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Ambivalence and Subaltern Voices: A Postcolonial Comparison of
Michael Blake's *Dances with Wolves*(1988)
and Richard Wagamese's *Les étoiles s'éteignent à l'aube*(2014)

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Dedications

To my family

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Abstract

This research paper examines two novels, Blake's *Dances with Wolves*(1988) and Wagamese's *Les étoiles s'éteignent à l'aube*(2014),originally *Medicine Walk*, translated in 2016 by Christine Raguét. The central focus of this work is to compare the two novels from postcolonial perspectives through examining *ambivalence* and *subalternity* in both narratives. To achieve this purpose, two postcolonial concepts, of the prominent postcolonial theorists Homi K. Bhabha's ambivalence and Gayatri Spivak's subaltern voices, are used. To deepen our research, we rely on related sub-concepts like Stereotypes, Mimicry, Hybridity, and the representation of the Indians as subaltern. As a whole, the research aims at comparing a white-authored novel that seeks to humanize the Indians while simultaneously maintaining the stereotypes, with an Indian-authored novel that seeks the reconciliation with the past of the Indians. The first chapter deals with Ambivalence of Stereotypes, Mimicry, and Hybridity. It shows the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized and vice versa. The second chapter seeks to discuss the subaltern voices and the representation of women and the white man as savior. Throughout our investigation, we have found that the two authors evoke similar images of colonial and postcolonial perspectives. Besides, both novels reflect the ambivalence as an inevitable consequence of colonialism, and the complex relationship between the Indians and the white men. They also reflect how the power structures operate to silence the subaltern and make the colonized's voice unheard and not understood.

Keywords: Subaltern, ambivalence, hybridity, mimicry, stereotypes

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I. General Introduction

Native Americans have been depicted in American literature and they have been a subject of interest by different writers. Among these authors, Michael Blake, an American writer, known for his masterpiece *Dances with Wolves* (1988) where he tries to portray the complex relationship between colonizers and Indians, and explore historical events like colonialism, political and cultural conflict. However, the superficiality and the simplifying of the Indian portrayal in colonial narratives lead to the emergence of Indian writers who, through their written works, offer profound insights into Indian culture and history. These works provide a real view from within the Indian society. Richard Wagamese is a pertinent Indian writer, best known for his novels *Indian horse* (2012) and *Les étoiles s'éteignent à l'aube* (Medicine Walk) (2014), who devotes his writing for the Indian cause.

This work undertakes a comparative postcolonial study of Michael Blake's *Dances with Wolves* (1988) and Richard Wagamese's *les étoiles s'éteignent à l'aube* (2014). Both texts do not only engage in the Native American/Indian experience, but also approach the issues of representation of the Indians. It is also important to mention that *Les étoiles s'éteignent à l'aube* is the translated version to French Language by Christine Raguette in 2016, from Wagamese's novel *Medicine Walk*. In addition, Michael Blake's novel originally was written as screenplay. In this context, Blake writes how he is encouraged by his friend, Kevin Costner, to write a book; *he states*:

From that moment on he, Kevin Costner, never stopped, and when at last I said good bye and started out on my motorcycle he followed me to the door, turned me around and grabbed my shirt with his hands. "write a book" he recommended, his eyes glued on mine. "write a book". (Blake, 2011)

While *Dances with Wolves* is a white-authored novel that presents a narrative of a white man within Comanche band, *Les étoiles s'éteignent à l'aube* is an indigenous-authored novel that pursues the journey of a native Indian to the backwoods. Both stories reflect a portrayal of the colonizer/colonized complex relationship.

It is also worth to mention that Canada is the home for different native Indian groups like the Cree and the Ojibwa. These groups have undergone different forms of marginalization and oppression throughout history. Thus, these circumstances and experiences of these indigenous groups are used as the backbone of contemporary novels. Richard Wagamese uses historical and personal experiences to draft his narratives. Overall, the Indian writers like Wagamese devote their skills in writing to reclaim the past and cultural heritage of the Indians in general and the Ojibwa in particular. The story is a reconnection and reconciliation with Indians' past.

This study will employ a postcolonial theory, taken primarily from Homi K. Bhabha's work *The Location of culture* (1994) and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's essay *Can the subaltern speak* (1988). To understand the two novels from a postcolonial lens, ambivalence and subaltern voices are major concepts that will be used to analyze and discuss issues related to the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized, the cultural heritage, identity, and the representation of Indians in colonial narratives.

It is also crucial to show the importance of ambivalence as a theme in both novels; it is graspable through the characters, John Dunbar in Michael Blake's book and Franklin Starlight in Wagamese's book. Simultaneously, the issue of subaltern voices resonates strongly in both works. Like ambivalence, subalternity as a theme in postcolonial narratives is primordial to understanding subaltern groups' problems. By way of an example, in 2013 Cree youth walked from the James Bay Cree community of Whapmagoostui and arrived at Parliament Hill in Ottawa to bring attention to Aboriginal issues. Richard Wagamese talking about those young people who did that walk: "And I was really, really saddened that the prime minister actually chose to listen to panda bears rather than his own people when they made that journey to see him." (As it Happened, 2019), this witnesses Indians' struggle for their existence, culture, identity and how the dominant structure overlooks or neglects their claims and rights.

A- Review of literature

Dances with Wolves (1988) by Michael Blake and *Les étoiles s'éteignent s'éteignent à l'aube* (2014) by Richard Wagamese have been the subject of debate and analysis for many critics who have provided a profound examination from different perspectives. It is also worth to mention that is the first time the two novels are compared together. In addition, through our review of literature, we have found that the postcolonial concepts of ambivalence and subalternity are analyzed for the first time in both novels.

Anton Treuer, Professor of Ojibwe at Bemidji State University and the author of many books. A video posted by Anton Treuer entitled *Book and movie review of "Dances with Wolves"* where the professor makes reference to the reaction of the native communities who celebrate the positive description of the Indians. Nevertheless, this sympathetic treatment of the subaltern does not exclude the white's superiority. "They still positioned a white guy played by Kevin Costner as better at being native than the natives. Better at riding a horse? Better at shooting a Buffalo" (Treuer, 2025, 1:53). In addition, the portrayal of John Dunbar as a hero is to consolidate the Indians' stereotypes and to accentuate the whites' supremacy

Another study is provided by Zhongxia Wang, an academic researcher, who analyzes *Dances with Wolves* from the *Perspective of Deep Ecology*. He attempts to examine the novel from the view of ecology and environment. He follows the protagonist's adventure on the prairie and his intimacy with nature. His work reflects the protagonist's quest of self-discovery and nature's belonging. He emphasizes the significance of the story in rising ecological consciousness. In fact, the novel is full of images and ideas that are related to environment and nature. Through his journey, Dunbar realizes the relationship between human beings and nature (Wang, 2022, p.34). In addition, the wilderness is the place that reminds the human beings where they came from and that they are parts of it. Wang illustrates this idea from Michael E. Zimmerman, an American philosopher who states: "wilderness provides the location for an "intuition of identification with nonhuman beings" (Zimmerman, 1994, p. 36)" (Wang,2022,p.35). This

location can help people to reach self-realization and to be aware of the nonhuman beings like animals and plants and the necessity to act as protectors to our home that is our planet 'earth'. Dunbar bonds a tight relationship with the animals like Cisco, his horse, and Two Socks, the wolf. Wang also illustrates and emphasizes the humanity of the Indians in the following quote: "Indians...rarely farm, and seem not to be quite human by European definitions, but they are the most admirable characters who educate Dunbar truly about the prairie. They possess humility, endurance, and devout love for soil" (Wang,2022, p.39)

Minna Nyakwama in her turn, a student from University of Eastern Finland's department of Social Sciences, analyzes the novel *Dances with Wolves* in her master's thesis entitled "Cultural identity transformation in Michael Blake's novel. She emphasizes cultural diversity and discusses the intercultural process. In other words, she deals with the cultural integration and cultural transformation of the protagonist in the novel. Nyakwama shows Dunbar's cultural transformation; once in Fort Sedgewick, he feels the necessity to return back to the Comanche band. It is his home now "Dunbar smiles and tells them with confidence in excellent Comanche that he is Dances with Wolves (p.231). The identity search is over and he is happy to be a Comanche" (Nyakwama, 2024,p.46)

She also illustrates that the novel description of the natives by the white man is exaggerated and not realistic. According to her, the greatest criticism that Roger Ebert (1990) makes is that "the contact between Dunbar and the Comanches is not realistic. In reality "the dominant American culture was nearsighted, incurious and racist, and saw the Indians as a race of ignorant, thieving savages, fit to be shot on sight" (Nyakwama, 2024, p. 11).

Similarly, the novel *Les étoiles s'éteignent à l'aube* have not been receive critiques on ambivalence and subaltern voices. However, it is praised and celebrated as being a call for ancestral heritage and for its exploration of indigenous identities.

Charlotte Robertson, a rising junior at Vassar College studying English, analyzes *Medicine Walk* from the perspective of storytelling healing. She shows the effectiveness of storytelling as healing through describing the relationship between storyteller and listener. “Through Eldon, Frank learns that his people, the “Starlights,” were considered the first teachers” (Robertson, 2023). For her, the effectiveness of storytelling as healing is highly shown in Wagamese’s *Medicine Walk*. She considers that storytelling operates as a path to healing and through which the characters find peace.

Moreover, Lynne Wiltes (2021), in her “Seeing Self in Story: Holding Space for Identity and Perspectives”, tries to analyze *Medicine Walk* and the impact of it on the process of students’ learning. In part one, “Seeing Self in Story and Students” through Richard Wagamese’s *Medicine Walk*, she states: “it pains me to admit that my students did not see themselves in story, at least not in positive ways”. (Wiltes,2021,p.17) For her, it is important to recognize the effectiveness of storytelling in teaching. Through reading *Les étoiles s’éteignent à l’aube* and emphasizing the understanding of the character, Frank, who quit school for nature. She questions if her first students are like Frank; they might just be disconnected from school. They might feel more active and creative in nature, just like Frank. The latter is a child of nature rather than a child of school. The teacher, Lynne Wiltes, questions if her former students are like Frank; they might just be disconnected from school. She also fails to answer a pivotal question: “I did not successfully answer the question that has been posed in English Practice’s call: How might we use stories to help students understand themes of identity, diversity, and inclusion?” (Wiltes, 2021) Indeed, Wagamese’s novel is an excellent example of cultural diversity that may assist students and teachers in understanding themselves.

B- Issue and Working Hypothesis

Through the review of literature, we have noticed that both novels are criticized from different angles by different critics. However, the issues of ambivalence and subaltern Voices are

not referred to. The major interest of this work is to discuss the concepts of ambivalence and subaltern voices in Michael Blake's *Dances with Wolves* and Richard Wagamese's *Les étoiles s'éteignent à l'aube*. The first chapter deals with the question of ambivalence in both novels. Ambivalence is highly apparent through the narratives that follow the journey of the protagonists, John Dunbar and Franklin Starlight. Both the colonized and the colonizer experience ambivalence within colonialism and power structures. In order to understand more the concept of ambivalence, we will try to relate it to other postcolonial concepts like Mimicry, Hybridity, and Colonial discourse. Our goal is to compare the story of John Dunbar and his relationship with the Comanche that occurs in the second half of the nineteenth century in Western America, with Wagamese's narrative of the indigenous Ojibwa boy, and his aim to accompany his dying father to be buried as a warrior, that takes place in the beginning of the twenty-first century. The second chapter discusses subaltern voices. Here, our aim is to show how the two novels represent the Comanche and the Ojibwa as subaltern, particularly women. In addition, the idea of white man as a savior is also discussed.

C- Methodological Outline

This section provides the outline of our work. We have employed IMRAD method. Obviously, it begins with the introduction that provides a general insight into our research, followed by the elements that are integral parts of the introduction. The first one is a review of literature that concerns the different critiques of both *Dances With Wolves* and *Les étoiles s'éteignent à l'aube*. The second part is the issue and working hypothesis that deals with the issue that we should resolve in our work. Then methodology comes to demonstrate the steps that are used to fulfill the work, followed by methods and materials. The former seeks to describe and explain the theory that is used in order to justify our ideas and thoughts. The latter provides the biography of the two authors and the summary of each novel. Then, the core part of a dissertation, the discussion, is dealt with. The first chapter deals with ambivalence in *Dances with Wolves* by analyzing three concepts that are ambivalence of stereotypes and colonial power,

ambivalence of mimicry, and ambivalence of hybridity. And also it treats the ambivalence in *Les étoiles s'éteignent à l'aube* through analyzing the ambivalence of mimicry and hybridity in the novel. The second part of the discussion concerns the concept of subaltern voices in the two novels, by first discussing the representation of the Indians as subaltern and then examining the question of women and the white man as a savior in the two narratives.

II- Methods and Materials

This section contains the basis on which our work will be founded. The methods exploit the theory of our research through providing the definition of the theory and its concepts to deepen our understanding of the work. Moreover, materials provide the biography of the two authors and the summary of the two novels.

I. Methods

Our research is based on postcolonial theory. It refers to the critical study of the cultural, political, and economic consequences of colonialism and imperialism. Different key figures in postcolonialism have deepened and broadened the theory by appropriating concepts from other disciplines. Homi K. Bhabha is one of the emblematic theorists in the development of postcolonial studies. His field of study, mainly in his book *The Location of Culture* (1994), centers on the concepts of ambivalence, Hybridity, Mimicry, and Colonial Discourse. Gayatri Spivak, in her turn, is among the prominent figures in postcolonial theory who introduced the concept of subaltern voices in her essay, *Can the Subaltern Speak?* (1988)

1. Ambivalence

Eugen Bleuler, a Swiss Psychiatrist, coined the term ambivalence in 1910. He described it as being a state of having simultaneous conflicting reactions, beliefs, or feelings towards the same object. Stated another way, ambivalence is the experience of having an attitude towards someone or something that contains both positive and negative components. The term also refers to situations where a person experiences uncertainty or indecisiveness. He initially framed it as a core symptom of schizophrenia. Adopted to postcolonialism by Homi K. Bhabha, an Indian scholar and critical theorist, ambivalence describes the complex mix of attraction and repulsion that characterizes the relationship between the Colonizer and the Colonized. His work highlights the complexities and contradictions inherent in colonialism.

1.1 Ambivalence of Stereotypes

Homi K. Bhabha's analysis of stereotypes in colonial discourse reveals how they function as tools of colonial control while simultaneously exposing their inherent contradictions. For him the stereotypes are built on the notion of fixity, which suggests that the identities of the colonized are static and unchanging. However, it is not the case. Even the stereotypes are exposed to change, where the colonizer can describe the colonized as being ugly and beautiful at the same time. Homi Bhabha in *The Location of Culture* (1994) states "The stereotype is a complex, ambivalent, contradictory mode of representation, as anxious as it is assertive, and demands not only that we extend our critical objectives but that we change the object of analysis itself." (Bhabha, 1994,p. 70)

1.2 Ambivalence of Colonial Power

The ambivalence of colonial power refers to the desire to impose colonial and cultural dominance and the fear of losing control over the colonized. In other words, Bhabha posits that the colonizer seeks to civilize the colonized while fearing their potential rebellion if fully assimilated. For instance, he gives the example of Charles Grant, who, in 1792, desired to inculcate the Christian religion in Indians but worried that this might make them 'turbulent for liberty' (Bhabha, 1994,p.87)

1.3 Ambivalence of Mimicry

For Homi K.Bhabha, mimicry is when the colonized imitate the colonizers. It is a strategy to assimilate the colonized into the white's culture. The colonized subjects were expected to mimic but never achieve full equivalence, reinforcing hierarchies by maintaining the colonizer's superiority and the colonized's inferiority. And the ambivalence is to use this mimicry as a tool to control the colonizer but simultaneously as a tool of resistance for the colonized. In addition, the colonizer wants the colonized to mimic him but not to be like him. The colonizer provides knowledge to the colonizer; however, the feeling of anxiety is inevitable. In this sense, Bhabha, in his book says:

...then colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite. Which is to say, that is the discourse of mimicry is constructed around ambivalence (Bhabha, 1994: 86).

1.4 Ambivalence of hybridity

Hybridity refers to the mixing of cultures under colonialism. Bhabha discusses how colonized people adopt the colonizer's culture and how this leads to creating something new and having conflicted feelings about it, embracing and resisting the colonizer's influence. The ambivalence of hybridity refers to the dual and often conflicting emotions that arise when cultures mix. , hybridity is seen as both a source of strength and a site of conflict. The ambivalence found in hybrid identities is essential for cultural evolution and transformation. Bhabha emphasizes the dual nature of hybridity and highlights the complex and ambivalent nature of colonial power:

For the colonial hybrid is the articulation of the ambivalent space where the rite of power is enacted on the site of desire, making its objects at once disciplinary and disseminatory _ or, in my mixed metaphor, a negative transparency (Bhabha, 1994:160)

2. Subaltern Voices

The concept of subaltern was initially used by the Italian Marxist, political activist, Antonio Gramsci, in his widely known book *Prison notebooks*. In Gramsci's theory, 'subaltern' refers to marginalized and oppressed groups within society, excluded from dominant power structures. These groups include peasants and workers. The term is borrowed to postcolonial theory by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, an Indian scholar, literary theorist, and feminist critic. She is best known for her essay *Can the Subaltern Speak?* (1988), wherein she broadens the concept to embody the colonized and women as excluded groups from the dominant order. Spivak makes reference to the concept of the Eurocentric subject that centers European values and histories while marginalizing non-Western epistemologies. Moreover, epistemic violence is also a term coined by Spivak that is used to glorify and highlight the knowledge of dominant

power structures and at the same time to erase, delegitimize, and distort non-Western knowledge. In her essay, the abolition of Sati (widow immolation) was considered as a civilizing mission, and the colonizers positioned themselves as rescuers of Indian women from barbaric native men.

II. Materials

To reach our aim, we use materials that include the biographies of both authors, Michael Blake and Richard Wagamese and the a summary of both novels, *Dances with Wolves* (1988) and *Les étoiles s'éteignent à l'aube* (2014).

1. Michael Blake's Biography

Michael Lennox Blake was born in Fort Bragg, North Carolina, in July 5, 1945 and spent his early childhood in Texas before moving to southern California. His father was a military officer which meant the family moved frequently during childhood. They moved constantly from town to town and Michael Blake moved from school to school. He developed an early interest in writing and storytelling, inspired by his mother, who encouraged his creative writings. He is an American author and screenwriter. His debut in writing started while serving in the *U.S.AIR Force* during *the Vietnam War* where he is assigned as assistant editor of the base newspaper, *The Strategian*. His friend, Kevin Costner, encouraged him to turn a story about Indians into a novel. *Dances with Wolves* after many rejections was published in 1988. Michael Blake is an award winning author and screenwriter, best known for his work, *Dances with Wolves*. He went on to do humanitarian works and continued to write which allowed him to win many more awards among them the Eleanor Roosevelt, was acknowledged award for work with minorities, the animal protection institute's humanitarian of the year. His novels: *Dances with Wolves* (1988), *Airman Mortensen* (1991), *Marching to Valhalla* (1996), *The Holy Road*(2001), *Into the Stars* (2011). He died on May 2, 2015, after a long illness in Tucson, Arizona.

2. Synopsis of *Dances with Wolves*

The story begins with describing Lieutenant John Dunbar's journey to the western frontier, Fort Sedgwick. Cisco, Dunbar's horse, was represented as a faithful friend, and Dunbar

wished the horses could live as long as men. Once in Fort Sedgwick, Dunbar was surprised that there was nobody there. He decided to stay even though there was no sign of life. Dunbar tried to order the place and to clean it. His first encounter was with a wolf that sometimes visited him and to whom he offered some food. Then, he encountered the Comanche Indians; some of them attempted to steal his horse in vain. Then Dunbar sought for the Comanche camps to establish a dialogue and to try to live in peace. On his way to the Indians' camps, Dunbar saw a woman injured herself in mourning her deceased husband. She was a white woman adopted by the tribe since her childhood because her family was killed by the Pawnee (Indian tribe). He brought her back to the tribe to be treated. This act made the Indians had another vision toward him. Due to the language barrier, they could not communicate. So, the adopted woman, Stand with a Fist, served as a translator from English to the local language and vice versa. John Dunbar established a tight relationship with the Comanche through learning their language and adopting their customs and culture. Dunbar told the Comanche that a herd of buffalo was coming after a long absence. The Indians greeted Dunbar's information and asked him to join them in hunting the buffalo. After the hunt, even the Indians who did not accept Dunbar as a member of their tribe, finished by befriending him. Due to the White and Pawnee threat, the Comanche decided to move to another place. In fort Sedjewick, Dunbar was taken as a prisoner to the East. On their way, the Comanche came to rescue Dunbar and killed all the soldiers. At the winter camp, Dunbardecided to leave the Comanche with his wife.

3. Richard Wagamese's Biography

Storyteller, novelist, journalist, and critic Richard Wagamese was born in 1955 in northwestern Ontario. His family followed the traditional way of life of the Ojibwa people, fishing, hunting and trapping. He also experienced the profound difficulties growing up in foster homes. Wagamese's Literary and fictional writings blend traditional Ojibwa Oral storytelling

style with the highly literate genre conventions of the novel. Wagamese, a National Newspaper Award-winning columnist, was awarded the Alberta Fiction Prize in 1995 for his first novel *keeper 'n Me ...* In addition to his novels Wagamese has written a book of essays, *the terrible summer: the national newspaper award winning writings of Richard Wagamese (1996)* and a *memoir for Joshua(2003)*. In 2014, he wrote his novel *Medicine Walk* that tells a story of cultural transmission. The last journey of a dying man suffered from addiction to alcohol. This man called Eldon accompanied by his son, Franklin, to be buried in the mountains. Richard Wagamese died on 10 March 2017.

4. Synopsis of *Les étoiles s'éteignent à l'aube*

The story is about a sixteen-year-old, Franklin Starlight, who, with his mare set off for Parson's Gap town in British Columbia in order to meet his dying father, Eldon. Due to his liver disease, Eldon, an alcoholic man, asked his son for help to fulfill his last wish, which was to be buried in the mountains as a warrior, as did his ancestors. At first, Frank hesitated to accept the suggestion of his father. Eldon appeared overnight to Frank, who thought that his father was the old man who raised him. Frank remembered how he grew up in the old man's house and the education he received, the values, wisdom, love of land, and closeness to nature. Finally, he set off for their journey by preparing the mare and quitting Parson's Gap town.

During their journey, Eldon began to tell stories that he did not dare to tell someone about. Eldon told Frank about his mother, Frank's grandmother, who was a wonderful storyteller, and also about his best friend, Jimmy. Along their journey they encountered an indigenous woman called Becka. She gave them shelter. And she provided Eldon with some medicinal plants to help him recover from alcoholic withdrawal. The journey continues, and Eldon became more vulnerable and weak. He continued to tell Frank about his engagement in the Korean War with his friend Jimmy. Frank also remembers his childhood and the first time when he met Eldon. He was seven years old. Eldon was always drunk when Frank came to see him. Although the medicine given by Becka helped to ease Eldon's pain, his state was worsening.

During her pregnancy, Angie, Franklin's mother, went to labor and Eldon to the bar. Consequently, Angie died in giving birth to their son. Then, the kid was raised by Bunky, the old man. Eldon passed away after telling the story of Angie. Franklin buried his father as a warrior. Frank returned back to the old man. At the end of the novel, Frank was wandering on the land, and between the sunset and the darkness, he saw the ghosts of his ancestors, to whom he raised hands, and came back to the farmhouse.

III. Results

The analysis, of Michael Blake's *Dances with Wolves* and Richard Wagamese's *Les étoiles s'éteignent à l'aube*, has revealed important insights into the Indians' experience of ambivalence. Despite differences in the period of time and the settings of the two novels, it shows that the colonized or the colonizer's attitudes and feelings are always ambivalent. It is an inevitable consequence of colonialism. Ambivalence concerns mainly the double and contradictory feelings that the colonized can experience, within colonial power, toward the colonizer. However, it can also be experienced by the colonizer, John Dunbar, who mimics the Comanche culture. He finds himself in double feelings either to continue the imitation of the Comanche's culture or to stop mimicking and maintain only the original culture.

The ambivalence in *Dances with Wolves* can be seen, mainly, through the protagonist's transformation from a former lieutenant in the American army to a member of Comanche band, also, through the exchange of cultures between the white man and the Indians. Similarly, the ambivalence in *Les étoiles s'éteignent à l'aube* is presented mainly through Franklin Starlight's character, who is portrayed as a hybrid person who, through his mixed cultures of the traditional indigenous knowledge and the white knowledge, experiences double and contradictory feelings. The Indians experience ambivalence that relates to colonial and postcolonial trauma. To be explicit, ambivalence is inherited by the colonized from their ancestors. The Indians in *Les étoiles s'éteignent à l'aube* experience it as the characters in *Dances with Wolves* do. It is a legacy.

In addition, postcolonial concepts like Mimicry, Hybridity, and Stereotypes are the fuel for the ambivalence that leads either the colonizer or the colonized to live or experience double and sometimes contradictory emotions. Also, the ambivalence in both novels can be interpreted through the mixing of thoroughly different cultures and the unstable internal feelings of the characters.

Unlike *Dances with Wolves*, *Les étoiles s'éteignent à l'aube* is discussed through storytelling as healing. The importance of speech or storytelling is unquestionable. It can be seen as a way of healing from colonial harm. And also it can be regarded as reconciliation with the past and the Indian heritage. Frank's desire to hear his father might be understood by his internal rejection of the adopted culture and return back to the Indian origins. It might help the Indians to overcome the feeling of ambivalence. It can cut the process of imitation by rejecting the imitation of the colonizer. Through storytelling, the Indian becomes aware of his past and history. Then this consciousness can lead the Indian to reject the white knowledge by stopping imitating blindly the colonizer or the ex-colonizer. Consequently, the feeling of ambivalence can be stopped or eliminated.

Both authors provide an opportunity to the Indians a space to speak and to vocalize, each one in his way; however, their voice is not heard or understood within the colonial agency. Despite that Richard Wagamese's novel is told by an Indigenous man about Indigenous people by letting the Indians express themselves, unfortunately, their voice is unheard within the dominant structures. In addition, Wagamese uses the dominant language (English) to reach his message; nonetheless, the indigenous voice still has not been heard. His work counters colonial narrative by centering his narrative on indigenous characters. Michael Blake, in his turn, offers an opportunity to the Comanche to speak. The representation of the Indians' dialogues and the discussion of different matters, even political problems, with John Dunbar, do not make them heard or understood. In addition, the novel is written by a white man who has the authority to grant a space of liberty for the Indians to speak for themselves. However, this authority reinforces what Spivak calls sovereign subject. Besides, Michael Blake's novel employs Eurocentrism through centering the story around the white man, while he reserves a superficial description for the Indians. The two narratives confirm Spivak's idea: the subaltern cannot speak.

Women, in their turn, are marginalized either by colonial narratives or patriarchal systems. This can be seen through the character of Stand with a Fist in *Dances with Wolves* and Angie

Pratt, Eldon's Mother, in *Les étoiles s'éteignent à l'aube*. Both novels confirm thoughts like brown women saved by the white men from the brown men, and the white man as a savior. The character Dances with Wolves, John Dunbar, is served as a savior in the novel. He saves the Comanche people multiple times and he saves Stand with a Fist from the Indians by quitting the Comanche band together. The old man, the white man, in Wagamese's novel, in his turn, saves his beloved Angie's son from his alcoholic father, Eldon, by accepting raising the child that is not his. In addition, he saves the Ojibwa culture from extinction through transmitting Indian culture to the kid, Frank. Therefore, his use of these elements in his book can be interpreted as an attempt of Wagamese to imitate the colonial narrative in order to be accepted.

In addition, the representation of the Indians as bloodthirsty, backward, wild, and savage multiple times in *Dances with Wolves*, is used as a universal description or representation of all the Indians; they are put into the same bowl. The Indians are all the same, they share the same characteristics and traits. This common identification of the Indians is referred to in postcolonialism as essentialist element. In the second novel, these elements are present. Probably Wagamese includes it intentionally to make the people understand the effect of the stereotypes and how it can lead to marginalization and the exclusion from the dominant powers. Overall, both novels reveal intergenerational trauma. The colonized and the ex-colonized experience the same experiences of marginalization and emotional displacement. It is a colonial legacy. In addition, both authors deal with the first people of America, and they demonstrate how they share the same history, experience and consequences of colonialism. Both of them contribute to more understanding of the colonizer/colonized relationship.

IV. Discussion

This part of our dissertation seeks to discuss both works of Michael Blake's *Dances with Wolves* and Richard Wagamese's *Les étoiles s'éteignent à l'aube (Medicine Walk)*. To reach our target, we intend to use two postcolonial concepts, *ambivalence and subaltern voices*. The first chapter has dealt with ambivalence in both narratives. The first part of this chapter explores the question of ambivalence in John Dunbar's journey in the Western Frontier. To do this, three sub-concepts will be discussed namely: Ambivalence of Stereotypes, Ambivalence of Colonial Power, and Ambivalence of Mimicry in *Dances with Wolves*. The second part of this chapter plans to deal with ambivalence in Franklin Starlight's journey in the wilderness as far as it addresses both concepts: Ambivalence of Mimicry and Ambivalence of Hybridity. The second chapter is concerned to discuss the concept of subaltern voices in both novels. It deals with two main points; the first one is the representation of the Indians as subaltern, and the second one is about women and the white man as a savior in the two narratives.

Chapter One:

Ambivalence in Blake's *Dances with Wolves* and Wagamese's *Les étoiles s'éteignent à l'aube*: A comparative study

This chapter discusses the concept of ambivalence in both novels through exploring the concepts of stereotypes, colonial power hybridity, and mimicry. The first part undertakes ambivalence in John Dunbar's journey to the Western Frontier and the impact of colonialism on the colonized. The second part examines the ambivalence in Franklin Starlight's journey to the backwoods.

1. Ambivalence in John Dunbar's journey to the Western frontier

We intend to discuss the theme of ambivalence in *Dances with Wolves* (1988) by following the journey of John Dunbar, an officer from the American Army, to the Western frontier.

To do this, three postcolonial concepts will be dealt with; stereotypes, mimicry, and colonial power.

1.1 Ambivalence of stereotypes

Many Western writers shed light on colonial history and issues through their narratives. They work to demonstrate the white race as superior to other races. To do this, they use what postcolonial theorists call "stereotypes". In this regard, Edward Said defines this concept as: "The Oriental is irrational, depraved (fallen), childlike, "different"; thus the European is rational, virtuous, mature, and «normal."(Said, 1979, p.49) *Dances with Wolves* endeavors to challenge the stereotypes that are pasted on the Indians and to humanize them; however, it is a white-authored novel that has a tendency to inferiorize the Indians; thus, *Dances with Wolves* does not excluded from this tendency.

Anton Treuer (2025), in a video entitled *Book and Movie of Dances with Wolves*, analyzes the novel and the film and makes reference to the stereotypes that are apparent in the narrative. In addition, he wrote an introduction for the new edition of the book *Dances with Wolves*, and he asserts that the stereotypes used in the novel perpetuate the exclusion of the Indians in colonial

narrative. And what we are trying to demonstrate is that, despite the fact that the aim of the novel is to humanize the Indians, it does not succeed in eliminating colonial stereotypes. And that is what we are going to see in the following paragraphs.

Indeed, Michael Blake makes reference to time as a vital element in a civilized world. It helps them to be organized and to do their tasks at the right time. Once in the wilderness, Dunbar, the white man, wants to know how long he slept in *Fort Sedgewick*. He pulls out a watch, but it does not work anymore. And this might be done purposely to demonstrate the difference between civilization and nature. The narrator queries if time is really important here. This interrogation may lead to thinking about double and contradictory concepts: time and timelessness. John Dunbar has dual or double feelings. Here the ambivalence is to attribute the concept of time to civilization or merely to the whites. Time helps them fulfill their daily or occasional tasks, whereas in this wilderness there is no need for time. It is timelessness. The difference between civilization and nature is that the former is time and the latter is timelessness; there is no beginning or end. The narrator queries:

What did time matter to him now? What did it ever matter? Well, perhaps it was necessary in the movement of things, men and materials, for instance. For cooking things correctly. For schools and weddings and church services and going to work. But what did it matter out here? (Blake,1988,p.39).

In addition, time is crucial for John Dunbar. He records every single detail about his experiences with nature and the Comanche. In his diary, he writes about his visitors and describes the scenes. Later on as the narrative progresses and with Dunbar's contact with the Comanche, the idea of fixed stereotypes is excluded. The protagonist realizes that the notion of time has another perspective. Zhongxia Wang(2022) counters the false definitions attributed to the Indians by the whites by showing their “possession of humility, endurance, and devout love for soil and nature.”(p.39) The Comanche, in their measurement of time, depend on the migration of buffalo herds and the changing seasons. The time of Western civilization is linear versus the cyclical, nature-oriented time of the Comanche. Despite the measurement or the

identification of time differing from the Indians to the whites, it exists and is used in other forms, not forcibly as used in the white world. The writer tries to transmit a message that is, in this wild country, there is no time, so life in the western frontier is purposeless because there is no civilization. But it is not true; the Indians, despite their differences, own a vivid and rich culture, and they also organize and measure time in their own way. In addition, the wilderness is used as a site to explore the contrast between the two notions. The description of the notion of time is complex and contradictory. This idea of complexity is articulated by Bhabha: “the stereotype is a complex, ambivalent, contradictory mode of representation....” (Bhabha,1994,p.70).

It is also a misrepresentation of the nature or simply the colonized. Time is not simple but complex. It is attributed to the civilization and timelessness to the nature. It is not simple because it is likely to be changed. With the Comanche contact, Dunbar realizes that time is as useful as it is used in the civilized world.

It is also important to mention that the ideal climate for stereotypes to proliferate is the period of crisis and wars. Tileaga and Byford address the theme of Historical stereotypes and histories of stereotypes in their book “ Psychology and history: interdisciplinary explanations”.

They admitted:

Stereotypes are particularly common in times of crisis and stress, when the mind needs to impose order on a complex and challenging ‘information-rich environment’. ‘Research amply demonstrates that the use of social stereotypes increases in cognitively demanding situations ...Needs to simplify and structure understanding may be heightened within societies during times of crisis, such as wars, economic recessions and natural disasters’(Tileaga&Byford,2014,para.5)

The story of *Dances with Wolves* occurs during the American Civil War in 1863-1864. This can explain why the novel is full of stereotypes. For instance, the ambivalence of stereotypes can be seen through the description of the Indians as ‘brave’ and ‘coward’, a common stereotype in colonialism. In chapter eight, when an Indian tries to steal Cisco, Dunbar’s horse, he shouts at him. Then Kicking Bird ran away in horror. The representation of the encounter between the

white man and the Indian is symbolic; the reaction of the Indian who runs away and does not confront the white man shows how a civilized man can be different from a man who is close to nature. The Indian is a coward before a white man.

Kicking Bird stumbled backward in horror, righted himself, and instead of jumping the corral fence, he tore right through it. He raced across the yard, vaulted onto his pony, and galloped off as if the devil were on his tail. Not once did he look back (Blake, 1988, p.55).

However, as the story progresses and after his first contact with the Comanche tribe, John Dunbar rejects the racist stereotypes and realizes the humanity and the bravery of these people who dare to live in the wilderness with daily challenges. He describes the visit of the Indians to Fort Sedgewick as, Blake writes: “(I am amazed that all these people are warriors. Have not seen a man yet who is not a fighter). Our meeting have been highly amicable, though greatly hampered by the language barrier....” (Blake, 1988, p.118) Here John Dunbar asserts Indians’ humanity and bravery. The contradictory description of the Indians as both brave and cowardly at the same time is due to the ignorance of the real life of the Indians and the stereotypes taught to Dunbar in the civilized world. And his sustained contact with the Comanche shifts the inferior gaze to admiration and acceptance.

It is also important to show that the author’s bias is apparent. He describes the protagonist as brave in the whole story versus the Indians, who are portrayed as coward multiple times. The description of the two characters is ambivalent. While describing the protagonist as a brave man, the Indian is portrayed as a coward or less brave than the white man. This representation makes an Indian, or the colonized subject, rethink about its veracity and how an Indian can be described as a coward before a white man who is alone and a stranger from the country and this may lead to the creation of tensions and contestations. In other words, as the narrative progresses, the fixity of the stereotypes is excluded. John Dunbar used to learn that the Indians are bloodthirsty,

savages and with his personal experience with them, he discovers that they are fully human and they own a rich and vivid culture.

To finish, the stereotypes are always ambivalent. The colonizer can attribute double or contradictory stereotypes to the colonized and that is what makes it complex and ambiguous. It is also used as a tool to maintain power and hegemony over the colonized.

1.2 Ambivalence of Colonial Power

The colonial power tries to fix identities and maintain power. It also operates to assimilate the colonized. But this willingness to make the subordinate groups mimic the whites' knowledge and culture is always followed by the feeling of anxiety that the colonized can contest and rebel against Colonial authority. Colonial power is not only to maintain control by military invasion or violence, but it is also the ability to impress the other, make him docile, and deny his original practices. In *Dances with Wolves*, John Dunbar, the outsider, represents the colonial power from different angles. In the Frontier, he is supposed to serve his nation, USA, but he chooses to adopt the Comanche culture and to be one of them. The ambivalence can be understood through Dunbar's contradictory actions. He is supposed to represent the colonial authority, but he prefers to befriend the enemy of the American Army. He is in a dilemma, two opposed feelings invading his psyche. The ambivalence of colonial power in this novel can be seen in the way John Dunbar renounces his position as a Lieutenant in the American Army and his adoption of Indian culture.

In addition, the colonizer always experiences the sentiment of anxiety and the stress that the colonized could emerge as equal to or better than him. He is always claiming his superiority; however, he is always anxious that his authority can be stopped by the cultural exchange that can lead to resistance and rebellion.

It is also important to notice that power is not always something held by individuals or institutions; it is also a force that operates through social relationships and links between individuals. The discourse is used as a tool of power. Michel Foucault sees:

“...discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling-block....Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it” (Foucault, 1978, p.106). This idea can be illustrated through the encounter between the outsider and the Indians. Dunbar rescued Stand with a Fist and brought her back to her community. This action is a turning point in the story. Ten Bears, the Indian chief, admires John Dunbar’s action, and he considers him as “a bright omen” (Blake, 1988, p.106). The colonial power is ambivalent; the Indian chief used to see the white as a troubled creature, and the action of Dunbar has made his thoughts different. The Indians regard the whites as an enemy. Then with a simple action, this vision changes to celebration and acceptance. Here, the discourse of power is the action of Dunbar when he saves the Indian woman from death and the impact that this action has over the natives. They are influenced and impressed by the white man and they seek to befriend him and know more about him.

The Indians repulse the colonizers, and at the same time, they accept and glorify them. Through the following lines, the narrator tries to show the transparency of the Lieutenant and how his action prompts the Indians to know more about him and make an agreement. Being white can generate power and influence the colonized. The Indians think that Dunbar is a god simply due to his whiteness sacredness:

The white soldier had shown extreme bravery in coming alone to their camp. And he had obviously come with a single intention....not to steal or cheat or fight but to return something he had found, something that belonged to them. This talk of gods was probably wrong. (Blake,1988, p.106)

In addition, the protagonist, through his journey as a white observer, shows how he honors the guests by introducing his culture to Kicking Bird and Wind In His Hair. Coffee and sugar are new things for the natives. They show their desire to discover and taste it, Blake describes the scene as: “Kiking Bird and Wind In His Hair were leaning forward curiously. He had not realized that something so ordinary as grinding coffee could be magic. But it was magic to Kiking Bird and Wind In His Hair” (Blake,1988, p.113). Describing the reaction of the two

visitors to the grinding coffee as magic is a foreshadowing of the acceptance of the outside culture by the natives. It is a way to say, this is their civilization; it is magic, and it is worth being known and adopted. He invites the Indians to imitate his culture and also shows the power of the dominant culture. However, this imitation can evoke anxiety in the dominant groups' psyche.

It is also essential to refer to the power of wilderness in shifting the protagonist's thoughts as a primordial theme in the novel. Zhongxia Wang discusses how the wilderness may help Dunbar to listen to himself and recognizes himself as a part of this nature. Dunbar experiences the feeling of belonging to nature and at the same time the rejection of the corrupt world. This kind of ambivalence can only be experienced within nature.

It is in the wilderness that Dunbar learns the frontier is a mythic place of freedom and peace, and finally he recovers his true self he has lost because of the corrupting influences of the artificial lives. When he initiates into the inner world in search of his true self, he gets maturity and growth and identifies himself with the nonhuman world.(Wang,2022,p.37)

The colonial power that is represented by John Dunbar is overcome by nature. It makes the Lieutenant understand himself and finds a way to his inner world. It also prompts him to choose between recognizing himself as a son of nature or to belonging to civilization. To understand more about this wilderness, Dunbar renounces to his solitude and encounters the Comanche. He works hard to learn the local language through the help of Stand with a Fist, who serves as an interpreter. Here, the protagonist reflects the ambivalence of colonial power. While he initially represents the colonial force and grabs the Indians to adopt the new culture, he also works to adopt in his turn the Comanche's culture. And this willingness to imitate the Comanche's culture is not only due to admiration but also to record this exotic culture and probably to contribute as a white adventurer and a Lieutenant of an American army in writing history. The white man probably has double intentions. His contact with the Comanche is not only to highlight their cultural heritage but also to impress them by offering white culture and knowledge.

The whites hold power by owning knowledge, technology, and intelligence. That is why the chief asks the outsider for help in preparing for an attack against the Pawnee, Ten Bears asks John Dunbar, as a lieutenant in the American Army, to suggest a strategy to besiege the coming enemies: “if you were a white soldier...and you had all these men with guns, what would you do?” (Blake,1988,p. 264). John Dunbar succeeds in impressing the Indians by providing them with whites’ arms and smart decisions on military tactics. The power of the colonizer is to play an outstanding role as an intermediate to manage a war between two tribes that belong to the same race. To face the inevitable threat of the Pawnee, the Comanche opt to be guided by an outsider. This option does not come randomly. It is a consequence of cultural domination and power. He is a white man, who is obviously better than the Indians due to his possession of beauty, knowledge, and science. In order to maintain dominance, the whites should collaborate with the Indians as does Dunbar. The colonial power is ambivalent in the sense that the colonizer should follow opposite tactics to reach their purposes and interests. They use military invasions, and at the same time, peaceful strategies like collaborations and signing treaties.

It is also important to mention that the Indians are impressed by the American white culture. They always ask Dunbar for something like boots or a hat. They give something precious in return. An Indian warrior takes Dunbar’s hat, and he does not want to give it back to him. In order to keep it, he gives Dunbar a knife. This exchange of culture is symbolic. How the civilized grants something not really important (hat) while the Indian offers to him the knife that is a treasure for an Indian. The colonizer gives the superficial things and the colonized gives the real things. According to Michael Blake, in a scene of cultural exchange, *Wind In his Hair* is hypnotized by Lieutenant’s tunic and impressed by its buttons, then *Dances with Wolves* gives it to him in exchange for a decorative breastplate (Blake, 1988,p.180-181)

The strategy of the colonizer is to take more than he gives. The colonizer tries to impress the colonized by providing some of his knowledge and culture but not the whole knowledge or

culture, and this helps them to gain their confidence and then to facilitate American army expansion.

To finish, like the ambivalence of stereotypes, the ambivalence of colonial power in *Dances with Wolves* is complex and sometimes obscure. John Dunbar fluctuates between keeping his title as the dominant authority or to renouncing it and diving into a new culture. The power of Dunbar's actions is more effective in making the subordinate groups accept the dominant culture than using violence. The colonial power also makes the Indians live in a dilemma: either to contest the white man as did their ancestors or to accept him and consider him as one of them.

1.3 Ambivalence of Mimicry

Mimicry concerns mainly the imitation process of the colonizer's culture by the colonized. However, in *Dances with Wolves*, mimicry can be seen more in the way John Dunbar, as an outsider and colonizer, adopts the Comanche way of life. He imitates Comanche's values, customs, and language. Mimicry in this novel is not limited to the colonized, but it goes beyond to embody even the colonizer. John Dunbar and the Indians engage in a form of mimicry by adopting certain aspects of each one's culture, like trying to understand each other by constructing a bridge which is to learn the English and Comanche languages.

Ambivalence of mimicry in this novel can be understood through Dunbar's transformation from a former soldier of the U.S. Army to a member of an Indian tribe. The cultural exchange with the Comanche members makes Dunbar feel like one of them. He succeeds in learning their local language because he spends most of the time with the Comanche. The adoption of another culture does not mean burying the original one. They can coexist even if the feeling of being split between two worlds is not excluded. Here Blake represents the notion of unhomely. That is the feeling of displacement between double cultures. The concept of unhomeliness is ambivalent; the unhomely person feels that he belongs to neither culture. He accepts the host culture, but he is also always nostalgic for his original culture. In his article *The World and the Home*, Bhabha

claims that “the unhomely moment relates the traumatic ambivalences of a personal, psychic history to the wider disjunctions of political existence” (Bhabha, 1992, p. 144).

His adoption of Indian culture does not chain him to retain his identity. Indeed, his distance from Fort Sedgewick creates in him a form of nostalgia: “the lieutenant had mixed feelings about being back. He knew the Fort as his home, and that was reassuring” (Blake, 1988, p.194). Thinking about Fort Sedgewick as his home, Dunbar reinforces his psychological ambivalence about belonging either to civilization or to nature. This idea of belonging to Fort Sedgewick reassures him and makes him less nervous.

The encounter of two or more different cultures always leads to mimicry and that is forcibly generates ambivalence. Bhabha states: “From such a colonial encounter between the white presence and its black semblance, there emerges the question of the ambivalence of mimicry as a problematic of colonial subjection” (Bhabha, 1994, p.129). In the novel, despite the fact that the lieutenant is living with the Comanche and imitates the band, he is always seen as a foreigner, an outsider. His clothes, color, language, and accent make him different; he is a visitor.

Ten bears’ village becomes the center of his life, but for all the ease with which he settled into it, Lieutenant Dunbar moved as a man apart. His skin and accent and pants and boots marked him as a visitor from another world. (Blake, 1988, p.213)

Besides, the narrator describes how a person can be bonded to his original culture even if the person is uprooted from his identity since childhood. He utilizes the character Stand with a Fist to convey this idea. Her endeavor to remember the English language is an attempt to relate back to her original identity. Despite the fact that the dominant culture operates to erase the original identity, failure is inevitable. Blake states: “She was no longer a Comanche...her long-buried blood was running again, her undiluted white blood” (Blake, 1988, p. 208)

In addition, the importance of imitating a language to integrate a society or an identity is evident. It does not only help to communicate but also to understand the components of that

society and identity. In her Master thesis, Nyakwama uses a quote from the sociologist Stuart Hall, to explain the importance of language in a society.

A shared language is one source of cultural identity. Speaking a language places the speaker in a certain language community. Knowing a language also entails that the speaker is aware of the values shared in the language community. This is why language has also become a symbol of cultural oppression. The oppressed have been forbidden to speak their own language and have been forced to speak the language of the oppressors (Hall 2003, 90.). (Nyakwama,2014,p27)

Dunbar's willingness to learn the language is not only to communicate but also to study the Comanche culture and to be one of them. To do this, *Stand with a Fist* serves as a bridge between the two Cultures. However, displacing between two languages can create an ambivalent feeling of acceptance and repulsion. Dunbar splits between both the English language and the Comanche language. The former represents his first identity and the latter the adopted one. And the acceptance of each one's identity shows the cross-cultural process through history. And sometimes as it is argued by Stuart Hall, quoted by Nyakwama (2014), the subordinate groups are forced to use the oppressors' language, which can lead to resistance. Through this language, Dunbar comes to understand more about this culture. He realizes that the Comanche accept the whites' culture; however, the oppression and the subjugation lead the chiefs to review their accounts. They cannot trust the whites anymore. They are obliged to sign treaties and papers. This form of agreement and negotiation is new for the Indians. They adopt it, and it becomes a form of official negotiation between them and the white men. Kicking Bird questions if, in fact, the acceptance of this new form of agreement, signing papers, can afford peace. Of course not; negotiations often end dramatically by killing the Indian chiefs. The whites influence and impose their culture and laws on the colonized. And due to their racism, cunningness, and deception, the Indians become conscious of their actual danger and the necessity to react as soon as possible. Resistance is the only arm that remains under these circumstances. *Kicking Bird to Dances with Wolves*:

...but I am told that the promises are always broken. If white chiefs come to see us, how we shall know their true minds? Should we take their presents? Should we sign their papers to show that there will be peace between us? (Blake,1988,p.214)

And he continues:

“...When I was a boy many Comanches went to a house of law in Texas for a big meeting with white chiefs and they were shot dead” (Blake,1988, p.214) . This conversation is very important, Dunbar knows the actual danger of his society on the Indians, and he feels ashamed. In this regard, Nyakwama argues that the Lieutenant: “The narrator states that Dunbar is ashamed of even having been one of them. This feeling intensifies as Dunbar begins to admire the Comanche and wants to become one of them; the Comanches become his positive reference group”

(Nyakwama, 2014,26)

In addition to what has been said above, we can say that the colonized is always considered inferior and not equal to the white man. Kicking Bird, in telling *Dances with Wolves*, John Dunbar, how the whites can behave before the Indians, asks if it is necessary to sign their paper as a sign of civilization and acceptance of adopting this form of agreement to afford peace. Peace is not attainable through imitation and assimilating the white culture because they cannot accept the Indians as one of theirs. They are always regarded as inferior and not fully human. The proof; the Indian chiefs were shot dead in discussing meetings by the whites. Fanon argues in his work *Black Skin, White Masks* (1986) “I will say that the black is not a man” (Fanon, 1986,p.10). Seeing the idea of Fanon from another angle in *Dances with Wolves* we can say that “the white man cannot be a man.” When the Comanche engages in a war against the Pawnee, *Dances with Wolves* (J. Dunbar) asks if he could join them. Kicking Bird doubts Dunbar’s aptitudes as a white man and refuses the idea: “...he is a warrior, but he is not a Comanche. He will not be a Comanche for a while” (Blake, 1988, p.238) Here, the intention of the author is to show that discrimination and racism are not characteristics of a white man but are human traits. This discrimination is not only experienced by the Indian but also by the colonizer. Dunbar, in his

turn, dives into Comanche culture and adopts a Comanche name, but he is still not fully accepted.

2. Ambivalence in Franklin's journey to backwoods

This part seeks to discuss the concept of ambivalence in the novel of Richard Wagamese's *Les étoiles s'éteignent à l'aube*. To enlarge our understanding of the concept in the narratives, two related notions will be joined that are Mimicry and Hybridity.

2.1 Ambivalence of Mimicry

The Ojibwa are Indian tribes from Canada and the United States. They belong to a larger cultural group known as the "Anishinaabeg". Like many indigenous groups, they face challenges, oppression, and cultural complexity due to colonialism. Franklin Starlight is an Ojibwa; he receives an English education, and he is given an English name, not an Aboriginal one. The dominant powers always work on finding strategies to make the indigenous people resemble them through mimicking, and as a result, the colonized prefers to behave and adopt the colonizer's conduct and way of life and sweep away his original culture. Ajit Mondal, in his article *The Lord Macaulay's Minute, 1835: Re-examining the British Educational Policy*, articulates:

Ultimately Macaulay in his Minutes of 1835 instituted an education policy in support of the British Raj which denigrated Indian languages and knowledge, established the hegemonic influence of English as medium of colonial 'instruction' (not education) in order to "form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern". Thus a natural consequence of Macaulay's theory was the development of vernacular languages as secondary to the teaching of English (Mondal, 2021,p.03)

Indeed, Macaulay policies and laws are imposed on all the English colonies, and their effect can be seen and lived today by the ex-colonized groups. The colonized are uprooted from their culture and language that leads to the generation of conflicted feelings and emotions. Franklin is imposed a language and a culture that is not his. He is inculcated this culture mainly at school. He imitates the other children; however, he has always felt that he is different.

Moreover, Charlotte Robertson in her article “Storytelling as Healing in Richard Wagamese’s *Medicine Walk*” (2023) emphasizes the importance of storytelling as healing. The relationship between Frank and his father is that of a storyteller and a listener. It can be seen as a way of healing from colonial trauma. Also it can be regarded as reconciliation with the past and the Indian heritage. Frank’s desire to hear his father might be understood by his internal rejection of the adopted culture and desire to return back to Indian origins. Charlotte, through her article, reminds us about the importance of one of the Ojibwa’s practices that is probably not practiced today due to the blind imitation of Western culture. Effectively, this practice, storytelling, can heal psychological trauma. It might help the Indians to overcome the feeling of ambivalence. The storytelling helps Franklin to question the imitation of the dominant culture. And through it, he realizes the importance of the Indian ancestral legacy by abandoning school and joining nature. By doing this, he cuts the bridge that leads him to mimic the white knowledge and seeks spiritual healing.

Like Charlotte Robertson, Lynne Wilste in *Seeing Self in Story: Holding Space for Identity and Perspectives* (2021), also emphasizes the importance of storytelling in teaching and how a story can change someone’s life and beliefs. She insists on the importance of storytelling in education. For her, the character Franklin can influence other indigenous students and can help them overcome their psychological trauma. Indeed, we think that Wilste is right. Through reading Wagamese’s novel, the students can understand themselves and choose either to continue with whites’ influence or to reconnect with their history. Frank chooses to be close to nature despite his assimilation to the White’s culture. He understands and recognizes his real belonging. By doing so, the Indians can reach psychological and spiritual peace. The Indian students can make an end to their constant imitation of the privileged West. Then getting rid of what we call ambivalence. She explains:

In *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter*, Daniel Heath Justice (2018) writes about the importance of stories, and how and why they matter. Justice explains that, the stories others tell about Indigenous people have too often been the wounding kind. For me, *Boss of the Namko Drive* comes to mind. As a settler educator and scholar, I have qualms as to the kind of story I tell. Once again, Richard Wagamese's words encourage me to let go of my doubts (Wiltes,2021,p.21)

To understand more of Roberteson and Wiltes's ideas, we should explore Franklin, the protagonist, who is given an English name that is the first detachment from his culture. His family name, Starlight, which is a translation of an Ojibwa name, means, according to Jimmy, Eldon's friend, teachers or storytellers who are taught by star people. Franklin is introduced to an English school where he acquires English values. However, the native does not long for studies but longs for being close to nature. He rejects mimicking the colonizer. He learns the language of nature as did his ancestors. Despite the excessive attempts to deface the indigenous culture, the Indians still have the willingness to return back to their roots, as does Franklin. The following lines show the magical relationship that Franklin has with nature and his spiritual relationship with his ancestors.

Il trouvait son Bonheur dans le travail de la ferme et sa joie dans les chevaux.....il avait quitté l'école dès qu'il avait atteint l'âge légal. Il ne s'intéressait pas aux livres.....il entendait les symphonies du vent sur les crêtes, et les cris stridents des faucons et des aigles étaient pour lui des arias.... Il était Indien (Wagamese, 2014,p.14)

Here the ambivalence resides in the way Franklin denies the English culture and, either consciously or not, reconnects himself with Ojibwa culture and to be in a permanent connection with nature. The last sentence of this quote reminds the readers of the actual belonging of the protagonist and the failure of the mimicking process.

To survive, the Ojibwa are obliged to imitate the white. They face pressures from European colonization and encounter various challenges, including dispossession and cultural assimilation pressures. The Ojibwa's attitudes are always ambivalent, either to accept the dominant culture and erase the original one to ensure their existence and survival or to opt for resistance and

maintain the original identity that might lead to resistance and death. In this respect, Eldon Starlight shows the importance of mimicry in order to survive:

...Tout ce que j'essaie de dire c'est qu'on a jamais eu le temps d'apprendre à survivre dans des coins comme ici. Aucun de nous. Des trucs d'homme blanc, c'est ça qu'on avait besoin d'apprendre si on voulait manger tous les jours. Tout ce qui était indien, on l'a oublié parce qu'on était occupés à survivre dans ce monde (Wagamese, 2014,p.81)

In addition, it is worth mentioning that the encounter between two cultures, during colonialism, the dominant and the subordinate one is inevitable. Consequently, mimicry may occur, and this may lead to ambivalence that creates a double and contradictory feeling of either continuing to imitate or stopping mimicking by maintaining only the original identity.

Furthermore, even decades or centuries after adopting the colonizer's identity and culture, his gaze to the colonized is always degrading and despicable. Mimicking white culture does not mean being accepted. Richard Wagamese writes; once Franklin arrives in the city, Parson's Gap, he realizes how this country can react to a poor Indian. The children mock him for riding on his old mare, insulted and stoned (Wagamese, 2014, p.17). He knows that he does not belong to this part of the world. Franklin keeps calm, and he is impassible before these scenes that are full of violence and discrimination, maybe to show the power of resistance among the Indians and how they face their problems with wisdom.

Besides to what has been said above, like the Comanche, the Ojibwa people are not familiarized with the horses. And this culture comes with the arrival of the Spanish settlers. Through Franklin's journey with his father, the latter tells his son:

“Les Ojibwés sont pas un peuple de cheval” (Wagamese,2014,p.103). This sentence shows that the Ojibwa people do not have a strong or solid relationship with horses. The sentence may reflect a tension or ambivalence between traditional ways of life and the changes brought by the Europeans. In the Great Lakes, the horses are not important in Indians' daily lives due to the density of forests and the harsh climate. The Spanish explorers and the planters brought horses to

North America when they arrived in the American territories. John Hankins Wallace explains in his book , *The horse of America in his derivation, history and development*, how the planters brought for the first time horses to this new land: “When the plantation was made at Hartford, Connecticut, in 1636, the planters brought their horses and other domestic animals with them” (Wallace, 1897, p.13)

Consequently, the American Indians adopt the culture of horses. The Indians used the horses as a means of hunting, travel, and warfare, especially in the Great Plains. While horses are not originally native to North America, they quickly become integrated into the lives and traditions of many indigenous people, including the Ojibwa. Eldon reminds his son about this adopted culture, and that’s why he finds difficulties in riding the mare.

2.2 Ambivalence of Hybridity

The ambivalence of hybridity of the Ojibwa can be understood through their assimilation to the European culture. In other words, it reflects the mixture of indigenous and non-indigenous cultures that often creates conflicting identities among the natives. A lot of Indians marry the whites, which leads to the mixing of cultures (Indian and European). This blending of cultures creates ambivalence, feeling either to continue in following the values and the norms of the original culture or accept only the ones of the adopted identity. Eldon informs his son, Franklin, that he is half Indian and half white. This mixed heritage situates Franklin in a space of cultural hybridity where he seeks to reconcile with his original identity through his journey with his dying father to the mountains. In addition, Eldon informs his son that they are not accepted by either the whites or the Indians. They feel unhomey:

Tes grands parents étaient tous les deux des sangs-mêlé. On n’était pas des métis comme on appelle les indiens français. On était tout simplement des sang-mêlé. Des Ojibwés. Mélanges à des Ecossais. Des McJib. C’est comme ça qu’on nous appelait. Personne ne voulait de nous. Ni les blancs. Ni les Indiens (Wagamese, 2015,p.79)

Here Eldon tells his son the story of his grandparents; they are Ojibwa and Scottish. They are accepted neither by the Indians nor by the whites.

To understand more about the term “hybridity”, Abdullahi Dahiru Umar states, in *Critical Review of Postcolonial Theory of Homi Bhabha’s Hybridity: A Study of The Location of Culture* explains that hybridity, is a controversial term in postcolonial theory and it is created by the process of colonization. It often refers to the creation of new forms of culture. And different forms like language, culture, politics, and race can be touched by the process of hybridization (Umar, 2024,p.16).

In this novel the hybridization touches all the forms: identity, culture, language, and even the way of thinking. The feeling of ambivalence is highly apparent in the novel through the characters like Frank, Eldon, and Becca Charlie.

During their journey, Franklin and his father decide to take a rest in a cabin in the forest. They find it unexpectedly occupied by Becca Charlie, who is also half Indian and half white. Her hybridity reflects the complexity of indigenous and settler identities in Canada. She renounces the comfort of the city and wants to be close to nature by following the steps of her ancestors. She is influenced by the two cultures and practices the values and the rites transmitted by her parents. She tries to coexist between the two identities by reconciling them through her daily struggle to survive in the mountains. She explains to her guests:

“...Mon père était Chilcotin et ma mère écossaise. Ils avaient tous les deux des têtes pleines de vieilles recettes. J’ai été élevé là-dedans” (Wagamese,2014,p.120). The two cultures find the way to co-exist despite the possible conflicts that can be encountered.

Ironically, Wagamese writes the old man is the one who transmits ancestral values to the kid. Hunting is a fundamental element to survive for an Indian. So the kid is taught how to be a successful hunter. Frank acquires the fundamental techniques to successfully reach his prey. The old man has also taught him how to use a gun since he was three years old. The gun represents the civilized world; it is not an Ojibwa tool, and Frank grows up with it and learns how to use it. The gun is a white man’s product and not an Ojibwa one. It is introduced to the Ojibwa culture by the colonial presence on American territories.

It is worth pointing out that it is at school where the protagonist feels his difference with the other children. He always felt that he belonged to nature and not to books or studies. The native is in two contradictory worlds, civilization and nature. ‘Il était le seul indien et ils ne lui faisaient pas confiance. Il ne leur accordait pas trop de confiance non plus d’ailleurs’ (Wagamese,2014,p.55).

The protagonist’s feeling is ambivalent. Although he attempts to coexist with the dual cultures, his attraction to his natural world draws him back to his original identity. To feel Indian and different is the first step to claiming his Indian origins. This can be related to Lynne Wiltes (2021) and her ideas about the importance of storytelling in teaching. May be through presenting the story of Frank to the student, they can recognize themselves in the story, because almost all the Indians share the same experiences either at school or within society. The awareness of their differences can lead the Indians to resistance and the reclamation of their history. Frank experiences a conflict of two cultures. Furthermore, the author provides the readers with some Indian practices that distinguish them from the whites. After killing a deer, the old man asks Franklin to cut the deer’s throat. After that, the old man marks the kid’s face with the deer’s blood, which the kid understands: “Parce que je suis Indien”, the old man responds, “Parce que je le suis pas” (Wagamese, 2024, p.62). Despite the differences in culture between the old man and Frank, the profound understanding of nature bonds them and the two contradictory cultures find a way to coexist.

The ambivalence of hybridity is not limited only to the Indians; the old man, with his sustainable contact with nature, adopted in his turn the indigenous way of wildlife. The proof is in the way he transmits the ancestral and spiritual beliefs to Frank. His belief in spiritual forces replaces his Christian religion.

J’ai jamais été très porté sur les prières. du moins, pas comme dans les églises. Mais moi, j’crois que tout est sacré. Alors quand j’dis quelque chose j’essaie toujours juste de ressentir ce que j’ressens et de dire ce qui en vient. ça m’a toujours suffi comme ça (Wagamese,2024, p.63)

On the journey through the wilderness, Franklin and his father continue to accentuate the attachment of Indians to nature. It is part of them. At the end of the fifteenth chapter, Eldon expresses how this part of the world gives him a sense of comfort and belonging. In this place he finds peace, reconnects with his past, and ties with ancestral spirits. Eldon to his son: “Je viens pour avoir un peu de paix ici, Frank, dit son père. Ici, c’est le seul endroit où j’ai l’impression d’être chez moi, comme s’il était fait pour moi” (Wagamese, 2014, p. 229). Eldon is a mixed-race person. Due to this hybridity, he chooses to die in nature by recalling his ancestral heritage and rejecting the superficial identity or culture that he used to mask himself with. Here in this place, he feels at home.

It is also worth mentioning that the relationship between civilization and nature is ambivalent. The narrator conveys the concepts of healing, reconciliation, and tranquility through offering views of nature like rivers, trees, and mountains, versus civilization that may lead a person to a state of degradation and sometimes madness. Wagamese in his novel explains how the river for an Ojibwa has a spiritual significance; water is sacred, and it represents a mirror to their past and history. “...puis il resta à regarder son père toujours en train de fixer la rivière” (Wagamese, 2014, p. 35)

We realize also that unlike civilization, nature teaches wisdom and guides people to the healing path. Franklin tells his father how the old man teaches him to take just what he needs from nature. It is an opposition to the civilization where people seek to take above their needs. While nature or being close to nature makes people have different perspectives about life in general, civilization teaches to compete with others and gain profit whatever the means and regardless if it harms others or not. The relationship between civilization and nature, between the white men and the Indians, is contradictory and ambivalent. The first concerns mainly material gains, and the second concerns spiritual perspectives and the constant respect of all the living beings. According to Wagamese, we, as human beings, are given the right to slaughter other

animals, but we should just take what we need. The old man taught this value to Franklin (Wagamese, 2014, p.105)

Chapter Two:

Subaltern Voices in *Dances with Wolves* and *Les étoiles s'éteignent à l'aube*

Subalternity is a current theme in postcolonial narratives. It embodies all the groups or the masses that belong to different societal structures, including the colonized people and women. This chapter analyzes the concept of subaltern voices. It deals with the representation of the Indians as subaltern in *Dances with Wolves* and *Les étoiles s'éteignent à l'aube*. In addition, it explores Indian women and the white men as savior.

1. Representation of the Indians as subaltern in *Dances with Wolves*

Dances with Wolves deals with John Dunbar's journey to the western Great Plains in the second half of the nineteenth century. It is a story written and narrated by a white man. It portrays Native Americans called Comanche. We have tried to analyze this novel through a postcolonial gaze and particularly by dealing with the concept of subaltern voices of Gayatri Spivak. In her essay *Can the subaltern speak?* (1988), she states "The much-publicized critique of the sovereign subject thus actually inaugurates a subject" (Spivak, 1988,p.66). Blake, in writing *Dances with Wolves*, tries to let the Indians speak for themselves. They are given an opportunity to vocalize multiple times in the story. However, this opportunity is given by the white man, John Dunbar, and this emphasizes the power of the dominant agency and reinforces the white's privileged position.

Kicking Bird tells Dunbar a story of the Indians who are invited to a house of law in Texas for a meeting and, unfortunately for them, are deceived and murdered by the whites. "when I was a boy many Comanche went to a house of law in Texas for a big meeting with white chiefs and they were shot dead" (Blake, 1988, p.215). This may demonstrate that if the authority gives the right to the oppressed to speak, it can be easily removed and that is what it happened with the

Indians. They are superficially granted the right to discuss political issues in a house of law, but the reality is, it is just formal and they are not heard.

Giving voice to the subaltern doesn't mean to take seriously their concerns. Spivak argues that the subaltern cannot speak because their speech is silenced by the power structures. Kicking Bird tells how the hair-mouth silences the Indians by killing them and stopping their voices. An agreement with the white man is something impossible by conversation; the subaltern should listen and apply what the whites dictate to him. Allowing him to voice opinions is not possible within the dominant power. Even if an occasion is given to an Indian to speak and articulate his concerns, his voice will not be heard or taken into consideration.

Furthermore, El Habib Louai, in his paper research entitled *Retracing the Concept of the Subaltern from Gramsci to Spivak: Historical Developments and New Application*, tries to deal with Spivak's reconsiderations of the concept of the subaltern, where he explains how the intellectuals fail to overcome what they call essentialism in defining the subaltern. Essentialism fixes identities and overlooks complexities

Spivak's second criticism of Subaltern Studies Group lies in her belief that no methodology, even the most ambitious Marxist one, can avoid a sort of essentialism in its attempt to define who or what may constitute the subaltern group. Consequently, Spivak chooses to adopt the notion of the subaltern essentially because, "it is truly situational. (Louai,2012,p.7)

Before the encounter between Dunbar and the Indians, the white man has a belief that the Indians share the same characteristics, experiences, and interests. That is why he refers to them as savages and wilds multiple times in the novel. They are also deprived of their humanity by reducing their language to that of the animals. The narrator describes it "like the barking of a dog." (Blake, 1988,p.75). Dunbar represents the essentialist thinking. In the following quote from chapter eight, Blake shows this idea: "he knew it was an Indian, but he had never expected anything so wild, and the shock of it had stunned him as surely as a blow to the head" (Blake, 1988,p. 54). The display of the reaction of Dunbar after seeing an Indian for the first time is

actually a shock; he did not expect to meet such a “wild person”. These stereotypes are attributed to all the Indians without exception regardless of their differences. As the narrative progresses, Dunbar identifies the Indians as separate entities and different groups. The Comanche are described as amicable versus the Pawnee, the Comanche’s enemy, as ruthless and bloodthirsty. Overall, *Dances with Wolves* contains essentialist elements, especially at the beginning of the novel, by portraying Native Americans through stereotypical characteristics. And this reflects how Native American has been represented in colonial narratives.

In addition, eurocentrism is highly apparent in the story. *Dances with Wolves* is a white-authored novel. The story is told through Lieutenant John Dunbar’s journal. Consequently, he is the reporter and the interpreter of the Comanche culture. At the very beginning of the story, Blake writes: “Perhaps this was why the sharply handsome cavalry lieutenant had thought of religion” (Blake,1988,p.02). This description of John Dunbar indicates the superiority perspective of the colonizer or the privileged West. He is a very handsome white man, and he is also described as a cavalryman which refers to adventures and bravery. The white man’s centeredness and Indians’ marginalization are major themes in the novel. The representation of the white man as brave and adventurous versus the Indians, who, despite their wilderness life and bravery in facing nature they are represented as cowards. It is a way of exporting biased and misleading ideas about subaltern groups.

Moreover, Blake reserves a shallow and superficial description of the Native American people. While the protagonist makes the readers or the audiences aware of his psychological trauma and daily challenges, the Indians are romanticized as living in harmony with nature and denying their internal and complex life. It is evident that the novel makes a sympathetic portrayal of the Comanche, but it is a simplified and a romanticized story of the Indian.

2. The White Man as Savior and Indian Women's portrayal in *Dances with Wolves*

Through the character of Stand with a Fist, Blake reinforces the concept of the sovereign subject. The writer, through Stand with a Fist, tries to give a voice to the Indian women. However, this opportunity is not innocent due to the white's origin of the character. She is a white woman adopted by the Comanche band. In his attempt to challenge the colonial narrative and the notion of the privileged West, Blake reinforces the gap between the civilized and the subaltern and also asserts the impossibility of the dominant structure to let the subaltern speak for themselves.

Furthermore, Elhabib Louai, in his research paper, explains how Spivak argues about the Indian women during colonialism and how the two authorities operate to decide on their behalf.

Spivak, faced with this difficulty of specifying the realm of subalternity, shifts to reconsider the issues of the subaltern groups by dealing with the problems of gender and particularly Indian women during colonial times. She reflected on the status of Indian women relying on her analysis of a case of Sati women practices under the British colonial rule. Sati women as a subaltern group, Spivak arguments were lost between two polarities: the British humanist discourse calling for individual freedom of Sati women and the Hindu native policy calling for voluntary participation in the ritual. The conflict between these two positions produced two different discourses with no possible solution (Louai,2012,p7)

In *Dances with Wolves*, the Indian women are described superficially and they are not given much importance by colonial narrative. Simultaneously, they are not better treated within their own societies. Thus, this accentuates their subalternity. Stands with a Fist is used primarily to facilitate the connection between the protagonist and the Comanche band. Her suicide attempt establishes her as vulnerable and broken. In addition the other Comanche women are erased from the narrative.

Another point that we think is important to point out is, like John Dunbar, the representation of Stands with a Fist in the novel is also Eurocentric. The narrative emphasizes how the white woman, like the white man, holds traits of bravery and intelligence. In contrast, the representation of the Indian women is passive and excluded. They are portrayed as being weak,

their tasks limited to domestic ones like preparing food and taking care of their children and husbands. Blake describes the Indian women's participation in the butchering scene: "once again women and children flooded onto the plain for the butchering" (Blake, 1988, p.190). The description of Indian women is also restricted to romantic scenes, as we can see in this quote: "The question stayed in his head, commingling lazily with the sounds of Kicking Bird and his wife making love" (Blake, 1988, p.187).

Unlike *Stands with a Fist*, the narrator does not give an emphasis on the Comanche women. He excludes them from the realm of bravery and intelligence. The following lines describe the character *Stands with a Fist* who is a white woman adopted by the Comanche band after losing her family to a Pawnee attack. Blake describes her as: "but she was very strong. Her beautiful light brown eyes, eyes that shone with intelligence" (Blake, 1988, p.68). As John Dunbar, *Stands with a Fist* is portrayed as being intelligent and brave, characteristics that are attributed to the whites.

A great deal of the narrative is to advocate for diversity and the representation of the Comanche's culture and lifestyle. However, it fails to challenge the dominant one that marginalizes subaltern voices. In this respect, Spivak, in her article *Can the subaltern speak?* (1988) questions why European intellectuals or elites who often call for the acceptance of the other might overlook or silence the voices of the groups they claim to support. The following quote elaborates this idea: "why should such occlusions be sanctioned in precisely those intellectuals who are our best prophets of heterogeneity and the Other?" (Spivak, 1988, p.67).

While the narrative does not explicitly focus on polygamy, it deals briefly with social structure and relationships within the Indian tribe. In many Native American cultures, polygamous relationships are historically practiced. Kicking Bird has two wives with four children. "Plus there were the ongoing duties of being a husband to two wives, a father to four children" (Blake, 1988, p.127) In addition, in the Comanche tribe, it is the father who has the power and the right to decide whether to make an end to the mourning of the widow or not. After

the death of Stands with a Fist's husband, she enters a mourning period. She cannot get married again with another man until her father decides to make an end to her sadness and mourning. The woman is not only excluded by colonial factors but also by their patriarchal systems.

There were no prescribed period of mourning in the Comanche life way, and release could come from woman's father. If she had no father, the warrior who was her primary provider would take the responsibility.'p.156. Kicking Bird ends Stands with a Fist's widowhood and releases her by merely saying these words: "StandsWith A Fist... you are no longer a widow"(Blake, 1988,p.275).

As we have mentioned above, the western narratives reflect the tendency to center white protagonists in indigenous stories. *Dances with Wolves* is not excluded from this tendency. John Dunbar is seen as a white savior multiple times in the novel. He saves Stands with a Fist from death and brings her back to her tribe. As an outsider, he contributes to saving an Indian's life. Blake writes: "The girl was bandaged with his underwear and a United States flag." (Blake, 1988,p.94), this sentence carries significant and symbolic meaning, how an outsider uses personal and intimate items to care about a stranger and particularly an Indian. This indicates the humanity and sympathy of a white man. In addition, the flag symbolizes the United States Army expansionism and the impact that it has on the Native American communities. The United States Army is also a savior and a protector of the Indians.

Besides, Dunbar informs the Comanche band about the coming of a massive buffalo herd. He does, indeed, assist the Comanche in the mission of hunting the buffalo by providing and using his revolver. "As the column passed by, Dunbar made a brief stop at the fort. He gathered a supply of tobacco, his revolver and rifle..." (Blake, 1988,p.159). His assistance as a white man and an outsider is significant because he provides new tools like revolvers that help the Indians in successfully and rapidly hunting the buffalo instead of using traditional means like bows and spears. The scene of buffalo hunting highlights the great maturity and smartness of the lieutenant, and it reserves a shallow description of the Indians. The Western narratives often silence the subaltern they claim to represent.

Spivak, in her essay, writes, “White man saves brown women from brown man” (Spivak,1988, p. 92). The white man is seen as a savior and the one who rescues the brown women from the men of their own race. Spivak provides the example of Sati. In this narrative, John Dunbar is not only seen as a desired guest but also as an ideal man, a hero, and probably a god. He is greatly appreciated in this tribe, particularly by women. Blake describes Indian women’s admiration of Dunbar as:

Having been a constant subject of discussion for many weeks, the lieutenant was well known to them: as a possible god, as a clown, as a hero, and as an agent of mystery.....he had achieved a rare status in Comanche culture, a status that was perhaps most appreciated by its women” (Blake,1988,p.182)

When the colonizer tries to save the subaltern, he actually reinforces his own power. After saving Stands with a Fist and the successful hunting participation, John Dunbar is greatly respected and admired by the Comanche, especially women.

Another scene, in chapter 26, describes John Dunbar as a savior. He helps the Comanche to successfully face the Pawnee’s attack. The lieutenant provides the Indians with military arms like rifles. And with his military experience, he proposes a strategy to deceive the coming enemies to the village. Indeed, the battle ends in favor of the Comanche. Blake describes the scene: “Seven Comanches had been wounded, only two seriously, but the real miracle was in the number of dead. Not a single Comanche fighter had been lost. Even the old men could not remember such a one-sided victory.” (Blake, 1988,p.270).

To finish, despite his integration into the Comanche tribe and the deep relationships with them, Dunbar decides to save the Comanche leaves with his wife at the end of the story. The motivation of his departure is explained in the following lines. He asks for a council in order to explain the reasons for quitting his new community:

...So you must know that it is hard for me to say that I must leave you...When they find me they find you. They will want to hang me and they will want the same kind of punishment for you.... I must go. I have told Stands with a Fist about this and we will go together (Blake, p.306-307)

He doesn't want to put the Comanche in trouble because he knows that the white men will chase him. Nevertheless, other reasons can be pinpointed. He is a white man whose actions are seen as heroic and also as a savior. Although Stands with a Fist is a fully integrated and respected member of the tribe, she is waiting for a white man to save her from the wilderness and to rejoin her race. She gets married to Dances with Wolves and becomes pregnant. And her consent to leave with him can be seen from Spivak's perspective about how the brown women are saved by the white men. Actually, their departure is to return to their white society and civilization and put an end to the harshness of living in nature.

3. Representation of the Indians as subaltern in *Les étoiles s'éteignent à l'aube*

The novel is written by an indigenous writer. He speaks on behalf of all the Indians and all the subaltern groups around the world. *Les étoiles s'éteignent à l'aube* (2014) gives a voice to the subaltern by centering indigenous experiences and narratives that are historically marginalized and silenced within the dominant colonial structure. Here, Richard Wagamese is speaking about his race and identity. He represents this remote culture not only to American people but also to the whole world. To do this, he highlights the indigenous storytelling and Indian cultural heritage. Unlike *Dances with Wolves*, *Les étoiles s'éteignent à l'aube* (*Medicine Walk*) centers the story around Franklin Starlight by emphasizing the complexity and the richness of Indian culture, sweeping aside the perpetuating stereotypes, and replacing the misrepresentation of colonial narratives with authentic storytelling.

Charlotte Robertson states that storytelling: “explained by Muscogee poet Joy Harjo in her book “*Catching the Light*” She stresses that stories hold power in their effect on others..” (Robertson,2023). We try to relate the concept of subaltern voices to the idea of storytelling as healing to show the importance of storytelling on the subaltern groups. In “*les étoiles s'éteignent à l'aube*”, the story is told through the characters Frank and Eldon Starlight.

In Indian culture speaking and telling a story can ease someone's spiritual pains. Indeed, Eldon is an excellent storyteller who transmits to his son some personal and historical realities. Through

these stories, the characters share their experiences as subalterns and how they are rejected by the dominant structures. By understanding their past, Franklin and other marginalized groups can follow the healing path. And through the storytelling, Franklin understands how his ancestors underwent the same experiences as he experiences today. And the importance of the storytelling is to be aware of intergenerational trauma, and this can help them overcome the feeling of inferiority and marginalization.

Another point that we think is important to be evoked is that the novel is written by an Ojibwa author; however, this does not prevent the presence of essentialist elements in the story.

At school, the children do not trust Frank; he is an Indian, and he is different. Thus, he is inferior. Another scene shows how the whites regard the colonized and their racist and deceptive gaze toward the Indians. Once in the Parson's Gap, Franklin is seen as a stranger and an undesirable creature. He is stoned and rejected. This is a result of colonialism that rejects all that is related to Indian culture and highlights the white civilization. This reflects how the civilized West can generate clichés and stereotypes to refer to the subaltern groups and how they put all the excluded people into the same bowl. In addition, Eldon, in telling Frank his story of his father, accentuates the concept of subaltern voices in Indian life. Eldon assures his son that his family is poor and finds difficulties in surviving due to marginalization, destitution, and poverty that lead many Indians to join wars that are not theirs to gain money. Eldon's father joins the Second World War in order to support his family, and unfortunately he is killed shortly after joining the war. Eldon and his friend, in their turn, experience the same conditions as their parents and ancestors.

In addition, due to the marginalization process, sustainable silencing, and discrimination, Eldon and his friend Jimmy decide to join the Korean War in order to win a place in a dominant society and to bid farewell to the poverty that has followed them since their childhood. These scenes show how the Indians are marginalized, silenced, and pushed to subordination. The storytellers are Indians, Eldon and Frank, and this is a contest against euro-centrism that is

common in dominant narratives. Eldon, in telling his son about his past and memory, contributes to making their voice heard and transmitting their experiences to the subsequent generations.

It is also important to say that Richard Wagamese's work might be seen as a *strategic essentialism*. It is a political strategy where a group temporarily adopts unified identity for the sake of mobilizing for a common goal. Here Wagamese uses this story to ensure the survival of his excluded culture by demonstrating the power of the cultural essence of spirituality that is common in Indian cultures despite the differences that separate them. It is a call for unification to prompt the Indians and all subaltern groups around the world to highlight their cultural heritage and to strengthen their unity. Wagamese's book is also used as a strategy to counter the colonial narrative that centers around white heroes, as we have seen in *Dances with Wolves*, and to center this narrative around indigenous characters.

Lynne Wiltes admits: "...In that first year, I did not successfully answer the question posed in English Practice's call: How might we use stories to help students understand themes of identity, diversity, and inclusion?(Wiltes,2021,p.17). Through these lines we can understand that even the schools fail to transmit the values of cultural diversity that are important to co-exist. If the students do not have access to such stories, they cannot understand the daily oppression and discrimination that subaltern groups may undergo under the power structure. Wagamese's novel is the ideal story that addresses themes of cultural diversity and subaltern voices. It is represented mainly by the protagonist, Franklin, who is marginalized by the students at school merely due to his Indian origin. The Ojibwa are always seen as inferior, and in order to survive, they have to renounce their culture.

Furthermore, through the character of Becka Charlie, Wagamese attempts to display the knowledge of medicine or healing practices in Indian culture that is often ignored or invalidated by dominant Western medical systems. She provides medicine to help ease Eldon's pain. A conversation between Frank and Becka about traditional medicine:

Il a bu de l'infusion de cèdre? Demanda-t-il.

Ça marche bien

C'est vieux remède, mais il est bon

Tu connais les remèdes ?

Certains. Mon père était Chilcotin et ma mère écossaise. Ils avaient tous les deux des têtes pleines de vieilles recettes. J'ai été élevée là-dedans. J'en ai gardé un grand nombre toutes ces années. On sait jamais quand ça peut t'être utile. (Wagamese,2014,p.120)

Through the character of Becka, Wagamese shows the richness of this remote culture and how it is important to preserve ancestral knowledge that proves its effectiveness. To reject these ancient practices is to deny the existence of the Indians.

It is also worth mentioning that Wagamese utilizes the English language, which is a universal and dominant language, in order to advocate for the rights of his community. The dominant societies and power structures contribute to shaping the minds of the marginalized people. This can lead to restricting the scope of freedom to make their voices heard. *Les étoiles s'éteignent à l'aube* is a story told by a subaltern about subaltern Indian groups, the Ojibwa.

Ironically, the subalterns use the colonizer's language to advocate for their rights and denounce the discrimination, racism, and oppression that they undergo in their lives. Hence, their claims will not be heard or taken into consideration within dominant structures. This leads to maintaining western ideologies, and thus, the subaltern will not be understood or heard. So the issue here is not if the subaltern can speak but whether his voice is heard or not. Eldon's attempt to share his life story reflects the need for indigenous voices to reclaim their narratives, which have often been marginalized or silenced due to colonial histories.

4. The White Man as Savior and Indian Women's portrayal in *Les étoiles s'éteignent à l'aube*

Like *Dances with Wolves*, *Les étoiles s'éteignent à l'aube* marginalizes women and does not give them the opportunity to voice and articulate their past and memory as do the protagonist and his father. The novel represents Indian women as prostitutes, and reduces them to a lower level socially and economically. They are dominated not only by colonial institutions but also by patriarchal systems. Wagamese denies women voices in the novel. He does not give them an opportunity to voice, and by this, he accentuates the colonial narrative and its marginalization of Indian women. In addition, he confirms Spivak's idea that the subaltern cannot speak, especially within a patriarchal system.

Supporting Spivak's ideas, Rosalind C. Morris, in her book *Can the subaltern speak? Reflections on the history of an idea*, emphasizes the marginalization of women through making their speech voiceless through letting other powers speak and decide on their behalf. She also urges to investigate the condition that forces women to be mute and not be heard.

We will try to analyze the following women characters from Spivak's perspective.

that:

The importance of reading the statement as such and thereby reflecting upon the act of reading lies in its displacement of the question of what a subaltern woman really said or wanted to say(and hence what could be said on her behalf) and its consequent emphasis on the question of audibility and legibility. It enables an investigation of what conditions obtrude to mute the speech of the subaltern women, to render her speech and her speech acts illegible to those who occupy the space produced by patriarchal complicity(whether of imperialism or globalization), namely the state.(Morris,2010,p03)

Women marginalization is represented by different characters in the novel. These characters are only given minor roles and described superficially regardless of their inner thoughts and desires.

Deirdre

She is a minor character, a prostitute; she is only described having sex with Eldon, not by her own history, thoughts, or desires. She is an unvoiced character. Her presence in such a place,

rooming house, demonstrates her economic vulnerability. Her description illustrates the invisibility of marginalized women. Eldon introduced her to Frank as follows:

Elle, c'est Deirdre, dit il en pointant un pouce en direction de la femme. C'est une pute.

La femme lui donna une claque espiègle, et fit un clin d'œil de gamine au garçon, ce qui lui retourna un peu l'estomac. Elle se redressa dans le lit pour s'asseoir coté de son père, elle arrangea ses long cheveux d'un blond terne et porta la bouteille à sa bouche, alors le drap tomba si bien que ses seins se mirent à danser devant le garçon qui se raidit et rougit.

Tu peux en profiter. Ça la dérange pas.

Merci. Non, répondit le garçon (Wagamese, 2015,p.30).

The mother of Eldon

She is a powerful example of the subaltern woman. Her voice is silenced by both economic hardships and gendered violence. She experiences violence and trauma through her life. She experiences the loss of her husband and poverty, and later on, violence and an abusive relationship with Jenks. She accepts her situation and prefers to be silent rather than denouncing her companion's emotional and physical violence. She is not named which symbolizes the erasure of her identity, and is described merely as being passive and vulnerable. It is a common description of indigenous women in colonial narratives.

Angie Pratt

Eldon's wife reflects indigenous experiences of marginalization and trauma. Like most indigenous people and especially women, she experiences addiction, oppression, and injustices throughout her life. She shares parts of her background and family history in order to support Eldon during his struggle with alcoholism. She died in childbirth as a consequence of Eldon's irresponsibility. So we can see Angie as a subaltern in the sense that her life history is not different from other Indian women, and they share the same circumstances and destiny. Throughout her pregnancy, she works to cover her daily needs, and Eldon spends his time drinking. And this situation leads to her death. So, Angie, as an Indian woman, is not only marginalized by colonial institutions through preventing her from getting rights and jobs that can

preserve her from poverty but also by patriarchal society, her husband neglects her and does not take care of his wife during her pregnancy.

Like Michael Blake, Richard Wagamese uses Bunky, the old man, who is a white man, as a wise man who works hard to maintain the Indian practices and values by inculcating them in Franklin's mind. The old man can be seen as a savior of Indian culture or identity. He also raised Franklin, who is the son of the woman he loves, Angie. And despite her death, the action of Bunky, who accepts to raise the baby of an Indian, is an allusion to Spivak's idea that the white man is always here to save the brown women from the brown man. He saves her son from his alcoholic father and provides him an excellent education.

V. Conclusion

This work is a comparative study of Richard Wagamese's *Les étoiles s'éteignent à l'aube* to Michael Blake's *Dances with Wolves*. It is investigated through postcolonial perspectives by dealing with Homi Bhabha's *Ambivalence* and Gayatri Spivak's *Subltern Voices*.

Our analysis of ambivalence in *Dances with Wolves* makes us understand that this postcolonial concept is not only restricted to the link between the colonized and the colonizer and the feelings of instability and contradiction that the colonized experiences under colonial agency, as Homi Bhabha articulates it, but also the experiences of double feelings that the colonizer can encounter through the contact with the colonized

We come to a conclusion that despite the difference between the two narratives either in setting or in the period of time, the ambivalence is inevitable and experienced by the characters throughout the novels, especially by the protagonists. The ambivalence of the stereotypes can be seen through the way Blake represents the Indians sometimes as wild, savages and sometimes kind and generous. He also widens the gap between the white man and the Indians by depicting the white as smart and courage, in contrast, the colonized is described as coward. Furthermore, the ambivalence of colonial power is also a major theme in the novel. It is represented through the instability of feelings of the protagonist either to renounce his authority as an officer in the American Army to become a member of the Comanche band. The actions and discourse can also be employed as authority. The actions of Dunbar and his appearance make him an ideal person and greatly admired within the Indian Community.

In addition, the ambivalence of mimicry can be understood through the contact of John Dunbar with the Comanche. The Lieutenant is in dilemma either to adopt the Indian culture or to abandon his won. In addition, the analysis of the novel through the exploration of notions like hybridity, mimicry, and colonial discourse proves the complexity and the interrelationship of both the colonized and the colonizer's feelings.

The characters in *Les étoiles s'éteignent à l'aube*, undergo the same feelings of contradictions and duality. Power structures impose on the Indians to adopt the dominant culture mainly through school. Franklin feels distinct feelings of rejection and acceptance. He has always been felt split between two worlds, civilization and nature. Ambivalence is always experienced by the colonized even after the decolonization. Although there is a difference in the period of time when the two stories occurred, *Dances with Wolves* in the second half of the nineteenth century and *Les étoiles s'éteignent à l'aube* in twenty-first century, the colonized or the ex-colonized cannot exclude or prevent what Bhabha calls Ambivalence.

It is also important to mention how the Indians are, in both novels, described as Subalterns, a concept that refers to the marginalized groups in the world, particularly the colonized within dominant structures. The Indians in the two narratives are excluded and marginalized. The first one, *Dances with Wolves*, is a white-authored novel that, despite its reputation as a revolutionary novel about the description of the Indians as human, still disregards and excludes the Indians and make a promotion to the essentialist thinking. The second novel, *Les étoiles s'éteignent à l'aube*, is an Indian-authored one that, despite its devotion to the Indian culture, identity, and Indian-centeredness, carries experiences of loss, resistance, oppression, discrimination, and even some essentialist elements. Both novels confirm Spivak's ideas of the white man saves brown women from brown men, and the white man as a savior. All these elements make us, as readers, conscious about the characters' marginalization and how they are still voiceless even after being expressed and given a voice, the subaltern cannot speak.

VI. General Conclusion

Dances with Wolves and *Les étoiles s'éteignent à l'aube* are two significant works in American/ Indian-Canadian literature. This study has analyzed the narratives from postcolonial perspectives. However, limitations are encountered. The first limitation concerns the access to the primary texts, as both novels are not available in Algeria, and had to be purchased them abroad. The second limitation lies in the lack of existing literature on the postcolonial concepts of Ambivalence and Subaltern Voices in relation to these works. . That is why we have found difficulties and challenges in completing, investigating, and deepening our discussion.

Furthermore, the scenes in both texts are rich in imagery related to nature and civilization, which offers promising avenues for further research. In *Dances with Wolves*, John Dunbar's encounter with nature, particularly, his relationship with the wolf "Two Socks" awakens his consciousness and embrace his unity with the natural world. He considers himself as an integral part of nature. This demonstrates the power of nature in changing and shaping human's mindset and awareness. Similarly, *Les étoiles s'éteignent à l'aube*, in its turn, emphasizes the deep connection between the Ojibwa and nature. The journey through the backcountry provides vivid images of nature, like the varieties of trees, mountains, rivers, and animals. It reinforces the notion that the land constitutes the essence of the Ojibwa identity. Franklin's rejection of school and joining nature refers to the primary link to his real belongings.

Besides, storytelling as healing and storytelling as important in teaching and learning are also interesting ideas in both novels, and it can emerge as another area of investigation for future exploration. Although this study has addressed this idea, they could be expanded by examining how both texts can serve educational purposes not only in North American but also globally, through highlighting their impact on both Indigenous and non-indigenous students. In addition, a comparative study between Indian storytelling and Kabyle storytelling could offer insightful

perspectives on how narrative traditions contribute to healing from grief, guilt, and the feeling of inferiority.

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