confusion. This is evident when she, as little Apolonja, imagines herself to be a famous film star or a beautiful teacher. Shocked into a new culture, Apolonja thus pretends herself away from her present, difficult reality: “I would pretend I was them. Now I could pretend to be this lovely woman” (119), writes Kojder of this experience. Apolonja aspired to be anyone but herself, and I believe this is more than simple child play, given that I myself experienced a similar sense of self-loss in my early years of immigration. Culturally inhabiting the old world, the self is physically pulled out to learn how to bend its inner shape so as to fit the new world.

The socio-linguistic pressures coming in the form of the intrusive English language and Canadian cultural expectations continue to press upon little Apolonja. Kojder’s young self, however, continues to fight them. Remarkably, little Apolonja refuses to surrender her foreign, proper name into the phonetic system of the English language in spite of outside pressures from the dominant group. These pressures manifest in the form of wishing to alter the young immigrant child’s name and thus make her appear in sound more like her Canadian counterparts: “[The kids] started calling me Paula or Pauline in school, but I knew that wasn’t my name so I’d just ignore them and kept on writing and calling myself Pola,” the shortened form of Apolonja (119). Because Apolonja Kojder’s own name is a social differentiating factor due to its spelling and phonetic sound – it is as visible as skin colour when seen or heard – her school’s desire to alter it into a more Anglo-Saxon, acceptable version could be viewed as social prejudice reflected in the

“social stigma” that is “attached to a name characteristic of an ethnic group of low prestige” (Lipski 110). Indeed, in the middle of the twentieth century, when Kojder was a little girl, ethnic prejudice against Poles and their ethnic-sounding names operated in the form of ‘Polish jokes,’ ethnic slurs and other forms of ridicule coming from the more established members of Canadian society (Lipski 116). The typical ethnic joke spun puns about Polish character traits: Poles were depicted as “large in size, strong, gross in appetite, stupid, dirty, excessive in sexual activities, cowardly, and avaricious” (Clements in Fish 450). Kojder certainly refers to ethnic prejudice in her memoir. Writing bitterly about the discrimination her father faced in Canada as an immigrant worker (121), the author implies that mispronunciation and ethno-linguistic discrimination have been regulated by biased feelings: “The people [in Canada] looked at Tatu as an outsider, because he had a heavy accent and his English wasn’t very good, even though he got his Canadian citizenship in 1955” (136). Kojder’s resistance to discrimination is thus reflected in her technique of pressing forward with the inclusion of Polish words and phrases in her text. It is a way of refusing to accept prejudice and a way of hoping to expose Canada’s role in once constituting immigrants through these delusory images. In fact, Kojder’s affiliation to her Polish language at such a young age leads her to initially reject English: “I’d show the pictures [of strange animals] at home and ask what these animals were called in Polish,” she writes (121). The deliberate presencing of Kojder’s ethno-linguistic self therefore carries over to a “refusal to be translated into the dominant language” which “becomes a conscious form of resistance, a desire to assert language rights, namely those relating to the maintenance of the mother tongue” (Cronin 56). By insisting on being called ‘Pola’ in the Canadian educational and social setting, Kojder, as a transnational individual, “both strengthens the bonds of association and familiarity with the source language and, arguably, makes [herself] even more aware of the fact that [she is], in a sense, living in translation” (Cronin 61). Indeed, Kojder translates her Polish self into the Canadian space and vice versa throughout her memoir.

In fact, accommodating her self in the space of cultural translation, the author is closely bound up with and attracted to her native language and culture. As an invisible minority writer who values and projects her marginality, Kojder thus utilizes language as a “strategy to self-empowerment” (Huggan 20) to show that she is culturally distinct and not

an invisible face that can be easily moulded to 'fit' the desires of mainstream Canadian culture. Maintaining her name as it is – alien-sounding but real – proclaims her commitment to maintain her ethnic identity intact at a time when Canada, before the implementation of its policy of multiculturalism in 1971, sought to assimilate its immigrants into mainstream society. Some critics of Canada's Multiculturalism Act attack the "linguistic hypocrisy" that is embedded within this policy by writing that the Act "enlists the users of languages other than English and French in the cause of 'strengthening the status and use of the official languages of Canada'" (Karpinski quoting Act 3(1)(i), Multicultural 'Gift(s)' 121). To be sure, Kojder may be saying here that, to use Eva C. Karpinski's words, any "forms of forcing 'others' into the regime of 'standard English' disguise the greatest logistic impossibility of multiculturalism" in Canada (Multicultural 'Gift(s)' 121). That is, Kojder's work exposes the absurdity of multiculturalism "without multilingualism" (Karpinski, Multicultural 'Gift(s)' 121). In effect, by rejecting the "imperium of a dominant language [that] impose[s] order through exclusion" (Cronin 72), Kojder celebrates her minority status: "But one of these days they were going to spell my name right," she asserts (Kojder 120). The author is clearly uninterested in living in a "standardized world" that is defined by a complete loss of distinctiveness (Cronin 126).

But even the gradual diminishment of speaking Polish within her home space in later years threatens Kojder's cultural identity, which she of course attempts to forestall: "I noticed Mama wanting to use English more and more. I hated that," she writes, "Home was home (Polish). I'd insist she speak Polish" (124). On this note too I can personally identify with Kojder's identity struggles. Having to adopt the English language as the primary medium for self-expression upon my immigration from Poland to Canada, I too continue to encounter moments of a split sense of identity when my personal name is divided between the official 'Joanna,' which is used in the public sphere of the dominant culture, and 'Asia,' the Polish, shortened form of my full name that is used in a more intimate and predominantly ethnic sphere. When 'Joanna' (pronounced in English) is used at home, I too feel under a sort of attack. This English-sounding 'Joanna' sounds like someone distant that I know but who is not entirely known to me in the private sphere. English-sounding 'Joanna' is an invasive, foreign-sounding label that I have not grown up

with on intimate terms, and it thus does not sit well with my ethnic sense of self within the personal setting of home. I identify with Kojder's argument that "school (English) was school and home (Polish) was home" (135). Therefore, like Paula being foreign to Apolonja, so the English-pronounced 'Joanna' is a stranger to Polish-pronounced 'Asia.' 'Asia' is a name and self that, conversely, does not seem to have a place in the public setting, mostly because it is hard to pronounce with a Polish dialect for English speakers and because, once again, it has not usually been used in the public sphere as such. 'Asia' fits home. Separating the public and private names is somehow akin to a balancing act of keeping my interrelated yet distinct Polish and Canadian cultural names in a comfortable equilibrium.

Yet, with the threat to her ethno-linguistic self, Kojder avoids the demise of her cultural diversity in Canada by embedding her ethnic difference into the text through the foreign words she so carefully chooses, as I have shown already. Kojder draws on many ethnic words for names in her memoir for the purpose of maintaining a conscious balance between her Polish and Canadian cultural self. Referring to her family members in Polish throughout her memoir – mother is *Mama*, father is *Tatu*, and grandma is *Babcia* (125) – these names are generated by "general social or physical framings of experience" (Sweetser and Fauconnier 5). Since a name such as *Babcia* is significant for evoking a desired frame, the cultural context called up by *Babcia* in the mind of the Canadian reader is that of Polish family roles. The roles of 'grandmother' are therefore understood and experienced from the position of Polish culture and from the roles that Polish culture frames a 'grandmother' with. That is, *Babcia* represents the concept of a grandmother who instils Polish culture, language, cuisine, housekeeping, memories and heritage into her granddaughter, Apolonja. On this point, Kojder writes, "I'd think up simple words in Polish, write them out and then ask usually Babcia if that's how you wrote them ... Babcia would [also] help me to pray in Polish" (121). The word *Babcia* in Kojder's text is therefore inseparable from and a symbol of the cultural specificity of Polish family roles and traditions. The same is true for *Mama* and *Tatu*. While the Polish mother's role is to transmit Polish heritage and female empowerment to her daughter, the Polish father inscribes his child with memories of the Polish experiences in World War II and teaches her the Polish language – all of which bears a direct impact upon little Apolonja's self-

construction and self-understanding. Kojder only knows her parents and grandmother from within the space of Polishness, and she names them and therefore writes of them from precisely the same native location. To illustrate the close ties of her family members in Canada and the importance the family places in maintaining Polishness within the home setting, Kojder writes:

The whole family would go to see exciting movies like *Quo Vadis* (based on Henryk Sienkiewicz's novel), after which I had nightmares about being attacked by lions and bears just like those Christians and had to pull the quilt over my ears so I'd be safe even though I was sleeping with Babcia. (123)

As a result of Kojder's discursive strategy, these culturally meaning-bearing Polish names and words come to add and possibly transform mainstream attitudes and experiences that are anchored in the Canadian cultural and political space. By introducing ethnic words, then, Kojder analyzes and reveals the interrelated relationship between the words, categories and their national context. Canada is understood as a space that is wrought by the mutual interdependence of both English and multicultural voices and experiences. Indeed, since "semantics is generative ... of the building principles of cognitive constructions" (Sweetser and Fauconnier 22), Kojder's "lexical choice" is therefore "centrally involved in expressing and constructing human understanding of the world" (Sweetser and Fauconnier 8).

As a cultural translator and interpreter, then, Kojder enacts a *métissage* of braiding the two languages together. Although Kojder describes the ethno-linguistic prejudice she and her family had been facing as immigrants in Canada, the unspoken fact that she aligns the two languages reveals the sense of solidarity that she feels towards both cultures. The Polish and Anglo-Canadian cultures are, as the memoir shows, integral parts of her identity and they bind the Canadian socio-linguistic space together. Expressing herself mainly in English, Kojder does not elaborate on the gradual acquisition of her English-Canadian identity: "Somewhere along the way we kids started to speak English among ourselves ... We soon started to talk in English when we played make-believe" (122). This silencing of the acculturation process seems to suggest that it occurred quite unremarkably, naturally and inevitably. She reveals her mood by writing that "our parents

still spoke Polish to each other ... [but we Polish kids] soon started to talk in English when we played make-believe” (122). The author hints that English slowly began to enter the Polish home: eventually, she writes, “we were all learning English at home” (121). Nevertheless, through a presencing of foreign words, Kojder’s diaspora experience is thus highlighted as a way to recognize the necessity for heterogeneity and difference – that is, her text speaks to the fact that Canadian identities live in and through (cultural and linguistic) difference and hybridity (Hall 138). This way, Kojder’s memoir vies for the recognition of cultural voices and, as it does so, the text also contributes to “a reformulation of public space in migrant societies” such as Canada – that is, the Canadian landscape is defined as “primarily a translation space” (Cronin 68). In this space, cultural identities are translated to each other and in this process of translation, the nurturing, acknowledgement and mutual coexistence of these identities is represented as an urgently needed possibility. In this sense, the presence of foreign words and “translation itself [become] the possibilit[ies] of dialogue across difference,” between Canada’s minority and majority cultures (Cronin 72).

Kisulkw (The Great Spirit) in Rita Joe’s Autobiography

Like Kojder’s memoir, Rita Joe’s autobiography too is significantly framed by the author’s native Mi’kmaq tongue. From first chapter, *Epitejij*, to last chapter, *Ntapekiaqn*, each section in her autobiography is headed with the Mi’kmaq language. To me, Joe’s choice to name each chapter in Mi’kmaq illustrates the powerful claim that Native language and identity have had and continue to have on Joe’s entire life. This framing of her text suggests that Mi’kmaq language is indivisible from Joe’s sense of self. The practice of projecting difference through Joe’s discursive mode also acts as a strategy to expose the history of Canada’s cultural intolerance and linguistic homogenization. Language, therefore, is utilized by Joe towards accurate self-definition and as “a weapon for survival” (Wong, *Sending My Heart* 166). Living through years of institutional abuse such as within the residential school system, Joe uses the pages of her autobiography to undo the damage inflicted upon herself and her people: “We were not allowed to express our Native language, culture and spirituality, and these things are very important to us”

(48), she reflects on the years spent in Shubenacadie residential school. Interleaving Mi'kmaq native words, phrases and even whole poetic verses into the body of her English-language autobiography, Joe states the presence and continual resilience of Mi'kmaq culture within Canadian society. Scholars describe the socio-political reality that encompasses Joe's life and that influences her writing as follows: "Relocated and marginalized, without even recourse to the legal foundation of treaty rights ... in Canada, the Mi'kmaq persisted in the first half of the twentieth century in varying states of extreme poverty, powerlessness, and alienation" (McKegney 36). Joe presences her native language and privileges cultural difference to redress the linguistic suffocation that has been enacted against the Mi'kmaq peoples at the hands of the dominant, homogenizing powers, particularly between the years 1879 and 1986 (McKegney 33).

As a writer who (re)constructs the identity of herself and of her indigenous group through language, Joe does not use Mi'kmaq words lightly. Rather, in First Nations cultures, language "is considered sacred. To speak is not a casual affair, but a holy action" (Wong, *Sending My Heart* 19). Hence, when Joe writes in Mi'kmaq: "Many of us do a sweat in the sweatlodge / My *Kisulkw* is on my mind while doing the sweat... / I have seen the Dancing Eagle / My *Kisulkw* in the sky" (145), her "envisionment of the text world assigns that world both a perspective and a history" (Fillmore 122). The frames that the word *Kisulkw*, which stands for 'The Great Spirit,' would evoke in the Mi'kmaq speaker – the Creator, the Universe, Heaven, earth-based spirituality – are otherwise momentarily cut off in the English speaking reader by the writer's choice to privilege and to presence Mi'kmaq language (and spirituality). Similar to Kojder's own strategic positioning of Polish words, Joe's exercise in lexical framing thus provides the content upon which the reader once again "performs a 'configuring' function" (Fillmore 123). That is, to understand what *Kisulkw* means, the reader of Joe's autobiography is challenged to search for a background frame to understand the surrounding culture that he or she is suddenly faced with. The reader is forced to pause, pay attention to the spelling and sound, note the flow of the letters, and finally to flip forward to the Glossary of Mi'kmaq terms so as to seek the English translation. Only then can the reader gain entrance into Joe's cultural world. This way, Joe's linguistic structure simultaneously "exploit[s] and depict[s] ... information accessibility" in her reader (Sweetser and Fauconnier 2). The English speaker

is thus induced to “set up a new mental space” as a result of Joe’s overt linguistic technique (Sweetser and Fauconnier 10). The idea here is that, as she writes her autobiography and constructs meaning through discourse, Joe intends to structure particular cognitive spaces under the personal and external pressures of culture and context. The word *Kisulkw*, then, frames or situates the history of Mi’kmaq spirituality within a yet wider history of colonial relations between First Nations and Canadian settlers. Using this term to “recall the historical basis of [the term’s] creation” (Fillmore 123), Joe attempts to correct dominant mind-sets towards First Nations traditions: “Do not sit there and assume we had no spiritual communication with our Creator before the Europeans came,” she writes of the day she addressed Christian priests and nuns during a talk (155). This reveals Joe’s sensitivity to the “connections between language and attitudes” (Fillmore 126) and the need to correct and improve that link. In periodically addressing her English speaking audience through the medium of Mi’kmaq, Joe can be said to “give forth the spirit of [her] life” (Wong, *Sending My Heart* 19). God and spirituality are therefore understood by the reader from the Mi’kmaq standpoint. The significance of this linguistic strategy lies in the fact that the English language is “inadequate for expressing local experience” and that English language also often embodies “a world view very different from ... [the Native peoples’]” (Seiler 53). Through the word *Kisulkw*, the reader learns that “Spirituality is a way of life for Natives” (Joe 154) and is invited to sympathize with the anger Joe subsequently feels “about the regimentation of spiritual life in [residential] school” (56). Joe’s project thus entails “writing against centuries of ethnocentric constructions of Native peoples and against a world view that is virtually the opposite of that embedded in Native cultural practices” (Seiler 59). The Anglo-Canadian reader of Joe’s text thus comes to understand the author’s and her community’s pain of living through cultural and spiritual maltreatment. Indeed, when European settlers made contact with Canada’s First Nations, “one god took away the dignity of another god. Now what has to happen is that the god who lost their dignity has to take it back” (Highway in Seiler 53). Hence, Joe’s discursive mode can be said to inherit “significant structure from [her] beliefs about reality” as she experiences it within the Canadian space, particularly from within the historical relations between Canada and its First Nations (Sweetser and Fauconnier 3). The effect of including

translations for these foreign words is that it creates referential connections that, in turn, provide the reader with an understanding of Joe's indigenous identity (Sweetser and Fauconnier 2).

Importantly, the religious frames that the word *Kisulkw* evokes are culturally incompatible with their English language counterparts, despite the fact that a translation in the English is possible. What I mean to say here is that the cultural concept of the Great Spirit is not known or active in mainstream Canadian culture and that its presence is therefore significant in that the word represents Joe's unique spiritual and cultural experience and identity. The word needs to be presented in its original form in order for the writer to stay true to the correct representation of her Mi'kmaq spiritual tradition. The presence of *Kisulkw*, of a unique Mi'kmaq spiritual entity, encourages the Canadian reader to understand that there are multiple and equally valuable interpretations of the spiritual world and experiences, besides the dominant one (for instance, the Christian world view). The word *Kisulkw*, like many other Mi'kmaq words that Joe foregrounds in her text, is intended to demonstrate the culturally-defined perspectives that the writer holds and through which she reads herself and her world. It also functions as a powerful statement that the author first and foremost interprets the world from the Mi'kmaq, rather than just from the mainstream, standpoint. Indeed, even simple phrases that could have been expressed in English are put into the Mi'kmaq language so as to highlight the author's cultural presence: "*Nemi'k*," she writes (103), which means, "I see" (187). Likewise, a word such as 'orphans' is first of all expressed in Mi'kmaq as *sitnaqn* (Joe 24). Having been an orphan child herself, Joe acquaints her readers with the reality of being a Mi'kmaq orphan who moves from foster home to foster home and who, as a result, loses much connection to her Mi'kmaq culture due to the absence of her parents. Leaving her foster home in Pictou Landing, Joe wonders, "If I had stayed in Pictou Landing, would I know more Indian prayers today?" (28). The author also reveals Native attitudes towards *sitnaqn*, or orphans, by writing that "Natives believe that if you are kind to *sitnaqn* (orphans), goodness will be returned to you" (24-25). The word *sitnaqn*, then, is connected to both personal and community beliefs and experiences, and, its presence in original form allows for a deeper access to its specifically indigenous meaning and significance. Writing in a fashion that places great value on Mi'kmaq linguistic heritage, Joe points out the

ability of the Mi'kmaq language "to generate entirely different sets of meanings or ways of viewing the world" (Cronin 105), especially in relation to the socio-political attitudes found in Canada. In an important way, framing cultural and political situations through the application of foreign words provides Joe (and Kojder) with the only relevant way of communicating about her cultural experiences.

It is important to note, however, the fact that, like Kojder, Joe's inclusion of English translations suggests that she does not aim for the alienation of her English-speaking audience. The Glossary supplied at the end of Joe's autobiography provides translations for English speakers who, like me, are not versed in Mi'kmaq. Hence, like Kojder's English translations of Polish words within brackets, Joe's Glossary of terms bridges and speaks to both cultures, joining the two linguistic worlds within a single space – that of text, which is also representative of the physical space of Canada. The highlighting and translating of foreign words strives towards equality and protects cultural difference within the Canadian space (Cronin 2). Joe's translations are meant to connect and communicate with rather than divide the Mi'kmaq and Canadian cultural worlds. To use Cronin's words, translations "can contribute to inclusive forms of citizenship," and I believe that this is what Joe is working towards (Cronin 4). Thus, interested in promoting cultural dialogues, Joe can be said to invest her hopes in this possibility not through an investment in generic identities but through an investment in culturally specific identities that ultimately enhance "intercultural contact" (Cronin 63). Difference is thus meant to be not only understood but actively engaged with the moment it is translated. Joe's textual invitation for the discovery of the 'otherness' of her language is set up so as to create a positive view of Aboriginal and cultural diversity. This way, Joe's discursive strategy is also intended to suggest the "fragility of static notions of culture and identity" in contemporary Canada (Cronin 47). Mi'kmaq words are thus framed for a new cultural realization and interpretation, and the general knowledge of First Nations that the reader is forced to bring into play is, at the moment of understanding, forced to undergo a transformation in awareness. This technique is quite remarkable when looked at from the frame semantic point of view because it helps one see that Canadian minority writers situate events in relevance to an ongoing history. That continued history is the assertion of one's cultural presence through the representation of linguistic difference.

The legacies of the colonial encounter are such that, like her English speaking reader, Joe too is at times cut off from understanding the words of her own Native tongue. This is because “Canada’s official residential school policy ... acted as a weapon in a calculated attack on indigenous cultures, seeking – through such now infamous procedures as ... forced speaking of non-Native languages ... to compel its inmates into assimilation” (McKegney 33-34). As a residential school survivor, Joe includes Mi’kmaq words as an invitation for her audience to experience the linguistic disconnection she too suffers as a result of the institutional attempts to eradicate her Native language: “But not so much of my life do you bear / Let us trade places just this once / And you listen while I go on about my culture” (101), she writes. Joe illustrates this linguistic disconnection she at times suffers: ““What is a *mikij*?” I asked. ‘A turtle,’ I was told” (122-123). One crucial side effect of growing up in a land that has been repudiating her culture has been Joe’s inability to speak and write perfectly in both Mi’kmaq and English: “My English was poor, and my words were frustrated, angry, crying, hoping for communication,” she writes (113). Scholars write that, as a result of colonialism, First Nations “experience a ... profound dislocation in having ‘their own ancient and sophisticated responses [to the world] marginalized by the world-view which was implicated in the acquisition of English” (Ashcroft in Seiler 53). Much pain in the First Nations ethno-linguistic self is felt due to the impact of Canada’s residential schools. During the residential school years, “Native children were divorced from their traditional Native cultures yet at the same time were refused entry into prosperous white Canada through ... racism, [they were] institutionalized to occupy a liminal space” in Canadian society (McKegney 34). Writing that: “I lost my talk / The talk you took away / When I was a little girl / At Shubenacadie school” (55), Joe learns as much as she can of her Mi’kmaq language as well as of its history in order to learn more about her own self. This allows her to write herself from a position of empowerment. Although “the subject-position allotted to the indigenous populations by the imperial nations was that of ‘colonial other’” (Emberley 6), Joe chooses to learn the two languages and to construct herself as a survivor of the legacies of the colonial system: “They say that I must live / A white man’s way ... / My heart remains / Tuned to native time,” she writes (51). Rather than suffer a loss of her cultural self and rather than accept internal colonization, Joe harnesses her painful experiences to the

benefit of her self-evolution. In fact, to master and represent her Mi'kmaq language in her work is crucial in maintaining the continued existence of Mi'kmaq cultural and linguistic identities. Translating or carrying her culture over to mainstream society is therefore an act of cultural survival. Indeed, aware of the everlasting threats to her indigenous culture and community, Joe confesses that she always “looks for an honourable image to create” (55) of herself as a way of exorcising the one that has been forced upon her by the ruling system (116-117). Mi'kmaq language is therefore placed in Joe's autobiography as a source of strength and a testament to the culture's continuation.

As already mentioned, by writing and by making her cultural wounds known to her Canadian audience, Joe reclaims her personal and collective story: “Let me find my talk / So I can teach you about me” (55), she offers her readers. As a language, Mi'kmaq was deemed by Canada's colonial powers to be backwards for its alleged lack of written documents: “I knew Native writing was in existence – stone writings, I call them. My people had left a message in petroglyphs, but nobody who came after us could read it, so they chose to deny its existence,” she writes (129). The majority group's denial, particularly by Canadian historians, continues on at the time of Joe's writing. Redressing colonial wrongs therefore occupies much space in Joe's autobiography. Presencing Mi'kmaq – “*Lnui'simk*, Indian talk” (104) – Joe gathers personal strength and momentum to correct dominant misconceptions and prejudices about the alleged illiteracy of her peoples. By using *Lnui'simk* to signify Mi'kmaq speech, Joe's deliberate choice of words places her “own limits on what differences might exist” (Cronin 105). That is, Joe dispels prejudiced views of Mi'kmaq culture that the mainstream holds by writing her own authentic version of cultural difference, and the social and spiritual values found therein. To illustrate the tension and misunderstanding between the two cultures, Joe writes:

Later, when I did my own [prose and poetry] writing, I came across histories saying that we, the Mi'kmaq, left no word. That would make me so mad ... I know people wrote to each other in Mi'kmaq; my own sister used to receive letters written in Mi'kmaq. (36)

The dismal reality is that even today “indigenous people in Canada ... are ‘othered’ as ‘Third World’ figures within the dominant social formations,” and they continue to

“grapple fully with the ... neo-colonialism in Canada” (Emberley 15). However, finding her people’s language and story, and, herself within the Mi’kmaq language community, consolidates Joe’s sense of personal identity: “I had crossed a bridge,” she writes on gathering an understanding of her people’s misconstrued past: “I did not feel insecurity anymore. Representing my people gave me a natural high” (141). Becoming her community’s scribe – “I know their ways / I know their creeds ... / *Aknutm te’ sik kejitu* [I tell what I know]” (102) – Joe’s act of writing in Mi’kmaq as well as in English rewrites the institutional and historical prejudices that held up the Mi’kmaq as a primitive nation that has had no written history of its own. By using Mi’kmaq words and phrases to address the history and traditions of her peoples, Joe not only generates reality but also demonstrates that “language [is] not an ahistorical object” (Cronin 104) but one that actively rewrites history and reshapes ethno-linguistic identities and realities.

Significantly, Joe has achieved a destabilization of many cultural prejudices by splitting the centre and interjecting herself into Canada’s cultural and literary scene. She attains various prominent public recognitions for her creative contribution to the study of the Mi’kmaq peoples: “When *Poems of Rita Joe* first came out, the media called it literature and praised it,” she writes proudly (123). Her literary successes are thus themselves a testament to the falsity of racist prejudice on the intellectual capabilities and will of the First Nations people. Perhaps most importantly, Joe writes about her life to inspire not only her Canadian audience to transform their misconstrued perceptions, but to especially inspire the current and future Mi’kmaq generations to decolonize their own minds. She wants the Mi’kmaq to believe in and project faith, resilience, as well as personal and cultural self-esteem, and, importantly, to never forget their heritage. She writes, “There are forces in action / Calming the land. ... / Restoring the image, to the rising generation” (125). In this sense, Joe herself is a powerful, cultural force in action: “I stand before the native children / Baring my soul about our culture. ... / They listen: / A generation of cultural mend is born” (118). The transcription of Mi’kmaq phrases is thus intended to show her Mi’kmaq audience that their shared indigenous history, language and culture are righteously and deeply embedded within Canada’s socio-cultural landscape. It is intended to show her Mi’kmaq readers that they have every right to feel at home, within themselves, within their culture and within Canada. It is important for Joe to present a

brave survivor's heart to her people in order to inspire them to press forward against the social odds that continue to come their way. Her narrative focus on the good pulls her readers to move past the focus on indigenous trauma and to look instead for solutions and towards better relations and cultural possibilities. Framing her narrative with the spirit of survival, Joe stimulates her Aboriginal language into being within the text so as to strengthen the presence of First Nations in Canada. This helps her to illustrate the need for Canadian institutions to harmonize with her distinct national group and to show her Mi'kmaq audience that it is possible to present their cultural voices. Joe's technique of privileging cultural and linguistic difference therefore ultimately reveals to both her Canadian and Mi'kmaq audiences that her culture is "important just like yours" (101). Joe's use of language, therefore, holds "strategic potential for the formation of new socio-political subjects" (Smith and Watson 44), subjects who embrace their own ethnic difference and cultural plurality. For Joe, linguistic otherness is "an area of genuine possibility, bringing with it new perspectives, energies, traditions and forms of expression" into Canadian society (Cronin 68). Ultimately, Joe's enunciation is meant to inspire all her readers to resist, as she does, cultural erasure and misconceptions. Consequently, to borrow Patricia Monture-Angus's words, Joe chooses to "act as a bridge between [her] people and non-Indian people," thereby carving out a space that is "the home of the boundary warriors" (Monture-Angus 79).

As a peaceful warrior who exists on the boundary between the Mi'kmaq and Anglo-Canadian communities, Joe, much like Kojder, interprets the two worlds to one another and envisions a reality of better mutual understanding and coexistence between these two groups. Using the power of both the English and the Mi'kmaq languages, Joe wishes to reconstruct the division between her nations – Canadian and Mi'kmaq. She utters "The words of a culture / To spread and mend" (101). The link between the foreign word and its translation reflects Joe's efforts to introduce society to a new view of Canada as a third cultural domain made up of multiple perspectives, voices and presences. Gathering information about her culture in words that are "expressed in Mi'kmaq" in her community (119), Joe, in transferring oral communication into written communication (131) essentially blends her Native, oral (and written) history with the written, Canadian history of this nation state. Her embrace of these two cultural and linguistic domains is

therefore a profound marker of her spirit being bent on unifying the two realms through the practice of *métissage*: “I experience both [Mi’kmaq and Christian religions and languages], I am Micmac / The true bond dwelling in my heart, / Spirituality bridging the two [cultures]” (156). In fact, Joe wishes to see more cultural *métissage* occur within Canada’s social space: practicing Christianity and Mi’kmaq spirituality, Joe’s hybrid spiritual milieu induces her to wish that more “traditional experiences and practice could be part of church activities” (152). Encouragingly, some of her wishes begin to manifest themselves and they therefore point to the possibility of positive transformations: “The attempts of the [Christian] priests and the nuns in the choir to speak our language always moves me” (167), she writes. What Joe’s practice of spiritual and linguistic hybridization intends to show her audience, then, is that not only does Canada shape the identity of its peoples but that its multifaceted peoples too shape Canada’s very own identity: “Our land is here, as far as one sees ... / The trades we know are a way of release / To offer our country our achievements” (98). Joe’s practice of hybridity thus establishes the cultural plurality of Canada, where Mi’kmaq and English languages bind Anglo-Canada to Joe’s Native community (Bammer 99). The author works hard at using Native spirituality to reveal to both the Canadian and Mi’kmaq readers that as human beings we are essentially all the same. She writes, “*Kisulkip* (the One who created us) hears [us], no matter what language we use” (Joe 166).

Joe’s recovery of the value and history of her language is thus akin to her recovery of her sense of self, a self that is ultimately rooted in her communal language, culture and past. Yet, aspiring towards healing through *métissage*, Joe’s trauma of “los[ing] her talk” is relieved by her concession that the English way of speaking too has its power and its positive values. In fact, the non-Native way of speaking is “more powerful,” according to Joe (55). Socially more powerful, English is utilized by the author to reach the dominant group and to speak to both cultures as a way to reconcile their longstanding partition. By taking agency – “The four years [at residential school] have given me strength” (49) – and claiming her language, Joe claims her people’s past, story, and perhaps a future of respect and coexistence for coming generations. Joe’s representation of linguistic identity is thus a form of re-wording and re-naming “the narratives of the past” (Hall 131) and of re-positioning herself and her community within the dominant culture as a Canadian

presence that existed long before European colonial contact was ever made. As in Kojder's case, so here again linguistic difference in the form of Mi'kmaq words is put into socio-political action. Foreign language is used as a tool to subvert any readers' sentiments towards cultural homogeneity and as a way to state that cultural and ethnic purity are an all-along impossibility within the Canadian landscape.

Linguistic Identity in Summation

Both Kojder's and Joe's discursive strategies and cultural perspectives are as profoundly "concerned with the 'emergence of new' cultural forms through translation practice" as they are with their textual contributions to "the persistence and development of diversity" in Canada (Cronin 129). These two authors ultimately carve out a right to cultural forms of expressions. Enacting *métissage* by braiding together native language with the dominant English language, both *Marynia*, *Don't Cry* and *Song of Rita Joe* weave the personal and the political together in their respective constructions of community-based identity, which is invented through and in language. These two Canadian minority writers allow the audience to view their world from another perspective so as to generate sensitivity and a shift in the majority's consciousness. In these two texts, the possibilities of social participation and justice are realized through cultural and linguistic plurality. The technique employed in these two personal narratives is a kind of hybridization of various cultural and linguistic elements used to frame the authors' bicultural identities. The translation of the native word to its English version sets the two languages into a relationship that is intended to signify the existence of a third cultural space that is defined by a multiplicity of languages and cultural identities. In this third space, plural languages and hybrid identities are interrelated and coexist inseparably from one another. It is a reality that all communities are invited to accept and work to nurture and enhance.

Kojder's and Joe's personal narratives argue that all worlds are constructions of language, and they illustrate that "the multicultural subject is always the site of contradictions" (Lionnet, *Postcolonial Representations* 33). That is, the two writers counter the false ideologies of pure culture and pure nation that still seem operate within a

multicultural Canada. Just like Canada in its growing multiculturalism, so Canada's English language is shown in these two texts to be contingent on and permeable by 'difference' and 'otherness.' Establishing themselves as the cultural 'other,' Kojder and Joe, both assimilated into the English language, retain "a radical difference that can point to their submerged origins on the palimpsest of history" (Lionnet, *Postcolonial Representations* 38). Ultimately, though, writing and expressing their selves in both of their cultural languages allows Kojder and Joe to emancipate themselves and their ethnic and national groups from various dominant obfuscations, as I have discussed above. Indeed, Kojder and Joe both show that their sites of marginality within Canada's majority culture are central locations for eliciting subversive discourse against the hegemonic powers that shape an image of their past and present realities. Marginal within the centre, they destabilize centralized authority by conceptualizing hybridity and by insisting that Canada has always already been, since its pre-Confederate beginnings, culturally and linguistically creolized or *métissaged*. The practice of *métissage* that I detect as operant in both these life writing texts thus works as an important strategy of subversion and healing, of privileging and valuing difference, and as an emancipatory symbol for the interrelatedness of cultures, ethnicities and linguistic identities that occupy the simultaneously multicultural and transnational space of Canada.

CHAPTER IV: The Female Self in Relationality

The world can be experienced not only through the awareness of being an ethnic or indigenous individual but also through the awareness of being a gendered individual. In their respective life narratives, Apolonja Kojder and Rita Joe are both intimately connected to their female selves, though with unique variations. While to identify herself as a woman who arises from a lineage of other women and their legacies is of crucial importance to Kojder's sense of self and belonging, for Joe, the importance and connectedness to femaleness is vital in terms of promoting solidarity among all women, as well as with men. Joe utilizes her specific gender experiences to end sexism, while Kojder challenges patriarchal values and the exclusions of female experiences from history. Rather than reject gender altogether in protest of its patriarchal construction, both authors individually write womanhood into their texts as a political strategy to utilize their representations of femininity towards achieving gender-based, social transformation. Largely founded on relationality to the female community, female identity thus becomes, in these two life narratives, productive and a force of resistance. Thus Kojder, by speaking about women's histories, and Joe, by voicing the problem of violence against women, undo, to use Rivkin and Ryan's words, "the silence of those who still do not speak" (769).

I sense that the topic of 'being a woman' in the world is as important to Kojder and Joe as it is to me. I feel that I experience life differently and distinctively as a woman, but I also know that this difference in experience lies in the socio-cultural conditioning that I have received from greater society, a society that is still largely constructed along the lines of patriarchy. Having the gender of 'woman' ascribed to me means to have a specifically, socially-defined role placed upon me that divides my culturally defined 'femininity' from a man's 'masculinity.' I effectively understand gender as a social construct. Hence, I live with the awareness that it is not just women but also men who struggle with the problematic values of and roles created by our social system (where both women and men must live up to particular standards of either femininity (right beauty, right behaviour, etc.) or masculinity (strength, reason, independence, etc.) in the Western world). Rita Joe certainly writes against Western gender role constructions through her depiction of her and her husband's patriarchal conditioning (where the man feels he must appear above of

and control 'his' woman). Likewise, Kojder writes with a profound awareness of gender roles, though she takes the female role on very consciously and textually performs it in order to resist traditional, male-dominated values by bringing women's histories to the light and by empowering them. In my reading of *Marynia*, *Don't Cry* and *Song of Rita Joe*, I recognize that both authors agree on the importance of women's affiliations to the female community. 'Woman' becomes a category of interpretation in these texts, but while this concept's place in society is addressed, womanhood is taken on powerfully to recover a lost tradition of female strength, independence and parity. Kojder and Joe both depart "from the way women had been made to be by patriarchy" (Rivkin and Ryan 766).

Mothers and Daughters

As a woman, Apolonja Kojder naturally gravitates to the experiences of her female predecessors in order to learn more about her own self. Because I too oftentimes look towards my mother's and grandmothers' stories and life experiences, I can identify with Kojder's sentiments. Throughout her memoir, the author is very clear about foregrounding her grandmother's and mother's presence and their impact upon her own life and self-understanding. The author begins by constructing her family's female genealogy before she allows herself to materialize textually as a self or character within the narrative. Kojder structures her memoir in such a way to imply that she cannot exist without her female predecessors, upon whose lives, stories and heritage her sense of place and identity depend. In this sense, Kojder's self is structured relationally – that is, the author creates the impression that she cannot understand herself, past, present and future, without her connection to the stories and experiences of her great-grandmother Rozalia, grandmother Marja, and mother Helena. This psychological connection and relationality give Kojder her sense of purpose. Defining herself along the lines of her foremothers offers the author new values and relations that present a way out of patriarchy. Addressing patriarchal definitions of the female self, the author illustrates that by looking after her predecessors first and by silencing herself for most of her memoir, female identity is predicated upon connection to the female community rather than upon a separation from it: "Mothers and daughters could overcome seemingly insurmountable obstacles by supporting each other,"

she writes (31). Kojder writes against patriarchy by constructing mothering and the relations between mothers and daughters across time as a strength and a central relationship rather than as a mere biological destiny. The author takes charge of and gives the traditional conception of the female gender her own definition.

Kojder begins her memoir by describing her great-grandmother's life in the early twentieth century in Poland. Rozalia is portrayed as a strong, level-headed and bold woman whose daughters, granddaughters and great-granddaughters matched, in character, her own courage and independence. Being strongly rooted within her femininity, Rozalia is characterised as a woman who oftentimes felt angry at the insulting attitudes towards women that existed within Polish society during her lifetime (22). Rozalia is further described as someone who refused to accept the Polish priests' demands that wives must submit to their husbands (22). Kojder begins to establish a lineage of women who protested against patriarchal norms. The author brings the mother, grandmother and great-grandmother into the foreground, turning the 'others' from her familial past into the most intimate, familiar and significant figures in her self-development and identification. She writes, "I hadn't known my great-grandmother, Rozalia Stec, but ... I felt I had a sense of what kind of person she was" (130). Marja, Kojder's grandmother, is, for her part, characterized as "a very stabilizing force in our lives ... She had gone through so much in her life, but somehow managed to survive. She was a very strong woman" (Kojder 128). The author also presents her mother, Helena, as an equally level-headed, determined, intelligent and strong woman: "Mama was strong, spirited and determined. These were the qualities that were being promoted by the family" (132). Kojder describes her immigrant mother's determination to live up to the Canadian middle-class standard of living by taking it upon herself to study English long before the family's journey to North America ensues. Helena's fortitude to rise above adversity – such as during the family's forced migration to Siberia, subsequent stay in India towards the end of World War II, and finally adjustment to life in Canada – is very much highlighted by the author: "The other people in the tents [in India] laughed at [Helena's] determined efforts to learn English," writes Kojder, "but Helena ignored them. She wanted to make something of herself and be independent" (92). I feel that, under the surface structure of Kojder's narrative, there lives a "complex self-portrait that deconstructs the notion of 'heroine'" across the female line,

where Kojder's narrative strategy rejects "the tradition of female passivity [that has been conventionally] inscribed in the dominant scripts of her [and other women's] legacy" (Lionnet, *Autobiographical Voices* 25). In foregrounding her mother's story and agency against an old tradition of female meekness, Kojder uses her mother's legacy to achieve personal empowerment (129). Marianne Hirsch writes that the relations between women in families have been traditionally silenced or absent from "theology, art, sociology, and psychoanalysis, and [in] its centrality in women's lives" until the mid-1970s (201). Reflecting on the women's positive influences upon her, the author writes that, during her university years, the "stories that my foremothers had told all drew me in [the] direction ... [of] women's studies and ... ethnicity, both fields that captured my imagination" (133).

It may thus be argued that Kojder assumes "the feminine role deliberately [in her text]. Which means already to convert a form of subordination into an affirmation, and thus to begin to thwart it" (Irigaray 795). That is, Kojder assumes her feminine role to hinder and transform the story of women's 'natural' subordination by confirming women's strength and significance through the presentation of her foremother's powerful qualities. This way, the feminine in *Marynia, Don't Cry* makes visible "what was supposed to remain invisible" (Irigaray 795). Kojder writes, "I found that there was little encouragement for such values [of female independence and of a female support system as a method of survival] outside my family, either in writing or in the society at large" (132). The author's statement addresses not only the lack of attention that has been paid to women's stories in the twentieth century; it also transmits her awareness that she exists in a society that is still largely defined by patriarchal rules and values. To offset this reality, female histories and experiences are given precedence in Kojder's text.

Because Kojder inherits not only a heritage of strength but also a heritage of a painful past, she is fervent about speaking out about her grandmother's and mother's stories as women who survived Soviet labour camps in Siberia during World War II, and later, as struggling immigrants in Canada. The silent stories of women in Siberian camps have been generally inaccessible to scholars until the collapse of the strict communist regimes in Poland and the USSR (Jolluck xiii). Hence, both the Polish and Canadian reader would essentially have little knowledge about this part of history, especially as it

was experienced by women: “Researchers in the West, particularly Polish émigrés, devoted attention to the invasion of eastern Poland beginning in the early postwar years ... Civilian deportations [of Polish families to Siberia] did not receive sustained analysis” (Jolluck xii). Prior to as well as after the years spent in Siberia, the women in Kojder’s family have been largely dependent upon each other for survival, while their husbands and brothers often either immigrated to Canada early on (such as the author’s grandfather 17) or joined armies, such as the Polish Army. Kojder writes that her mother was

opposed to strong men going into the army while she was left behind ... She remembered how hard her grandmother and mother had had to struggle on their own after her father had left for Canada. The old familiar pattern was repeating itself. (77)

As a result, Kojder states that her grandmother “Marja was no stranger to the daily struggle of staying alive. It had taken all her strength and ingenuity to keep the family above the subsistence level” (54). Consequently, by structuring her selfhood upon the lives of her female predecessors, Kojder’s focus upon the feminine role in history and in her own life is both “socially compelled” as well as “ontologically necessitated” (Butler 908).

Kojder emphasizes and celebrates women’s unity by highlighting the fact that, when almost every woman in her family had gone through a traumatic crisis, their mothers were always there to help them in maintaining sanity and perseverance. Thus active in the face of their external circumstances, be they war or migration, the experiences of Kojder’s female predecessors convey to her a sense of faith, self-ability and endurance. She writes, “These stories inspired me, just as I’m sure they had those women who had come before me. The women in the stories were examples to emulate” (132). Kojder admits that the stories her mother, grandmother and father told her “nurtured and shaped” her (129), and through this relationality to her familial female community, “it told me that women could defy all odds and survive in the world and that I could do the same” (130). The repetition of her great-grandmother’s words, what Kojder clearly sees as these women’s mantra – “Marynia, don’t cry...” – repeated in times of crisis, functions as female empowerment and as a connection to these women’s shared past. Kojder characterizes the resilience

found in the female community as “an invisible legacy [inherited] from [her great-grandmother Rozalia]” (130). The author’s extensive description of the family’s survival struggles in Soviet Siberian camps adds a note of emotion. It was in a Siberian labour camp that Kojder’s fourteen-month-old sister, Apolonja Rozalia, died of fever (Kojder 47). The author links the deceased women in her family to highlight these women’s important, unbroken connectedness to her. To illustrate, as a young girl, the author often mourned for her deceased baby sister, wishing the latter had been there by her side to help her through hard times. She writes, “When I felt sorry for myself I’d think of my sister being dead and think that I was the most miserable creature on earth because she had been taken from me” (133). She continues, “The fact that my sister and I had the same first name tied me inextricably to the story of Siberia. That place became more real for me because a small child like me, who not only was my sister but also had my name, had suffered and died there” (133). This way, Kojder illustrates that history and female relations are inextricable from her self-understanding and self-definition. Learning valuable lessons even from her deceased sister, she writes, “Whenever I felt discouraged, the stories of Siberia always put things back in perspective. They also reaffirmed the value of life and pointed out that nothing should be taken for granted” (133).

However, the demanding nature of working towards a comfortable standard of living in Canada did distort the connectedness between mother and daughter. Kojder writes, “Sometimes I hardly saw [Mama] because she’d come home in the morning and go to sleep, or go to work in the afternoon and I’d be sleeping when she came home. She seemed to be working all the time” (116). The hint at a sense of separation between mother and daughter reveals that, while Helena gradually became more detached from the family’s Polish identity by submerging herself into Canadian friendships and preferring to speak English over Polish within the home (124), Kojder herself is responsible for maintaining the connection to her Polish heritage. That is, it becomes clear at this moment in the text that Kojder’s female heritage is instigated, collected, put into a whole and carried on by the author herself. However, although Kojder reveals here a profound sense of separation between her child self and her mother, she nonetheless works hard to weave a strong bond between herself, Helena, and the other women in her personal story. She thus maintains and organizes her identity around these female affiliations. Her connection

to her mother is revealed most importantly in the memoir's subtitle: *A Mother's Legacy*, as well as by the text's general, extensive focus upon the mother's life and her relationship to the author. The author would agree with Marianne Hirsch that the relations between mother and daughter are "the most formative relationship in the life of every woman" (200). Highlighting their bond, Kojder writes about asking her "mother to write about the family ... I knew it was painful for her to relive some of the past in writing her memoirs, but I knew I could depend on her" (131). Interviewing her aunt and mother for a graduate paper on the family's immigration to Canada, Kojder writes that, "Now I was beginning to see a connecting thread running through the generations," a thread of "the old female support system, of mother helping daughter to the best of her ability" (130-131). The cooperation between the author and her mother in the future writing of the family's memoir is a further testament to that legacy.

Kojder's text can be ultimately viewed as a reformulation of women's roles, and as a tribute to the women's stories and their impact on the author's personal world and influence upon her female identity. The author reconfigures the socially-created notions and values that have been traditionally placed on her gender and she projects this reformulated role in her work to generate a better notion of female subjectivity. In the words of Marianne Hirsch:

There can be no systematic and theoretical study of women in patriarchal culture, there can be no theory of women's oppression, that does not take into account woman's role as a ... daughter of mothers, that does not study female identity in relation to previous and subsequent generations of women. (202)

Marynia, Don't Cry is an encouragement for women to structure their sense of self along their own, affirmative lines. In addition, Kojder's text speaks to the value and importance of rewriting and including gender history across cultures and national borders. Because Kojder and her family become Canadians in the mid-twentieth century, the heritage they carry becomes in a sense transnational and comes to occupy a place in Canadian history itself. This is the message that Kojder's memoir intends to present. After all, Kojder does not encourage "primary allegiance" to herself (Bloom 292); rather, she encourages empathy for her foremothers as she tells and foregrounds their formerly

silenced history. She writes with a feeling that her life is spread across past generations. Rather than merely consult her own psyche, Kojder refers to the stories and memories of the women from her familial past in order to write a *métissage* of their conjoint life, heritage and values. By doing this, Kojder places importance upon and makes an inseparable connection between nations, genders and experiences and moulds them into a holistic narrative and sense of self.

Womanhood and Solidarity

Like many female autobiographies, Rita Joe's text pulsates with an "awareness ... of the cultural category WOMAN for the patterns of women's individual destiny" (Friedman in Neuman 218). In her text, Joe looks for ways to carve out her own destiny as a woman, one that does not ascribe to the direction pointed out by Western patriarchy. Joe's self-representation of her womanhood is written into the text in order to reconfigure Native women's sovereignty through the recovery of the indigenous female voice and agency.

Like Kojder, Joe inscribes the story and history of her family ("My brothers and sister did what they could to take care of me ... the closeness we shared stayed with us always" (35)) and of her people onto her self. Joe's text consistently highlights group consciousness: "in all Native communities, the people helped each other," the author writes (80). Joe states that the place to which she could turn to in order to share her joys and concerns in was the Native female community: "It is like living with an extended family," she writes (80), adding, "we women, by association, / Always stand together" (94). The Native community of women teaches Joe various things about Mi'kmaq culture: "I would ask women in the community for information" (108). Gathering information, Joe also spreads her own teachings to the "young girls of Eskasoni / Soon to be women" (109). With a strongly developed connection to women who go through various challenges on the reserve in Eskasoni, which Joe joins with her husband in 1956, Joe's sense of the importance of harmonious relations among females extends even to

those women who, knowingly or unknowingly, have hurt her: “Sometimes, I’d even try to work on the compassion of the women who took to my husband,” she writes (92).

When her husband Frank threatens to leave her, Joe confronts the white woman that he has his affair with. She writes, “I went after that woman and went into her home and pushed her up against a wall. I said, ‘I’ve got a baby and a house full of children, and you would take my husband?’” (106). Following her arrest for breaking and entering, Joe, as a woman who fights to keep her family together, is struck by the fact that she is offered no bail, which she explains as racism. She writes, “Why is there no bail? I did not commit murder. Are they trying to make me into an example?” (106). Yet Joe immediately feels ashamed of her actions against Frank’s mistress. In accordance with her values of maintaining peace, understanding and solidarity among all beings, Joe soon goes back to the woman to have “a serious talk with her,” she writes. Remarkably, Joe writes that, “I explained the situation, woman to woman, and that was more effective than the other way of doing things ... she became a friend instead” (107).

By highlighting female solidarity and its potentials, Joe encourages and espouses a place within which all women can absolve their mistakes, share stories, work together and rely on one another in true accord. She feels a natural affiliation to all women and seems to espouse the idea that, as bell hooks writes, “Women need to come together in situations where there will be ideological disagreement and work to change that interaction so communication occurs” (63). Women’s “solidarity [therefore has the power to] strengthen resistance” against sexism, injustice and common misunderstandings across sexes and cultures (hooks 63). The kind of harmony that Joe advocates can break down pre-conceived borders between groups of female individuals. That is, by highlighting the natural bonds among women and their ability to come to a mutual understanding, Joe may be said to resist what bell hooks calls “the male supremacist ideology” that teaches females to believe “that women are ‘natural’ enemies” (hooks 43). In other words, transcending social fabrications and misconceptions of womanhood, Joe’s text studies and presents the relations between women “outside of patriarchal conceptions” and highlights “the power and value [that female relations] hold in themselves” (Hirsch 222).

Befriending a white female anthropologist with whom Joe exchanges information about

the Mi'kmaq nation, the author emphasizes the importance of women working together. She calls this process their "song a landing place" (132). Joe's values of mutual support, forgiveness and reconciliation thus confirm the possibility of "transform[ing] society as a whole" (hooks 44), that is, to cease gender and cultural biases among women and to move towards reciprocal empathy and cooperation.

The fact that women can and should rely on each other for mutual understanding and survival in good and bad times is similarly echoed in Kojder's work. Although Kojder is more focused on her familial lineage, Joe concentrates on a workable solidarity between all women, no matter their cultural background. Importantly, to rise above patriarchy, Joe does not focus her energy on maintaining solidarity only with her own gender. Rather, she also insists on equality, respect and support between women and men. For example, she works very hard on her marriage, and, after many painful years, succeeds by gaining her husband's total devotion. Writing about the destructive legacies of colonialism in the lives of Native women and men ("in some circumstances it is no longer the descendants of the European settlers that oppress us, but it is Aboriginal men in our communities who now fulfill this role," writes Monture-Angus (229)), Joe illustrates the painful gender imbalance and physical abuse she suffers at the hands of her husband, Frank, who takes to alcohol and violence against his wife during most of their married life. Joe writes that "I was a battered woman for many years" (73). Monture-Angus writes that "many Aboriginal women move from the violence of our childhoods ... to violent relationships with men ... Violence ... *is* our lives. And it is in our histories" (170). Without excluding the experience of violence as a foster child, residential school inmate and later wife, some of the negative experiences that Joe faces are the many seemingly powerless moments of submission in her relationship with Frank. Commenting on their power relations, Joe writes:

Frank did not want me to keep [her baby by her first partner]. I loved my son, but I also loved Frank blindly. I did what he asked me to do: I took Bobby to my sister Annabel, who found a good home for him ... the empty feeling I experienced inside me cannot be described. (75)

While Joe remarks with honesty that, early in their marriage, she "jumped to do whatever [Frank] wanted [her] to do" (75-6), she does not elaborate on these

uncomfortable experiences extensively. Joe's silence about these moments in married life shows just how deeply the effects of colonialism and patriarchy run. Monture-Angus writes that she understands Aboriginal women's silence on coercion in the home "as an expression of helplessness – helplessness learned through colonialism and oppression" (172). However, Joe does not fail to speak out about her turbulent marriage and about her belief in the need to transcend this unjust situation of submission and aggression. Though she decides to provide no extensive commentaries on her painful experiences, she does expose the problem of violence both within her own and in her daughters' marriages, a problem which, as Monture-Angus says, is "a crisis at the community level" (171). Joe illustrates her agency to end violence in the Aboriginal home by beginning to speak openly about Frank's beatings within their Native community, so as to create "peer pressure for the abuser to stop" (92). By talking about her experiences, Joe also hopes to eliminate the negative impact of Western patriarchal values on Native men. She ultimately exposes the large problem of disrespect and violence in the hopes of healing the victims and aggressors, and in the hopes of eliminating these issues altogether.

Writing about her husband's desire to outdo his wife's literary successes by attaining a Bachelors degree, Frank admits to having taken on this sudden ambition because he "wanted to be better than [his wife]," he tells Joe. Startled, Joe responds: "That shocked me ... I wanted him to know that he was on the same level as me. I wanted that so badly because it is a part of traditional Native belief" (126). As a Mi'kmaq woman, it is important for Joe to live out the traditional, Native beliefs of gender equality. I also feel that Joe illustrates here the importance of moving beyond insecurities and gender imbalances that have been placed upon her people by the old colonial system, whose patriarchal values continue to live on in many Mi'kmaq men and women. After proving herself as a consistently strong, independent and devoted wife, mother and accomplished writer, Joe inspires her husband Frank to, years later, "cut out drinking altogether ... He was so good to me, forever telling me of his sorrow for his actions ... in the earlier part of our marriage," she writes (125). The longer Joe is married to Frank, the more she begins to take charge of her life and the stability of their difficult marriage. She does not fail to give up on Frank due to her submission; rather, she decides to stay with him because she believes that all men and women can be positively transformed once they recognize their

socially-constructed inner demons. By gradually learning to eliminate the elements of colonization and patriarchy that live in her, Joe's exemplary life of valuing herself, having faith, compassion, dedication and surviving adversity positively affects and thereby transforms others and alleviates their own pain.

Joe's strong belief in the respect between a woman and a man affects her own daughters who eventually decide to end their abusive marriages after watching and admiring the strength and changes within their mother and her marriage (126). It is true that Joe uses herself "like a book with no cover" (167), living her life as an example of her values, inspiring other women in her writing, and convincing them "that they could do even better" (166). By writing about the physicality of her experiences, the author is able to ground "culture in the body" (Lionnet, *Autobiographical Voices* 33). For Joe, "self-writing becomes self-invention" (Lionnet, *Autobiographical Voices* 33), and through the healing and empowering aspect of writing and constructing herself into the strong and kind person she knows she is, Joe also reconstructs the self-image that the young women and men of the Mi'kmaq nation have of themselves. Writing about the physicality of her experiences and knowing that gender is a role imposed on her by greater society, Joe defines herself as a woman who makes the choice to find significance in her womanhood and to apply positive values to her understanding, configuration and enactment of the female gender role. Ultimately, Joe's autobiography illustrates powerfully "the memory of an orphan child, picking herself up from the misery of being nobody, moving little grains of sand until she could talk" about being a powerful Mi'kmaq woman within greater Canadian society (169).

Female Identity in Summation

Considering the representations of female identity, it becomes clear to me that Apolonja Kojder presents a less individual and a more relational self in her memoir. Conversely, Rita Joe's self-representation maintains a strict balance between individuation and relationality. The immediate differences here can be pinpointed to the generic variations found in these two texts – the memoir recounts a family's life as well as the

individual's, while the autobiography reflects a self's journey and development in time. However, a more complex explanation of difference between these two texts can be seen through their diverse contexts – while Kojder is a woman intent on foregrounding a feminine perspective of family history and of the need to redress ethnic and historical omissions of female experiences, Joe is a woman who writes her life as an example of the possibility of transforming self-conceptions, social norms and bridging gaps, as well as a voice for hope and inspiration to all her readers. However, both women are, undeniably, “by virtue of culture and gender ... multiply relational subjects” (Wong, First-Person Plural 169-170). Yet, while some scholars argue that “Native women often feel obligated to insist on Native over female identity” (Wong, First-Person Plural 170), while white women often prioritize femininity over culture, *Marynia*, *Don't Cry* and *Song of Rita Joe* seem to reverse this concept. While Polish-Canadian writer Kojder is more interested in recounting the events of her foremother's lives to partly show the reader how she has become what she is, Joe, on the other hand, chooses neither position – Mi'kmaq identity or womanhood – over the other. In Kojder, femininity is definitely the driving force in her memoir, more so than in Joe's case. Conversely, Joe represents herself as an individual who values her independence, though she never forsakes her dependence on her Mi'kmaq female community for grounding her in her sense of self. Still, despite these slight differences, both texts are representative of what Wong would call “nonoppositional relationality” (First-Person Plural 170); that is, identities that resist binary oppositions (individualism versus relationality) by incorporating what autobiography would traditionally see as competing or alternative aspects of the self. That is, both Kojder and Joe insist that the individual cannot exist apart from her womanhood, culture and history. Employing the practice of *métissage* as such, Kojder's and Joe's respective autobiographical texts clearly represent their third layer of selfhood, female subjectivity, as a “political strategy for ... survival and personal identity” (Wong, First-Person Plural 171).

CHAPTER V: Conclusion and Recommendations for Further Work

While critics describe the twentieth century as “the age of migration,” they also state that, in our highly globalized world, “more and more national groups throughout the world mobilize and assert their identity” (Kymlicka 193). Both ethnic and national groups effectively challenge various socio-political norms “by a new ‘politics of cultural difference’” (Kymlicka 193). While the impact and experience of immigration has been described in Apolonja Kojder’s memoir, Rita Joe’s autobiography spoke to the circumstances of national groups, such as the Mi’kmaq. In this paper, it was my hope to give readers a glimpse into the cultural world of Canada’s minority citizens.

The marginalization of ethnic, national and female experiences within Canada’s majority culture was effectively challenged by Apolonja Kojder’s and Rita Joe’s two texts. I have shown that by asking for greater acceptance of cultural and national differences, the two authors work towards the creation of a much more “tolerant and inclusive democracy” in Canada, to use Kymlicka’s words (19). I feel that these two personal narratives could be looked at as resistance literatures (Barbara Harlow’s work would be an important source), and that in further analysis, these texts could be approached more broadly from that perspective. I would suggest that the role of agency could be studied as well. What could be valuable here are Louis Althusser’s theories on the role of ideology in shaping an individual’s identity. While Althusser discusses people’s participation in their own subjection in society, I think that it would be important to discuss from this point onwards the writer’s agency and resistance against the system’s interpellation or subjection of the self. Other theorists could be vital additions to the topic of agency and resistance. For instance, the manipulation of the creative space for the purpose of resisting a dominant system is discussed by Michel de Certeau, while Francois Lyotard discusses the use of language as a countermovement that has the power to create new subjects and societies. Many of these notions run through Kojder’s and Joe’s texts.

Kymlicka writes that “minority rights are central to the future of the liberal tradition throughout the world” (194). I feel that Kojder’s and Joe’s books capture his sentiments precisely as they both seek, for their communities, to feel a part of “the larger political community [that they all] cohabit” (Kymlicka 13). Sadly, even in the twenty-first

century “white supremacist values” are still prevalent in Canadian society, Bonita Lawrence writes (173). For instance, negative values work “in numerous ways on the identities of urban Native people [by] devaluing the humanity and narrowing the options of the dark-skinned individuals and rendering ‘inauthentic’ the Indianness of those with light skin” (Lawrence 173-174). Likewise, in his discussion on writers from a minority European ethnic background (that is, non-British and non-French, a group that Kojder falls into), Enoch Padolsky comments that:

many European-Canadian ethnic minority writers still seem to be conscious of issues of dominance because the bi-national framework to the Canadian national discourse still frames their Canadian minority ethnicity ... in many cases both pre- and post-immigration experiences of disempowerment continue to reverberate ... [where] experiences of identity are closely linked with issues of dominant power. (26)

I have learned that, as Kojder’s and Joe’s texts imply, Canada does not yet fully exemplify ideals of total cultural tolerance and freedom, especially since, as Daniel Coleman writes, “the heights of anti-racist protests” occurred in Canada just in the late 1980s and early 1990s, “when Black, Native, and Asian Canadian writers were protesting their continued marginalization in the Canadian arts scene despite the inclusive-sounding directives that had recently been made official in the Multiculturalism Act of 1988” (3). I feel that the invisible minorities can be included in the above statement (such as the literary works of Brandt, Kostash, Kulyk Keefer and Van Herk). After all, Kojder’s memoir is written at the close of these protests – namely, in 1995.

The fact that both the ethnic group, which Kojder represents, and the national group, which Joe represents, work to redress and challenge the status quo of Canada’s dominant attitudes and institutions points to the possibility of minority groups forging alliances to achieve their generally common goals of socio-cultural justice. I do believe that political alliances would be fruitful in the task of forging greater cultural and national liberties in Canada. Yet this is a topic that deserves further investigation which was beyond this paper’s scope. The questions that I would like to see explored and answered are as follows: How can ethnic minorities form alliances with Aboriginal communities to

work towards achieving greater tolerance and social participation in Canada? What are Aboriginal people's attitudes about making alliances with other marginalized communities? And what are the attitudes of ethnic communities of joining cause with Canada's First Nations? Have any ethnic and national communities attempted this before, and what has been the result? If not, what outcome could be expected? How do Canadian institutions react? Clearly, these questions require extensive research and analysis.

Another interesting and important question, with respect to Kojder's and Joe's texts, is whether immigrants in Canada do or should have ethical responsibilities in regards to the oppression of the First Nations people. Scholars write that, even as late as in the year 2004, UN investigators concluded that "Canada has not developed an effective 'intellectual and ethical strategy' for disseminating inclusive and anti-racist values throughout the country" (Coleman 8). Knowing this, my brief personal opinion on this matter is that new immigrants to Canada do have a responsibility to participate in the abolishment of the Aboriginal people's continued social marginalization. The question to ask is: How can immigrants get involved on a practical level and move beyond the required expressions of genuine respect and understanding of the First Nations situation? I would like to know how immigrants and ethnic groups can become active on a large scale in the elimination of the remnants of colonialism. It is my belief that old and new immigrants are settlers of the Canadian lands that have originally belonged to the First Nations, and, by default, that these newcomers should understand history and live in a way that does not impeach on or destroy Aboriginal rights, lands and identities. As an immigrant myself, this is how I feel about the issue. But as a new Canadian, I also feel that greater Canadian society has the same ethical responsibilities to its First Nations people. We are all inheritors of the past and engineers of the future, and therefore, ethical responsibility lies on every Canadian's shoulders. Likewise, I feel that Aboriginal communities too have a responsibility to work towards ending external and internal colonization. This is what Rita Joe writes about. I have a feeling that the best way to achieve these goals is to encourage the ethnic, immigrant, national and mainstream communities to work together and alongside the First Nations people. Importantly, Joe's autobiography heralds this vision and calls all readers and communities to begin this process of mutual emancipation.

A larger study could indeed develop many of my points further, and add much more content and analysis to Kojder's and Joe's narratives. Further analysis could expand on the ways that Native communities have or would respond to Rita Joe's approach to the issues that her text raises and to her generally positive outlook on the future of Native-Canadian relations. The same analysis could be done by looking at the Polish community's response to Kojder's text, specifically with respect to her privileging of acculturation over assimilation. A comparison between her second-generation status to that of other second-generation Polish-Canadians would also be compelling. More research should be done on how deeply connected the second generation feels to its Polish roots and heritage. Is the old world easily forgotten in the face of modernity – that is, in the face of a growing absence of master narratives and in the expansion of current values of materialism, career ambitions, and so forth? I know of only one historian, Magdalena Blackmore, who is currently doing a study on this topic in Saskatchewan – that is, in Apolonja Kojder's home province. The challenge in doing such a comparison may lie in the limitations that the lack of scholarly or historical work on this topic presents. Likewise, very little critical work has been done on Kojder's memoir. There has been nothing written beyond Mark Wegierski's article on her book. I feel that I have detected a large vacuum in terms of both autobiographical and scholarly work on Polish women's immigrant experiences in Canada, and it is a vacuum that is calling to be filled. As I analyzed Kojder's text – whether I studied her ethnic, linguistic or feminine identity – I had to almost solely rely on texts that did not directly speak of the Polish-Canadian experience. Most Polish-Canadian historical works focused very little on familial and individual experiences, so they were only illuminating sources for fact-finding and for understanding general contexts. The same can be said for my study of Rita Joe's text. Very little critical attention has been paid to *Song of Rita Joe*. Subsequently, I have only been able to work with Ben McKegney's article on Joe's autobiography.

I must also admit that it was sometimes frustratingly hard for me to choose from the small number of autobiographies and memoirs that have been written by Polish-Canadian immigrant women and Native-Canadian women. The most widely known text written by a Polish immigrant who began her life as a young girl in Canada is the memoir written by Eva Hoffman, *Lost in Translation*, a text that I very much identify with. Yet

while I was drawn to Hoffman's book, I hesitated to take her up for my thesis project because, first of all, critics have done an extensive and exhaustive amount of work on her text, and secondly, Hoffman cannot be characterized as a Canadian writer. I was very intent on presenting the Canadian experience in my paper. Consequently, I like to look at Hoffman as a perfectly transnational writer, who is as much Polish as she is Canadian and American, although she is, perhaps, American most of all. In effect, I was and still am quite shocked at how little work has been produced by Polish female immigrants to Canada, compared to the rich work that has been done in the United States. Why are Polish-Canadian women so timid about taking up the pen to compose their memoirs? I may allow myself to say the same about Canadian First Nations female autobiographies, although Aboriginal-Canadian women have published much more compared to Polish-Canadian women. It was somewhat challenging to find an 'appropriate' First Nations text, and by 'appropriate' I mean one that, once again, has not been exhaustingly criticized. Maria Campbell's memoir, *Halfbreed*, is such a heavily worked-on text, one which I have also seriously considered for this paper. Furthermore, it was not easy for me to find a First Nations autobiography that has not been mediated by someone else's voice. I am aware of Lynn Henry's potentially problematic assistance in the writing of Joe's autobiography, as it raises numerous issues related to the nature of life writing narratives of collaborative authorship. However, the limited scope of this essay simply could not allow for a discussion on this broad and important subject. Joe's autobiography seems to retain and transmit her original voice, though to which degree precisely I cannot be certain. I feel very happy that I have been able to find *Song of Rita Joe* and *Marynia, Don't Cry* – one by pure accident (Joe's text) and the other by word of mouth (Kojder's book). I feel the two texts complement each other very well, especially in their similarities.

My goal was to present and to bring to light two works by two authors who really operate from the peripheries of Canadian society. Having focused my energies on these two texts, I hope that my project will somehow open up the field of Canadian minority life writing more and encourage others to write about both their personal experiences as minorities within the Canadian landscape, as well as to write critically about the life writings and oral histories that do or will one day exist. Because, from my perspective, the Canadian literary and scholarly environments seem to celebrate and even cling on to

certain, specifically chosen celebrity minority writers (such as Michael Ondaatje), it is vital to continue developing the area by studying lesser-known authors. Though the study of Canadian minority literature is becoming increasingly popular, and though studies on minority life writing have gained some force in the last few years in Canada, minority life writings still constitute a small field that I feel is waiting for ripeness and for the picking. While I was writing this paper, I worked with several valuable articles that I found within various, jointly mainstream and multicultural collections, though I was unable to find any critical book that is yet solely devoted to the topic of Canadian minority life writing narratives. While *Literary Pluralities* holds some articles on minority life writing in Canada, both on immigrant and Aboriginal works, I have been able to locate an additional text, published in 2004, that deals with minority experiences, entitled *Adjacencies: Minority Writing in Canada*, edited by Beneveti, Canton and Moyes. In it, about two or three papers discuss the construction of immigrant identity, where one, Julie Rak's article, deals with identity in a diary, and another discusses Ondaatje's cultural diversity. Another text that includes a few articles on immigrant and indigenous life writings is *Tracing the Autobiographical*, edited by Kadar, Warley, Perreault and Egan, and published in 2005. It contains two critical articles, one by Suzack and one by Crowe, on Aboriginal life stories, and one, by Egan, on exile in the Canadian immigrant life writings of Daphne Marlatt. These are of course some examples and do not represent other texts that do or may exist in this area. As a result, further work on the personal narratives of Canadian minority writers would complement the field by developing its critical discussion on life writing, nation, identity, power, diversity, 'othering,' as well as on politics, dialogue, respect, solutions and social transformation. I feel that the field of autobiography holds the potential to attend to these issues, and that my paper has helped address these concerns and expand life writing scholarship through the comparison of the Polish- and Native-Canadian experiences to each other.

My use of Francoise Lionnet's reading strategy, *métissage*, could be more expanded upon in a larger project. Specifically, the question could be asked whether Aboriginal communities in general would agree with the concept and applicability of this term to their particular concerns. Because this question is very broad and political, and because it would inevitably take me a bit outside of the direct consideration of Rita Joe's

text, I was unable to address this concern. All I can say at this point is that many Aboriginal communities would argue for an authentic and essential identity. Scholars write that “affiliations with multiple communities occasionally cause [hybrid or mix-blood Aboriginal people] to be viewed [by Native communities] with some distrust” (Lawrence 188). Some First Nations hold that “Native identity [is] a relatively homogenous essence” (Lawrence 189). Rita Joe, in my reading of her autobiography, accepts the idea of an essential, cultural selfhood for herself and her people. Yet, at the same time, she tries to show that racial groups mix throughout history and that, as human beings, we are all innately the same, and deserve to coexist both as a collective group of citizens and as culturally unique individuals and communities. I used the term *métissage* to identify Joe’s literary strategy of hybridizing Aboriginal and mainstream Canadian histories and societies. Joe’s textual engagement with *métissage* does not insinuate the erasure of cultural differences; rather, it enhances diversity. In fact, Lawrence writes that:

Asserting hybridity is extremely important in [Aboriginal people’s] abilities to identify as Native people ... On a practical basis, for individuals to see their identities as hybrid is to allow their individual identities their diversity and specificity without dismissing them as *Native* identities. (188)

I feel that this statement applies to Joe’s text. On a similar note, Kojder’s memoir presents the author as a hybrid individual, both Polish and Canadian, though she takes care to present herself as Polish first, Canadian second. Hybridity in this sense is viewed by both Joe and Kojder as a strength. Even though the two authors present, in their own unique ways, the relations between their cultures and mainstream Canadian culture and history, they are very clear about their differences and distinctiveness. I am satisfied with the application of and search for elements of *métissage* in my readings of *Marynia*, *Don’t Cry* and *Song of Rita Joe*. I feel that the concept provided me with a theoretical model for the themes and observations I have been teasing out during my reading of these texts.

Because scholars tell us that “Identity ... is primarily about how history is interpreted and negotiated and about who has the authority to determine a group’s identity or authenticity” (Lawrence 6), I have learned how important it is to tell our own stories and to persuade others to accept, accommodate, and respect our self-representations and

cultural diversity. Through my comparison of the construction and negotiation of cultural identities in Kojder's *Marynia*, *Don't Cry* and Joe's *Song of Rita Joe*, I have learned that identity is dynamic, fluid, multiple and contingent. I now know how history, families, communities, institutions and events have contributed to the process of becoming an individual. As Apolonja Kojder's and Rita Joe's texts show, cultural selfhood is liquid and constantly re-constructed as it exists in tension with the dominant, historical (mis)constructions of a people's identity. In the words of Stuart Hall:

Perhaps instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact, which the new cultural practices then represent, we should think instead of identity as a 'production,' which is never complete, always in process and always constituted within, not outside representation. (222)

With this paper, I hoped to induce readers to re-examine the current ways of thinking about ethnic and national groups and identities.

My thesis has expanded the view of Canada and of what it means to be part-Canadian. By completing my project, I have come to see that identities that are related to ethnicity, nationality, language and gender have an impact not only on a minority writer's life experiences but on the practical, social relationships that these writers and their communities experience on a regular basis. Overlooked voices often have the most profound, provocative and enriching perspectives, which may not be necessarily espoused by the dominant center. To be sure, Kojder's and Joe's books hold a tremendous potential for social transformation. And in order to understand Canada in its fullest sense, its peripheries must be comprehended just as thoroughly and well as its center. I am convinced that *Marynia*, *Don't Cry* and *Song of Rita Joe* succeed in illuminating the Canadian socio- cultural and political environment.

During the writing of chapter three, it was my goal to create greater consciousness on the language we use to describe ourselves and others, and to recognize the power that words have to create and destroy existing realities. Some of society's frames of reference, or perspectives in other words, must be altered, so that the term 'minority' may not be used to enforce socio-political marginalization, for instance (James 6). Because power

relations dominate societies, it is essential to analyze those attitudes and relations that are inherent in our own society. This paper's examination of linguistic identity aimed to bring across the value and necessity of using inclusive, positive and non-biased language. Ultimately, I wanted to learn how minority writers make an effort to draw readers into their world and into our mutually-dependent identities and realities. When I began this paper, I felt that personal narratives could offer that insight the best due to their open and personal nature, and I have not been proven wrong.

As I wrote chapter four, my thoughts circulated around the idea of applying psychoanalytical theory to analyze the ways in which Kojder presents her female identity in relation to her mother, Helena. I feel that a Lacanian reading would have been very useful here, and that it should be approached in a larger essay. While Lacan's psychoanalytical theory on identity formation focuses on individuation and on the child's inevitable separation from the mother, Kojder's text, importantly, focuses on the opposite, that is, on the daughter's close relation to her mother for the female author's self-development and identification. Helena is presented as an intimate and important source for Kojder's sense of self; she is not the Lacanian, distant 'Other.' With this approach to the text, one could investigate whether Kojder could be said to write against patriarchal notions of the innate separation between mothers and daughters. Further, a discussion on what distinguishes Polish women from other women in other cultures would be interesting to me, as presented in Kojder's text. A more developed discussion could also be taken up on the position of strength and respect that women have traditionally held and commanded in Polish families and literature. This could be a good reference point in looking at Kojder's own illustration of Polish femininity in Canada. On another note, in terms of Joe's autobiography and her experience of the world as a Mi'kmaq woman, I feel that more could be done on the state of Aboriginal women's experiences of and within Canada. I originally intended to work more extensively with Patricia Monture-Angus's text, *Thunder in My Soul*, to discuss her historical, legal and personal observations about the patriarchal marginalization of Native women. Sexist marginalization was legally enforced by the Indian Act. The fact that First Nations women who married a non-Aboriginal man automatically lost their Native status, or that they were thereby unable to own a home on a reserve, resulted in the oppression of Native women not just by mainstream society but

also by Native men. “This,” writes Monture-Angus, “is an indication that the colonized have accepted their colonization” (135). The important topic of internal colonization in Native male-female relations could be further expanded upon. Joe’s marriage relations, as presented in her text, offer a powerful example of these issues, and of the author’s will to transcend them. Finally, the purpose of writing about female identity was intended to show that, for women, culture, history and greater society will always be experienced through the awareness of being a woman who belongs to a distinct community, that is, the female community.

Apolonja Kojder’s memoir has compelled me to ask essential questions about my cultural community as well as identity. I find myself trying to reconcile the old homeland I knew – which is now the imagined homeland – with the homeland I find when I go back physically. Poland has evolved into a still-familiar place that I am deeply connected to but within which I have begun to feel somewhat like a suspended, hovering visitor. Further, thanks to Rita Joe’s autobiography, I look upon Canada’s social relations with new eyes, and I have a greater understanding of the issues that First Nations have been facing and continue to face. Most of all, Joe’s text has ingrained within me a profound respect for the history, traditions, spirituality and social problems that run through Aboriginal communities. I feel that through this project I wanted to learn what other women underwent as immigrants and minorities, how they maintained their cultural and linguistic identities, and how they found themselves within and fit themselves into the Canadian multicultural mosaic. As a Polish settler in Canada, I have carried here the history of a country and nation that has been characterized by its own 123-year long non-existence due to foreign invasions, partitions and colonisations by Poland’s three neighbours (Austria, Prussia and Russia). As a student, ethnic woman and new Canadian, I feel that these texts have served as a source of empowerment for me. I am the recipient of the responsibility to raise awareness of Canada’s minority issues and to see myself within them.

Although I spoke of similarities and differences between Kojder’s and Joe’s texts, I have aimed to compare them in order to recognize the commonalities between these and other minority and national groups. My goal has been to instigate understanding and respect, and to propel discussion about the nature of Canadianness and multiculturalism in

Canada. By understanding individual life experiences, readers can become aware of the general social structures, its exclusionary practices, subjective world views and the power of life histories to transform these concerns. During my work, I have learned that by speaking out about our personal stories, we can affect the listeners and, through them, greater society and its realities at large. I hope that by having compared Kojder and Joe, I was able to create a space within which the ethnic, national and mainstream groups can learn to know each other better. Perhaps my paper may help transform our attitudes and ways of interacting with each other. By bringing the Polish and Native communities together, I wished to illustrate that, despite our valuable cultural diversities, we are all socially interconnected and are more alike than different. It has been my aim to make clear that the instigation of awareness leads to the end of biases and opens up the possibility of “healthy and harmonious relations” (James 4).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abraham, George. "Coming to Terms." *Canadian Immigrant* 5.7 (July 2008): 42.
- Akiwenzie-Damm, Kateri. "We Belong to This Land: A View of 'Cultural Difference'." *Literary Pluralities*. Ed. Christl Verduyn. Toronto: Broadview Press Ltd. 84-91.
- Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin. *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies*. London: Routledge, 1998.
- Bammer, Angelika. "Mother Tongues and Other Strangers: Writing 'Family' Across Cultural Divides." *Displacements: Cultural Identities in Question*. Ed. Angelika Bammer. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994. 90-109.
- Barnard, Elissa. "Rita Joe, poet, 75 – Voice of Nova Scotia's Mi'kmaq dies of Parkinson's disease." *Danielnpaul.com*. Daniel N. Paul., 25 Mar. 2007. Web. 9 June 2008. <<http://www.danielnpaul.com/RitaJoe-RenownedMi'kmaqPoet.html>>
- Beauregard, Guy. "The Emergence of Asian-Canadian Literature." *ECW* 67 (Spring 1999): 1-7.
- Bloom, Lynn Z. "Heritages: Dimensions of Mother-Daughter Relations in Women's Autobiographies." *The Lost Tradition: Mothers and Daughters in Literature*. Eds. Cathy N. Davidson and E. M. Broner. New York: F. Ungar Pub. Co., 1980. 291-303.
- Buss, Helen M. "Canadian Women's Autobiography: Some Critical Directions." *A Mazing Space. Writing Canadian Women Writing*. Eds. Shirley Neuman and Smaro Kamboureli. Edmonton: Longspoon/NeWest Press, 1986. 154-164.
- . *Mapping Ourselves: Canadian Women's Autobiography in English*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993.
- Butler, Judith. "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution." *Literary Theory: An Anthology*. Eds. Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan. Malden and Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2005. 900-911.
- Carr, Helen. "Poetic License." *From My Guy to Sci-Fi: Genre and Women's Writings in the Postmodern World*. Ed. Helen Carr. Pandora Press, 1989. 135-162.
- . "In Other Words: Native American Women's Autobiography." *Life/Lines: Theorizing Women's Autobiography*. Bella Brodzki and Celeste Schenck, eds. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988. 131-153.
- Cohen, Robin. *Global Diasporas: An Introduction*. London: UCL Press, 1997.

- Coleman, Daniel. *White Civility: The Literary Project of English Canada*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006.
- Cronin, Michael. *Translation and Identity*. London and New York: Routledge, 2006.
- Dancygier, Barbara. "Proper Names in Discourse: Modification and Constructional Blends." *Language in Action*. Ed. Seana Coulson. Stanford: CSLI Publications, to appear 2008.
- Emberley, Julia V. *Thresholds of Difference: Feminist Critique, Native Women's Writings, Postcolonial Theory*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993.
- Fee, Margery. "Who Can Write as Other?" *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*. Eds. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin. London and New York: Routledge, 1995. 242-245.
- Fillmore, Charles J. "Frame Semantics." *Linguistics in the Morning Calm*. Ed. The Linguistic Society of Korea. Seoul: Hanshin Publishing Co., 1982. 111-137.
- Fish, Lydia. "Is the Pope Polish? Some Notes on the Polack Joke in Transition." *Journal of American Folklore* 93 (1980): 219-222.
- Gasyna, George Z. "Inscribing Otherness: Polish-American Writers after the Great Divide." *Living in Translation: Polish Writers in America*. Ed. Halina Stephan. New York: Rodopi, 2003. 331-379.
- George, Rosemary Marangoly. *The Politics of Home: Postcolonial Relocations and Twentieth-Century Fiction*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- Glick, Nina Schiller, Linda Basch and Cristina Szanton Blanc. "From Immigrant to Transmigrant: Theorizing Transnational Migration." *Anthropological Quarterly* 68.1 (Jan. 1995): 48-63.
- Godard, Barbara. "The Politics of Representation: Some Native Canadian Women Writers." *Native Writers and Canadian Writing*. Ed. W.H. New. Vancouver: UBC Press, 1990. 183-229.
- . "Voicing Difference: The Literary Production of Native Women." *A Mazing Space. Writing Canadian Women Writing*. Eds. Shirley Neuman and Smaro Kamboureli. Edmonton: Longspoon/NeWest Press, 1986. 87-107.
- Grant, Agnes. "Contemporary Native Women's Voices in Literature." *Native Writers and Canadian Writing*. Ed. W.H. New. Vancouver: UBC Press, 1990. 124-133.

- Grewal, Inderpal. "Autobiographic Subjects and Diasporic Locations: Meatless Days and Borderlands." *Scattered Hegemonies: Postmodernity and Transnational Feminist Practices*. Eds. Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994. 231-251.
- Hall, Stuart. "Cultural Identity and Diaspora." *Transatlantic Literary Studies: A Reader*. Eds. Susan Manning and Andrew Taylor. Edinburgh: Edinburgh U.P., 2007. 131-138.
- Harlow, Barbara. *Resistance Literature*. New York: Methuen, 1987.
- Hernandez-Avila, Ines. "Relocations upon Relocations: Home, Language and Native American Women's Writings." *Reading Native American Women: Critical/Creative Representations*. Ed. Ines Hernandez-Avila. Lanham: AltaMira Press, 2005. 171-188.
- Heydenkorn, Benedykt. "Through a Prism of Memoirs." *A Community in Transition: The Polish Group in Canada*. Ed. Benedykt Heydenkorn. Toronto: Canadian Polish Research Institute, 1985. 249-257.
- Hirsch, Marianne. "Mothers and Daughters." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 7.1 (Autumn 1981): 200-222.
- Hoerder, Dirk. *Creating Societies: Immigrant Lives in Canada*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999.
- hooks, bell. *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*. Boston: South End Press, 2000.
- Huggan, Graham. *The Post-Colonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins*. New York: Routledge, 2001.
- Irigaray, Luce. "The Power of Discourse and the Subordination of the Feminine." *Literary Theory: An Anthology*. Eds. Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan. Malden and Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2005. 795-798.
- James, Carl E. "Introduction: Encounters in Race, Ethnicity and Language." *Talking About Identity: Encounters in Race, Ethnicity and Language*. Eds. Carl E. James and Adrienne Shadd. Toronto: Between the Lines, 2001. 1-7.
- Jaroszynska-Kirchmann, Anna D. *The Exile Mission: The Polish Political Diaspora and Polish Americans, 1939-1956*. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2004.
- Joe, Rita. *Song of Rita Joe: Autobiography of a Mi'kmaq Poet*. Charlottetown: Ragweed Press, 1996.

- Jolluck, Katherine R. *Exile and Identity: Polish Women in the Soviet Union during World War II*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2002.
- Jurkusz-Tomaszewska, Jadwiga. "Polish Writers in Canada." *Polonia of Tomorrow*. Eds. Teresa Kott and Jerzy A. Wojciechowski. Toronto: Canadian Polish Congress, 1972. 201-205.
- Kambourelli, Smaro. *Making a Difference: Canadian Multicultural Literature*. Toronto and New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.
- . *Scandalous Bodies: Diasporic Literatures in English Canada*. Don Mills, Ontario: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Karpinski, Eva C. "Multicultural 'Gift(s)': Immigrant Women's Life Writing and the Politics of Anthologizing Difference." *Literary Pluralities*. Ed. Christl Verduyn. Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press Ltd., 1998. 111-124.
- . "Tracing the Autobiographical/Auto/biography in Canada: Critical Directions." *Letters in Canada* 76.1 (Winter 2007): 323-327.
- Kojder, Apolonja Maria. *Marynia, Don't Cry: A Mother's Legacy*. North York: University of Ontario Press, 1995.
- Kremer, Jurgen W. "Ethnoautobiography as Practice of Radical Presence. Storying the Self in Participatory Visions." *ReVision* 25.2 (Fall 2003): 5-13.
- Kulyk, Janice Keefer. "'The Sacredness of Bridges': Writing Immigrant Experience." *Literary Pluralities*. Ed. Christl Verduyn. Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press Ltd., 1998. 97-110.
- Kymlicka, Will. *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.
- Lawrence, Bonita. *"Real" Indians and Others: Mixed-Blood Urban Native Peoples and Indigenous Nationhood*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004.
- Lionnet, Francoise. *Autobiographical Voices: Race, Gender, Self-Portraiture*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1989.
- . *Postcolonial Representations: Women, Literature, Identity*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1995.
- Lipski, John M. "Prejudice and Pronunciation." *American Speech* 51.1/2 (Spring-Summer 1976): 109-118.

- Lutz, Hartmut. "Rita Joe." *Contemporary Challenges: Conversations with Canadian Native Authors*. Saskatoon: Fifth House, 1991. 241-264.
- McCall, Sophie. "The Forty-Ninth Parallel and Other Borders: Recent Directions in Native American Literary Criticism." *Canadian Review of American Studies* 2.34 (2004): 205-220.
- McKegney, Sam. "'I was at war – but it was a gentle war': The Power of the Positive in Rita Joe's Autobiography." *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 30.1 (2006): 33-52.
- Mingwon, Mingwon (Shirley Bear). "Equality among Women." *Native Writers and Canadian Writing*. Ed. W.H. New. Vancouver: UBC Press, 1990. 133-138.
- Monture-Angus, Patricia. *Thunder in my Soul: A Mohawk Woman Speaks*. Halifax: Fernwood, 1995.
- Neuman, Shirley. "Autobiography: From Different Poetics to a Poetics of Difference." *Essays on Life Writing. From Genre to Critical Practice*. Ed. Marlene Kadar. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992. 213-230.
- Padolsky, Enoch. "Ethnicity and Race: Canadian Minority Writing at a Crossroads." *Literary Pluralities*. Ed. Christl Verduyn. Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press Ltd., 1998. 19-36.
- Palumbo-Liu, David. "Introduction." *The Ethnic Canon: Histories, Institutions, and Interventions*. Ed. David Palumbo-Liu. Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1995. 1-27.
- Paul, Daniel N. *We Were Not the Savages: Collision between European and Native American Civilizations*. Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 2006.
- Petersen, Kirsten Holst and Anna Rutherford. "Fossil and Psyche." *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*. Eds. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin. London and New York: Routledge, 1995. 185-189.
- Radecki, Henry and Benedykt Heydenkorn. *A Member of a Distinguished Family: The Polish Group in Canada*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976.
- Rivkin, Julie and Michael Ryan. "Introduction: Feminist Paradigms." *Literary Theory: An Anthology*. Eds. Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan. Malden and Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2005. 765-769.

- Ruffo, Armand Garnet. "Out of the Silence – the Legacy of E. Pauline Johnson: An Inquiry into the Lost and Found Work of Dawendine – Bernice Loft Winslow." *Literary Pluralities*. Ed. Christl Verduyn. Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press Ltd., 1998. 211-223.
- Schenck, Celeste. "All of a Piece: Women's Poetry and Autobiography." *Life/Lines: Theorizing Women's Autobiography*. Bella Brodzki and Celeste Schenck, eds. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988. 281-305.
- Seiler, Tamara Palmer. "Multi-Vocality and National Literature: Towards a Post-Colonial and Multicultural Aesthetic." *Literary Pluralities*. Ed. Christl Verduyn. Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press Ltd., 1998. 47-63.
- Smith, Sidonie and Julia Watson. *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001.
- Sweetser, Eve and Gilles Fauconnier. "Cognitive Links and Domains: Basic Aspects of Mental Space Theory." *Spaces, Worlds and Grammars*. Eds. Eve Sweetser and Gilles Fauconnier. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1996.
- "Tory MP says Sorry to Natives for 'Hurtful' Remark." *CTV.ca*. CTVglobemedia, 12 Jun. 2008. Web. 12 Jun. 2008.
<http://www.ctv.ca/servlet/ArticleNews/story/CTVNews/20080612/natives_poilievre_080612>
- Wegierski, Mark. "Marynia Don't Cry: Memoirs of Two Polish-Canadian Families." *Sarmatian Review* 18.1 (Jan. 1998): 519-520.
- Wong, Hertha Dawn Sweet. "First-Person Plural: Subjectivity and Community in Native American Women's Autobiography." *Women, Autobiography, Theory: A Reader*. Eds. Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998. 168-177.
- . *Sending My Heart Back Across the Years: Tradition and Innovation in Native American Autobiography*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992.
- Zaborowska, Magdalena J. *How We Found America: Reading Gender through East European Immigrant Narratives*. Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1995.