Chapter Five

DANCING WITH A GHOST:
JOAN CRATE’S *BREATHING WATER*
AND
JORDAN WHEELER’S
*BROTHERS IN ARMS*
CHAPTER FIVE
Dancing with a Ghost

Joan Crate’s narrative architecture mingles history and contemporary events with the communal and native act of story-telling, the incidents, images and characters of the novel are set against the timeless and time-honored native oral tradition; and an intimate harmonious tie to the landscape, community and the story-telling tradition inform and explain Crate’s vision of rootedness and identity. The stories manifest themselves in a cyclical rather than sequential way to reflect upon the essential characteristics of the native oral tradition, they also endorse a pattern of relationship with the native communities which can harmonize and contain the fragments of life experienced by the characters away from their natural habitat, the home of the natives.

Begum states: "Joan crate’s Breathing Water is a text that disturbs, subverts and transforms the existing paternal, Euro-centered order. Written by a Native writer of mixed blood, BW is a text that voices the hither to silenced voices of the Native/Woman. Doubly marginalized, suspended between the white Canadian society, and her own Native heritage, Joan Crate recreates the life of Dione Harilumbus as a constant Struggle between harsh reality and a maze of repressed memories”. (Begum 3)

Create intends to make us aware that the “reality” she projects is composed of the histories and cultures and people so interwoven that the “story” of one contains the story of another. For her the wholesome harmonies integration of memory, history, culture and story offers immense possibilities for the tradition of native writing. The readers establish a connection between family and community, history and tradition from multiple perspectives and like the characters trying to piece together their lives, they too participate in the circularity and fragmentation of Crate’s narrative structure to piece
together the events the relationships and the characters surrounding the natural landscape of the native world.

**Breathing Water** is the first Nunatak Fiction by the Canadian Native poetess and novelist, Joan Crate. It's a novel about Dione, the native woman, who is married and has a baby named Elijah. Her marriage and her baby have fragmented her life into pieces. Being a housewife and mother, she is very much frustrated in her present life and suspended in a dark sensual underworld. She searches for the voice of the storyteller, her father, which can only connect her fragmented lives. Her ongoing search fills the novel with irony, tenderness and wisdom. Jerry McDonnel in his review states: "Dione comes to realize that life consists of telling the traditional native stories, which provide guidance and continuity in life. Anyone who forgets the tales that underpin life is cast adrift and has no guidelines by which to order existence", (McDonnel 139)

Robert Kroetsch, in his review of the novel, says: “Dione, the heroine of Breathing Water, moves in the exquisite rhythms and details and surprises of Joan Crate’s prose from cosmos watching to crotch watching, from the wonders of breastfeeding to the blunders of marriage, from the healing powers of West Coast Indian mythology to the irresistible beauties and terrors of domestic life” (Back page). Joan Crate dedicates this novel to her Mom, Dad and Stephanie. It depicts Crate’s mastery of English language and the narrative form. The protagonist is very much disturbed and restless, moves around in search of a voice, and finds it nowhere. In the very beginning, her physical and mental states are described:

“All around me, the world bloats. Pink leaks into green leaks into grey and blue sky envelop me with swollen lips. I’m hungry. I want to suck the sky into colourless dust. I want to fill every cell with sleep and food, but I’m lost” (1)

Dione is very much hungry and tired without sleep. She is very lonely and goes to everywhere having no fixed destination in mind. She was her father’s “little One, his Eagle-woman” before marriage. She enters into a restaurant to have coffee. She hears to many voices there. She observes. “The voices have started to layer themselves one over
the other, and it's becoming difficult to tell them apart, to make sense of what's being said" (5). She, like a Salmon charging upstream, pushes through the crowd and reaches the doors to outside.

Dione, writes H.Callaghan, "seeks escape in a series of sordid, surreal affairs with seedy men-drug smugglers, male strippers and pornographic artists. But the man she's really looking for is her father, a West Coast Indian who filled her childhood with Native myths and folk-tales, He walked out of the family when Dione was a child. Now she searches everywhere for him and for the spirituality, peace and folk wisdom that his memory represents", (Callaghan 51) Dione is married to Jorge, a Greek boy, who is called JO-JO by everyone except his family. His mother wanted to have a traditional Greek bride as her daughter-in-law, but Dione already pregnant because of her affairs with Jo-Jo. As she says, "Jo-Jo, my husband, the father of my baby. That's why I married him, because he is Elijah's father and because he wanted me to" (9) Her mother and sister also suggest her to marry Jo-Jo. She agrees because she will have enough money. Even Jo-Jo can finance her sister Crow and her brother Sunny for getting education in universities. The first-born boy should have been Dimitri after Jo-Jo's father or Panajota after her grandmama. But Elijah is the name chosen by Dione after her father's name.

She has no engagement after her husband leaves for his office and returns late daily with some business excuse. She doesn't like to stay inside the house all time. She moves out and roams around driving the car alone with her baby-son, Elijah. She experiences her first physical contact with an artist one day, but thinks it's a dream. She leaves home "to drive to Baby Week at Eaton's", but doesn't reach the place. She has brought home a kisser cushion from the artist's room, but thinks that she has stolen it from a display. She recalls her childhood and says "As a kid I used to steal things candy mainly but perhaps it's a recurring problem. May be I'm Kleptomaniac. I can't help myself." (33). Her mother is of the same opinion that she has changed her manners after her son's birth. She isn't found at her place because she feels very nervous and the
spacious rooms seem to her too small. She states "I hate the barely audible sigh of air moving through empty rooms, I don't know what to do here, so I turn on the dishwasher, the washer and dryer, the vacuflo, the garburator, stereo and the TV. I want noise, I want voices" (33). She is afraid of "Silence" and feels that noise is better than silence or nothing- "this almost nothing at all" (Ibid).

Dione recalls her past life. She was working in the cafeteria after school and weekends for two years when she was sixteen. She had reputation as a good waitress. Linda, Jo-Jo's mistress, became her friend then. She was in charge of the lounge. She invited Dione to join her in the lounge and serve liquor to customers. She attracted Jo-Jo's attention then. In formal way, he invited her to several functions, dinners and other parties without doing anything wrong. She initially refused but later on accepted those invitations. She says. "Why not? I had nothing better to do. I was merely waiting for someone meaningful to come into my life." (44)

At her eighteen, she is dating with her young boss. At night, she imagines him "my future lover, my destiny". Then they start making love to one another. Two lovers at first sight are in love forever. Now she has been the mother to Elijah. But she is not happy and satisfied. She hates her present state, loneliness. She states "I hate the way Jo-Jo's changed me, my body, my little Elijah-something else, my destiny, its meaning, has been stripped away" (46). She has got her lover forever but her destiny is not in a good shape.

Dione, called Donni by Jo-Jo, attends to some family visits and gatherings organized by her husband and his business partner Gus Andropolous. His wife Sophie is also a nice woman of 27/28, very loving and gentle. She promises Dione to help her in cooking Greek foods. She is weak at shopping, for which she needs Dione's help. Dione takes charge of the outside world. Even in her childhood, she was interested in outside affairs. She says. "Nothing scared me outside-the trees, the road, the sea, the barely discernable darkness and woods when I sneaked out at night, or refused to hear Mother's call to come home" (73/4). She used to lead her siblings while playing outside.
She hasn’t mastered the art of cooking—the kitchen things, “The stainless steel utensils and rituals of sink and stove”. She is compared with the tide and her father says, “one day you could go too far” (74).

Dione is married to Jo-Jo and now a member of the Greek immigrant family in Canada. She meets with his family members and relatives. She knows that Jo-Jo is some kind of distance cousin to the Andropolous brothers and also business partner. She however, fails to know about the lineage the exact connection. Gus explains her. “You can’t understand what it’s like there—the little villages, the big families” (BW 75)

She tries to “Fit in” and to accommodate herself among his relatives. She, being pregnant, is very much under control. She says “I was self-conscious among them, these people I hardly know who spoke with accents and practiced strange customs like kissing each other on both sides of the face whenever they met. Among them I was foreign and inadequate, but I would try would” (76) She, being a Native conidian, decides to acculturate and assimilate herself into the Greek community in Canada. This is very interesting because Greeks are minorities and try to assimilate or acculturates them into the mainstream there. Their use of broken English is an illustration of such acculturation. Sophie, for example, always tries to protect Dione by her following statements

“Ladies and Gentlemen.” “You men make me sick!” …

“That girl gonna have a baby. She tired and in a place she don know all the peoples. Everyone speak Greek. She don speak Greek. Every one of you mens make bad jokes when she come. You want too much, you mens. You should be ashamed of yourselves.” (78)

The author deliberately constructs such ungrammatical sentences and broken phrases for Greek speakers in Canada. They have tried to assimilate themselves to a foreign culture as per their needs and demands. We shouldn’t expect the total assimilation of this ethnic minority because they have their own social and racial customs and traditional values to practice and they can’t sacrifice them for another set of values and customs.
Dione doesn’t like Jo-JO’s unnecessary interferences into her privacy. She pulls away from him but he grabs her again. She doesn’t consent to his advances. She remains strong and says: “I don’t want him. I won’t have him near me, contaminating me.” (79). She finally gains power and wins over Jo-JO. She is not found at home like most of the housewives. She doesn’t identify herself with other housewives. She strongly decides “But no, I have to remain myself, separate from Jo-Jo, in control. I want to go my own way. I need to something waits for me outside the house. I have to find it.” (83)

Dione has to decide her destination. Where has she to go? What has she to do? Whom has to contact? She takes her car to an unknown place. She doesn’t know anyone there. She enters into a building and in the basement she finds an artist’s studio. She sees a crowd: “Where shoes on the steps, white shoes climbing down, white socks, white pant, white shirt, white scarf, blonde hair, descending. White body walks over floor boards, turns towards me.” (24) The man in white takes her to a room and asks her to be naked under the lamplight. She says “I am lines quivering over paper, bending into muscle and bone, snapping like elastics.” (26) They have a sexual union. Dione drives home back, wondering, “Who he is, what he means, his art, his words, what meaning he has for me.” (28) His son has been gifted a kisser cushion by the man. Her father used to call her “Eagle woman” because she could fly down to track/run very fast, far ahead of everyone else. Next time she moves out in search of the art gallery but ends up in another strange location. She comes across an old man whose voice is low like her father’s voice and whose skin is like her father’s wood-coloured skin. She thinks “May be this is father. Doesn’t he recognize me?” (49). She reaches a red-light area, a place full of beggars, prostitutes and underworld people. She is surrounded by a group of persons named Gertie, Boxer, Mr. Macdonald the Mayor and Buzzard, a robber. They together take wine celebrating two events. Mr. Macdonald’s pension cheque and Buzzard is freedom from imprisonment. Buzzard offers her an invitation of travel to the States, a day trip she would give him company and they together would, “look like a family” along with the
baby. She accepts the invitation and accompanies him for the trip. She longs to be free of all responsibility and be young again. She says:

“We laugh, both of us watching him and I imagine a camera following us, shooting a scene here, a scene there. Singing in the car, the restaurant, balloons at the zoo, shopping for silly things, a kiss tenderly executed on a busy sidewalk. All of it creating a mosaic. Of what? Of love. Yes love. I have seen enough movies to recognize it.” (88)

She is a wife and mother and Buzzard asks her to look like a “housewife.” He uses her just to “cross the border” and do smuggling. She is in fear. She says, “I don’t know where I am, or where Buzzard is. He could have brought me anywhere, and then abandoned me. Maybe he only needed me to get across the border. Perhaps he’s a really big criminal. Someone could be coming to kidnap me right now.” (90/91). Buzzard hands her a comb near the border to comb her hair when he has to talk to the guard. She acts like a young mother. She assumes: “young mothers are innocents and unaware of their sensuality. It’s kittens and puppies they love, the warm caress of perfumed bath water, and children, of course children. Behind the bedroom door they are passionate with their husbands, only their husbands, their passion uncontrolled. You reluctant” (93). She thus searches for her own self, her womanhood and motherhood. She says to herself. “This is me, this is my role.” (I bid). She returns home and Jo-JO rebukes her like a bear. He calls her a whore, a “fucking whore.” She feels being “powerless” but can’t stand it. She searches for a meaning of her life. She visits Buzzard’s place again. She waits for him but he is gone. She says to herself: “I came here for a reason. I’m not sure what it is but it has something to do with reason, whether or not he meant, he means something in my life, weather or not my life has meaning, and I don’t want to leave with nothing.” (198 / 199)

Susan Elderkin in her review writes: “Crate allows Dione to create space creating space is a chore for Dione, because she wants to accommodate great disparity her parentage and heritage (her white mother and half-Indian father), her Greek husband’s family and culture, her need to escape both of these versus her need to comprehend both,
her desire to be a mother yet also to be free of responsibility and beyond accountability" (Elderkin 91)

Dione is involved in drug addiction and illicit relationship outside home. She always waits for "something" to happen in her life. She accompanies Randy and Jewell to a nightclub for enjoyment. She meets with Michael Masters, who invites her to his dressing room, gives her a motorcycle ride and does sex also. He gives her an autographed photo of his own with his address and telephone number at the back. Her brother-in-law and Jewell's husband, Rene, also kisses her roughly being over drunk. Jo-Jo also does sex with her at the new hotel construction site. She wants to say 'no' but has never been able to do so. She has always consented to his decisions and advances. Jo-Jo pushes her for another issue because he wants to have a son or a daughter named after her parents either father or mother. In her depression, Dione always remembers her Father's voice and her childhood days spent along with her sister, Jewell, crow and sunny. Her brother. She makes sincere requests to her Father to tell stories in her grief and misery. The stories told to her unite various threads of the pilot in the novel. One story is as follows:

A mortal woman, the chief's daughter, married the sea, or its son, or the spirit of the sea's son. Her would change and solid body mutated, swelled, reshaped and then dissipated into the sea. Her Father narrates.

"There was ugliness too. The fluid grace of the sea's son disappear on land; he could hardly walk, but rolled from side to side on feet clumped with shells and limp starfish. His body was slimed and barnacle-encrusted and the village gasped in horror as he made his way to the house of the chief to ask for his daughter's hand in marriage. No! They cried, you can't marry the chief's beautiful daughter. No, the chief told him, you cannot have my daughter, and the son of the sea returned to water. The chief's daughter followed her lover and saw him down the water. She touched him dipping her hand through the surface of the water. She feels
"something, the flicker of a fish tail, a slap of muscle, something smooth and liquid..." (23)

Imagining the story of the chief's daughter, the narrator Dione starts leaving how to swim. Her father instructs her “Blow into the water, breathe in the air” (Ibid) She thinks that the wife of the con of the Sea could “breathe the water” After her marriage, she perhaps became water, “her body and his body entwined, cool, and clean in’ love”. (Ibid.) She says, “I wish I could fall into a destiny the way the chief’s daughter did. Then everything-my life-would make sense”. (24) This story is related to the title of the novel The Protagonist identifies herself with the Chief’s daughter and like her, marries the person belonging to another race In her new role, she dissolves and dismantles into pieces. She is tired to establish her identity outside the house.

Her Daddy tells her the story about T’elch and his wives trapped in a cave He says

“Every morning T’elch left them there, and pushed a boulder in front of the cave mouth so they would not follow him and disturb his solitary swim in the ocean It was in the earth, transforming he would as the people wished T’elch was purifying his body with exercise, solitude, and fasting in order to be ready for the Changer. He had cased making love to his wives ... And each day he rose before dawn (35 / 36).

The other villagers were also interested to meet the changer and ask for his help. Their minds were gradually filled with suspicion and distrust towards each other T’elch had three wives and everything he required He asked for food and shelter for the poor of the village The stranger in the canoe granted him his wish. He changed him into a stone. The changer said. “And because you are so selfless a man, I will make you and example for all men for all time” (36) The wives were never accounted for and they perhaps wait in the cave still for their husband to return and release them Being worried about their condition, she forgets about her reality. She falls down from the wooden platform and hurts herself completely. She loses her sense and gets back after sometime Jewell
concludes “May be the changer rescued them” (38). Dione again identifies herself with the wives and feels herself trapped in Jo-Jo’s house as his wife and mother of a baby. She has no release from it. She doesn’t matter much in this patriarchal racist society. She is the “other” and the oppressed. She has to assimilate herself into the mainstream, her husband’s culture, forgetting her own root, past identity. She is always worried about her own womanhood.

Blue sky came every late summer night to his lover’s teepee and wanted to love her. Everything he left a blue bead, an offer of marriage, on her breast. Every night, he waited for her acceptance in her tent. She had nothing to do with him. She turned away from him as he listened to her steady breath and felt the heat of her skin. She made him wait for seven nights in this manner.

Then Blue Sky decided to take the help of the Shaman. He detached his penis, put it in a bag, and handed it to him. He asked him to chip one of her pubic hairs and to put it in the bag. He suggested him to open the bag for four nights after she sleeps. Blue Sky followed his instructions. On the fifth night the shaman reattached his penis and asked him to go to the woman’s tent that night. She accepts him. Thus, he succeeds in making love to her. This story full of sexual implications suggests Dione’s union with Jo-Jo. She becomes his lover and married him soon, competing with Linda.

Long ago before the earth was changed, Thunder was a man and married to Rain. As result of their union, snow and hail were born as their children. The Changer transformed our world and sent Thunder’s family to live in the sky. They were asked to rule over the weather. As Dione recalls, “they were very sad to leave the earth, their home, so the changer promised Rain, snow and Hail that they could visit it when their hearts grow heavy. But Thunder himself was not allowed to fall from the Sky, his power was too great. The changer took some of Thunder’s spirit and scattered it over the earth. It will be called electricity, he said.” (61). Thus the story cornines the traditional spirit with the modern-day scientific discovery. Electricity is made a part of the spirit of Thunder.
Dione was a lady of the outside world from the very childhood days without any interest in the kitchen or homework. Her father compares her with the tide. He used to say: "One day you could go too far" (74). She has left her family and community to marry Jo-Jo, a Greek young man. She has to acculturate herself. She remembers her father’s voice in the midst of her Greek friends and relatives.

"The Shaman swam with the tide because it took him swiftly out into open water, pushed his transformed sea outer body, neck stretched, tail out, so that he was nothing but a swift line darting through sea. He swam with the icy current until the shore was only tree tops being chewed by waves. The shaman was out of his depth, into the water, he captured him. There was no struggle. The shaman’s strength was gone, leeched into the cold water, yet he wasn’t afraid. That was before he knew" (74).

The strange asked the shaman to marry his daughter. Then he would teach him all his magic tricks. The shaman is transformed. He shook the water from his thick furred coat. Her father concludes: "The stranger was lifting the glinting knife to the sea otter’s throat and his grip on the back of the sea otter’s neck tightened" (74). In this story, the shaman is a spirit. He can’t be said to be either good or bad. He always tries to help others. In the process, he may perish himself. But he does everything knowingly. He is aware of the consequence of his actions. So he isn’t really "tricked" in the real sense of the term. Dione isn’t the "other" to be tricked by Jo-Jo. She is exhausted, but she continues to struggle without caring for her consequence.

Her father begins another story

"In the days of the flood there was a woman with a child. They were packed in a canoe in the pouring rain with the water rising steadily around them. The woman kept bailing out the canoe with a cedar bark basket. There was no time to paddle, and not much good. Then the frogs came. It had rained so much that the sea was covered in a layer of fresh water and the frogs were able to swim without salt burning their slippery hides."
gathered on three sides of the canoe, guiding it, pushing it through days of hunger and drenched to-the-skin cold ...” (83/84)

Against the dark cloud and the shades of gray sky, the frogs could see land breaking through the sea water. They reached the shore with the canoe and rescued the mother and her child. She was in a voyage to meet her lover who was found lying under a tree, injured and unconscious. The story ends with a happy marriage resulting in a large family of several generations. The frog is the symbol representing them and carved on their totem poles. Their clan is known as “the frog clan” and “it still exists” as per his father’s statement.

Dione is on a mission to do something in the outside world. She is very much excited with Buzzard’s invitation to cross the border and to have visit to the states. She knows that something important is going to happen to her outside her husband’s world, her son’s world. Next moment she realizes, “something is attached to my waist, a little frog kicking blue legs” (85). It is her son, her future generation belonging to the “Frog clan.” She has to take care of her child. Dione is very much scared by listening to the stories of slaves being captivated. She recalls one such story: “One slave was brought a stone carving by the spirits. He boasted to everyone and his captor-chief arranged a potlatch to show it off. Word was sent for across the water to other tribes, to families up and down the islands to come see the gift of the gods, and the chief and his slave arranged dances, costumes, food and gifts for their guests. Outside the great house, the enormous stone carving remained, its face formed by the months of spirits, stern, the eyes hard, punishing...” (97). The slave “quakes before his master “with fearful eyes. He remembers his freedom-days—“the wild green land”, “a different shore”, “the cry of gulls”, “hunting”, “a lover’s skin” (Ibid). He prays for his freedom and the people witnessing his events pray too. He hopes for a thing that is never possible “He wanted the stone to change, become something else, develop human limbs and bend in graceful lopes, running into freedom” (97). While remembering the story, Dione feels herself being a slave/captive to her master husband Jo-Jo. She struggles for her freedom and “can’t
stand being powerless.” She hits Jo-Jo hard. She says “I’m on him, slugging his chest, his face, biting” (Ibid). Jo-Jo grabs her wrists tight and may break them. She fights back to rescue herself. She then remembers the next part of the story.

“One night the carved stone escaped into the sea, it simply slid away and was never seen again. The slave had to carve the same shape from cedar for his master, for all the people invited to the potlatch” (97)

She draws the conclusion. “It was the first totem pole ever, but still the slave never escaped, never.” (97) Jo-Jo masters her holds her with the help of his sad eyes. He wins over Dione by means of emotion when he loses in power.

Dione thinks about the contrast between herself and her sister Jewell. She puts her sister in her place and wants her to have everything that she has/is having now due to Jo-Jo’s money. Jewell “can’t afford to” have electronic goods that are required by a housewife. Dione is having all the machinery items such as vacuflu, microwave, garburator, stereo, washing machine, and TV. Jewell’s husband Rene is not that rich to support all these machines. Dione remembers the story of the giant child who pulled apart the people: “The giant ripped through the village when everyone was sleeping wrapping his big hands around their throats until eyes and tongues popped and dangled from lolling heads. He plucked them out, threw them into a heap-delícacies-then tossed the bodies near the campfire. They would be the main course” (113). Dione assumes as if everything has been mixed up and misrepresented in the world. She says “our lives have been switched and they clatter awkwardly around us” (Ibid). They are like the villagers whose lives are almost dismantled. She continues to recall her father’s story. The giant child is confused and thinking about the preparation of his feast. The three virgins who had gone away to another village for healing people returned. On their arrival, they met with the giant child standing over the mutilated corpses of their villagers. They then tricked him: “A pungent aroma rose from the sleep potion in the boiling pot and filled the giant’s nostrils, making him drowsy” (114). They stabbed him to death, when he collapsed to the ground. The three virgins made themselves busy in assembling different.
organs of people’s dead bodies and tried their best to breathe life into the corpses. They succeeded in their enterprise of resurrecting dead people who thanked them in return.

Dione doesn’t believe but accepts the fact. The people, who were resurrected thus, were changed and they focused more on “wrong things”. “Mothers ignored babies, looked at arrows and canoes, longed for the hunt, the green forest, the sea, or ravens, whales, and bears forming under their fingers in the dull luster of cedar. Men wanted to see meat drip on a spit, clothing unwind under their touch. All the misplaced eyes and tongues were hungry, longing for destinies their owners would never have” (114). This corruption in the present generation disturbs her a lot. She foresees such corrupt happenings in her own life and in Jewell’s life too. She can afford to do what ever she likes, but she doesn’t get happiness and peace in her domgs. She requests Jewell to accompany her for some time. She needs to talk to someone about her present life and its difficulties. She needs to have someone’s support in terms of consolation and courage. She says in frustration: “I don’t know how to do things. I don’t belong in that house” (115).

Dione imagines about the ending of the above story. She used to ask to her father: “Did the villagers ever get used to their mixed-up parts?” (114). Can she get an answer of her question? It’s a mere story imagined and told by her father to the little children. Although both sisters are “mixed-up” in the real sense, they don’t have an escape from the reality at present. They have to face it and solve their problems in life on individual-to-individual basis. They have no other way out of it.

One day Dione goes out of her house with Elijah and reaches Stanley Park. She meets with an old man who resembles Keith, her father’s best friend. The old man feeds the ducks and pigeons in the park. He collects stale breadcrumbs from the bakery to feed the birds. To present the attitude of the modern man and the degenerate civilization, he makes a good observation:

“They thought I wanted them for myself. Well they can’t start giving out stale breadcrumbs to people now, can they? That’d be a real bitch.” (186)
Modern man doesn’t care for his fellow men and for other creations such as animals and birds. Being a native old man, he is very much concerned about nature and animal world. He wants to stop pollution and destruction, and protection of the environment simultaneously. When Dione expresses her inability to come to the park regularly due to her motherhood womanhood, he laughs at her and at the human condition” in general. He says, “One minute you’re so busy you wish you had time to relax, to do all those things you want to do but don’t have time for, then suddenly you got all the tie, and those things you wanted to so bad don’t seem important. Funny thing that Human condition, I guess.” However, in the fag end of his own life, he has learnt how to enjoy life and make the best out of his days. He doesn’t have any high aspirations to fulfill in life to the old man. Dione tells a story about a girl who hit a bird with a stone and makes winter angry. As a result, there was ice on the river and heavy snowfall. The village elders and the chief decide to give her to winter so that he can go away and cool down his anger. Her parents, having her as the only child, can’t live without her. But the elders don’t change their decision. She puts on her finest clothes and goes to winter sitting on a thick mat put on the ice and pushed into the river. Winter retreats then and a warm wind rustle through the village.

She recalls the story of an orphan girl whom an evil man tricks. He gives her a yellow liquid to drink. She feels falls down her head revolves around in circle. She then falls down into a deep sleep. When she wakes up, there is no daylight and she can’t move out in the dark. She finds that she is much grown up and her buckskin dress is too small for her body. She runs outside to a brook. She finds herself a beautiful young woman in the water. She comes to know about the evil man’s tricks: how he has pursued her to come with him to his cabin and how he has given her the transforming yellow liquid to drink. She finds that he is following her to get her back into his cabin. As she remembers, “The young woman ran back into the cabin, grabbed the vial of juice and her small buckskin dress, and fell down a path... The orphan ran long into the night until she was sure...
that the evil man no longer following her. Then she made a fire made by the stream, pulled her buckskin dress over her, and fell asleep."

Dione imagines herself an orphan girl who is helpless in the presence of an evil man. In the general store, a short, fat man with greasy black hair follows her. She thinks of his presence and his moist breath at her back. She closes her eyes, snaps her spine upright, and strides away from him. She goes to the pharmacy section from the jewellery counter, then to the cosmetics counter in order to keep herself from man's eyes. The clerk of the store disrupts her dream and she comes back to her normal state. She remembers her younger sister Crow smuggling cocaine from South America to Canada. She thinks about a visit to her mother, but the man again follows her. Dione is supposed to be a shoplifter and Mr. Henderson's person made her throughout. She is taken to a room and an attempt to assault her sexually is made by him. She remembers about the girl who ran down the path with the evil sorcerer close behind. At the end she saw the lodge of a hunter, a handsome young brave and she implored him to help her escape the man chasing her.

The officer changes her name from 'Dione' to "Yvonne". He proceeds saying different things in connection to shoplifting without paying any heed her. She hits back threatening him, feeling suddenly very strong. She threatens to give the information of his misconduct to the media. She is confident that she would get the support of many more women who are oppressed, exploited and sexually assaulted like her. She is keen to know the ending of the orphan girl's story. She knows the evil man dies and the hunter captures the evil. In order to have a happy ending, she imagines further. She listens to her father's voice saying: "The hunter then has the orphan girl all to himself."(243). Her own case is different. She becomes a winner and powerful. She could gain power over Mr. Henderson and his men due to her confidence and courage.

These stories are very significant to her life. They give her empowerment and freedom, a self-identity and connection with her root, her parents and her people. Later she laments over the loss of her father's voice and his art of the story telling. When the
old man requests her to finish the earlier told story about the girl who accompanies winter, she recalls but can’t say. She states “I can’t remember father’s story I can’t repeat it. I forgot The voice is not there inside my head His voice Father’s It’s gone” (253). She is driven away “into wilderness” by her thoughts and words She isn’t sure whose words she uses then. She improvises and revises his father’s version of the story. She tells that the people went to their summer village on the sea where they caught and dried fish and picked berries. The children played games and between all the work that had to be done, there were feasts and swimming, games of chance, dances, marriages and potlatches. The girl finally returns to them. She doesn’t speak what has happened to her while she was with winter. She keeps herself busy helping her parents to prepare for the winter. The summer has been prosperous and joyful along with a better winter. The people however had plenty of dried fish and berries. They were never hungry. The girl is no more afraid of the cold. She runs over the snow on bare feet without shoes or winter furs, carrying blocks of ice in her bare hands. She dresses herself plainly and faces the ravaging wind standing outside her parent’s lodge. She no longer feels winter’s fury and doesn’t withdraw herself shivering in severe cold.

When the old man asks Dione how the girl got such power, she replies with doubt. “Maybe winter gave it to her as a gift. Maybe she just acquired it, Maybe there was no person or spirit winter and she just tough living by her own with in the middle of the wilderness in the cold Or may be she was mad” (BW 255). She forgets the details of her story and of her father’s voice. She laments her poor memory and wishes to have someone who can teach her everything. She strongly says, “I want the world, my life, to have direction”. In the last chapter, she tells a story about the chief and his family to her son Elijah. She recalls her father’s voice and narrates the story. In between she fuses her own life story with the other one. It is difficult to distinguish between the two Dione and the chief’s daughter. The story goes like There is a chief who has a wife and three daughters. He doesn’t want his daughters to marry and to be separated from him. He continues to refuse the proposals given by several brave young men even after the people
of his village recommend them. One-day groups of people come to them by sea riding canoes. They bring a fortune in terms of gifts and furs for the chief's family and people. A young man of the group asks for the hand of his middle daughter. He can't refuse such a strong handsome and intelligent young man who is also well-respected by all. He hosts a feast for the chief, organizes dances to entertain the people, and bestows great wealth and extravagant gifts upon them. The chief changes his mind and allows his daughter to marry the young man. People enjoy the wedding celebration, the dancing, the games, and the stories told by elders. Then the visitors leave for their land with the newly married couple.

The chief's daughter arrives at an island and is given a grand reception by all. Dione remembers: "She felt their hands and heard their mouths, saw them interrupt their games played with marked pieces of bone and wood, arrows and hoops, to come to her and her husband. There was singing, dancing, and again, huge fires blistered the cool night air." (287) Her husband loves her at night and both are fast asleep. In the morning when the sun is above and bright, she wakes up to see her dead husband. She is terrified to see the handsome young man being transformed into a grinning skull with empty socket eyes. The chief's daughter runs on the beach and finds only skeletons lying in various positions where people had played games the previous night. Dione then says, "She would take one of the canoes. She would go back to her father, her family, and the village, across the water where people lived and breathed, even in sleep, and were flesh and muscle and blood." (288) The daughter doesn't succeed in getting back home. There is none who would carry her home. She sits on the beach "alone with bones in the land of the dead" and looks at "the great sea that lay between her and what she wanted: life and her family, herself, the way she remembered, the way she was." (288).

Dione now forgets her father's exact words and recalls only phrases of his stories. She appeals him to help her. She says: "Oh help me father, to carry on. And I close my eyes and concentrate, calling out for his words, father, father, father, feeling my own words flock to my lips. The story can't be told the same way twice. It is impossible."
(288). She uses her own words to tell the story and remembers her father’s contribution towards shaping her individuality. She arranges her story as she remembers it. She says.

“He gave me the story as others gave it to him, he passed it on, the glowing thread through the forest loading back to the past, launching my life into the future, the magic that allows me to transcend time, fly far above it, the pathway through. He gave me eagle feathers, Elijah, and now I fly. They’re my words, they have to be

There’s so much I know, but so much to learn, so many places to go” (289).

The woman, who married a ghost, now mourns her family and looks vaguely at “the impossible sea, the too many miles and invisible boundaries.” She has no chance to return to her father, mother and sisters. She sobs during the daytime and at night she notices the “shadow people with flesh around her. Some of them are in pain because their bones are mixed up due to her fleeing feet and are no longer properly placed in their respective bodies. Gradually, she learns to live in the distant land and adopts the ways of her ghost husband and other shadow people. She remains awake throughout the night and sleeps all day like others. Now she is happy in her new setting, living among the dead. She doesn’t miss her family anymore.

Dione narrates. “The shadow people lived without time, and she felt as if she had begun to fall down into nothing, but was stopped by nothing, was suspended” (290). She wakes up at night, cooks and cleans, dances beside the fire, and listens to the age-old stories told in the present. She learns to speak like the shadow people without any reference to time — yesterday or today, now or then. She strokes her husband’s “ageless muscled limbs” at nights and feels like getting pleasure. She becomes pregnant and gives birth to a baby. In order to give the child, who is “part mortal woman and her half-mortal child are left with her own family. For twelve days, her child is to be kept apart from others during the day and at night they can see him. Due to her bad luck, his grandmother wants to see him and uncovers his body finding only bones. She has to go back to her husband forever because she can no longer live with them. She sings “a bitter dirge of
pain" on departure and terrifies all. Since then, no one has come back from the Island of dead.

Dione doesn’t like its terrible ending. She revises it and ends the story in another way. The woman goes back to her husband with her child. She is not suspended anymore between the two worlds—mortal and spiritual. She is transformed into a spirit as well as her son. She has to excuse her family for putting her into this condition. Dione realizes the power of stories: “I didn’t know that stories must be told. Their power, their life is in the telling. I didn’t speak, and so I couldn’t tell my own story, couldn’t reclaim my father, couldn’t guide my life. I jeopardized you, little baby boy, as well as me. But no more.”

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(292). She decides to tell his stories, to have him back in her memory and through her little son. Dione herself has no scope for return to her family and people. She is losing her spirit day by day but doesn’t get success in her attempt to do something important in life. She knows how to prepare good Greek dishes but fails to make her mother-in-law happy. On her son’s birthday, she finds her mother-in-law indifferent towards her. She says, “you may like me. You may not. It doesn’t matter. You won’t speak about me as if I don’t exist when I’m in the room. You’ll talk to me directly, not through son.”

(269). Despite her utmost care and sincerity, she can’t be a good wife and mother. To Sophie, she says: “how to do things right, I’ll never be accepted” (248). Dione isn’t disheartened to see her failures. She decides to revive herself. She is energetic and brave. She promises to enjoy her son’s birthday celebrations in her own way. She describes, “we move in a slow dance, mother, sunny, crow, and me, arms wrapping waists, small steps closer and closer until we form a tight circle and sway back and forth, back and forth, eyes closing. There are no words, just a common rhythm, and the rumble of shared memories. His chant is clear and distant in my flesh. Hi-yuh, hi-yuh” (267).

Dione is always interested in “cleaning” everything. After her son’s birthday celebration, all rooms and windows are to be cleaned along with dishes and dining table. She washes the TV screen and cleans video player, the stereo, and the carpet. She also
cleans the upstairs, Elijah’s room, the bathroom, the guest room, the study room and their bedroom. She is very much tired but she has to do the cleaning. She searches for the reasons of her cleaning everything. She is reminded of the beginning of the spring, and then other seasons to follow it. She is a young woman, married with one child and expecting the next on Jo-Jo’s request. She says, “A home must be made. Not just for my babies, but for me, my memories, my future, my story” (280). She waits for the “swollen days ahead” passing through her summer course, hot and ripe.

Dione imagines and narrates. “Photographs I feel them before I see them, the old ones with jagged-tooth edges, and square I pull them out and there we all are, peering from the past” (277) She goes through some of her childhood photographs, keenly observing her mother, sisters and brother. Her mother insisted to have snaps then. Keith, her father’s best friend, had taken the pictures. According to Keith, camera “captures not only the features in shadow and light, the shapes, but it takes more away with it, something that stays in the print”(278) Dione keeps these photographs on her forehead to feel their coolness. She, however, remembers some elders in her community saying “the camera steals their spirits.” Some Native elders are always reluctant to have their pictures in public. We can see that in Thomas King’s novel Medicine River. They don’t want any outsider or non-native photographer to take their pictures.

Dione finds another old black and white photograph in Jo-Jo’s tray of toiletries. There are three children on the beach. Jo-Jo is about eleven years old then and the two girls are of about seven and nice. She finds another picture stuck to this one, and a couple in it standing at the same spot on the beach. They are her in-laws, Mamma and Dimitri, Jo-Jo’s parents. She says: “He wants the photograph. He wants some evidence that he exists here, where reality is different. He will send a copy home and keep one in his wallet to look at from time to time, and he will do the same with the picture of his children” (274). Jo-Jo’s parents are perhaps the first generation of Greek immigrants in Canada. An ethnic minority group struggles for their very survival in a new country, a distant land where strange customs prevail along with strange people. They have to
accommodate themselves in the new environment and adopt new ways of life. Simultaneously, they have to keep up their own traditions, customs and values inherited from their motherland, Greece.

Dione finds her old address book in which all her friend's names are written. She remembers them and their childhood days, their games and activities. She finds another book meant for her son, Elijah Hunt Harilumbus. He is named after her own father. His second name is her father's last name and her own last name too. Greeks usually don't have a second name as per the custom and Elijah isn't baptized yet. Dione says, "Elijah is mine, mine and my families, the continuum. And I will make the second child mine too..." (276). The printed book requires a lot of information such as the boy's birth-rate, weight, length, and parents and may more. She has only filled in his name and other blanks are left incomplete/unwritten. She doesn't remember this past error. She is helpless because she "can't go backwards." She has a poor memory and can't remember exact dates and time of his growth or its different stages.

She vaguely remembers everything, his constant contacts with herself, his first words, his first steps, and his separation from her. He is now responsible in a new way for his past life and memories, not for his well being. She states: "Yes it's gone from survival to development, and it's left me with a blur of time I can't order." (277) She decides to paste his photographs taken at different stages of his growth in the spaces of the printed book where she can't provide with exact information. Thus, Dione brings an order to her disordered life, and gives her existence a meaning to be remembered by her son.

Dione proves herself to be an "Eagle woman", always running very fast and ahead of others, and always being a winner in life. She strongly faces her challenge and independently finds out the solutions like her mother. She is very much influenced by her father whose voice she always hears. She searches for him throughout her life and continues to search till the end. She can see his reflection in her son whom she has named after him. Only her son Elijah can reclaim her father's voice, and can revive his/her tradition of storytelling. Life is meaningful only when it has a memorable or
remarkable past and a bright future. Dione foresees both in her lost father and living son. She is like the daughter of the chief, the wives of T’elch, the woman in the flood, and the slave of the master. But she always gains victory, empowerment and freedom. She is no more oppressed and exploited by others, even by her own husband. She has her own identity and dignity with her independent existence at free will/desire. Jo-Jo has bought an artwork from Mcmurchie, the artist, who has transformed her shape into a painting on canvas. She looks at her own eyes, but imagines them as her father’s eyes. She feels like destroying the painting, but can’t do so. She says: “No, I can’t destroy the sense in the painting that is only shadow or shape or light, but is all of that and something else, made from almost nothing – a paper, a stick of charcoal, yellow pastel – and disappears behind the illusion, becomes his eyes, his hands that became mine, and his voice that held the world, and still holds me, holds me now” (283). She gets a sense of security and protection from her father’s image and his voice. He is very much present around her, though she can’t see him any longer. This novel is full of symbols and images to depict such mental states of the narrator. She always dreams not of her father but of her vision of the world, of birds, animals, Nature, the sea, the waves, the sun and the stars, the cloud and the spirits. Crate has a superb mastery of English syntax. She has created her phrases and small sentences to express her thoughts, feelings and emotions.

Jordan Wheeler, one of the few freelance Native writers of Canada comes to us with a sumptuous inheritance, with the tradition of Cree, Ojibway, Assiniboine, Irish, English, Swiss, French running in his blood streams. Early in his life he wanted to be a journalist and moved around in an exchange program “Canada world youth” in places like Indonesia and worked for a newspaper in St. Paul, Alberta. He did not like the constraints of writing facts “(Lutz 67) and started writing stories after being encouraged by Maria Cambell in a workshop he attended. He wrote a string of three stories, based on brothers and later on published them in Brothers in Arms “Hearse in Snow” about two brothers, one living in Vancouver and the other in a native reserve with his father whose funeral became the occasion for the meeting together of the entire native community. The
second story "Red waves", again about two brothers set sometime in the future, the 1990's explored the complex networks intersecting and interlinking people around "The economic linking of reserve, like the linking in communication, satellite communication and the connecting of Native society in a native network, where all that is in place - computer linkages and a native - owned transportation network" (Lutz 69) Of the two brothers, one was a journalist working at a native multimedia and the other was a terrorist, and both were operating during a time that suggested the revival of Red Power. The journalist brother was on the chase to dig at the truth that lay at the blowing up a church and a brewery without knowing that he was in fact chasing his brother but the story, though a fiction, had a lot of echoes from the time when it was written, filtered through the imaginative brilliance and flare of Jordan wheeler. Wheeler dealt with the issues of native terrorism. The third story “Exposure” deals with two brothers again, One brother dying of AIDS, wants to die in the reserve and seeks the help of other brother to realize his wish. In all the stories, the native worldview is projected in a beautiful way and indirectly for wheeler believes that “The philosophy of native people is going to become a universal thing” (Lutz 73). “There is so much, in the richness of the culture and the medicine that I hope can survive I think that more people, like yourself, are willing not so much to “admit” but to share and realize and understand, and have not sympathy but empathy,” wheeler has said in his interview to Harmut Lutz (73)

Gerald Brown, in his review of the book, states. "Being brothers means more than being born from the same parents. It means dealing with real life-growing up both physically and emotionally dealing with emotional crises, and handling both public and private lives"(Brown 82).

As we know this book is a collection of three novellas. "Hearse in Snow," "Red waves", and "Exposure". "Hearse in snow" is a novella based on the story of Harry Cochrane and his children. The location is of Berens Landing Reserve. Paul Dieter and Charlie find the snow-covered body of Harry while plowing through the deep snow "Harry was drunk, tried a short cut to his son's place, but passed out and froze." (14)
“Harry was a respected man on the reserve. He served in the world war two and was once a band councilor. His wife had died five years earlier. Since then, Harry had lived alone and taken up heavy drinking. He had three children, all grown and scattered. The oldest, Walter, still lives on the reserve. The youngest, Billy, lives in Vancouver. His only daughter, Brenda, works at Indian Affairs. She’ll have to come from Regina for the funeral.” (14)

Walter lives in a cozy, two-storied building with his wife Shiela and three children, James, Alan and Brent. Alan is the eldest and Brent is the youngest of his children. Walter informs his wife that his father is drunk and he hates his drunkenness. He doesn’t want his father to be in his house with his children. Shield thinks that her father-in-law has not overcome his wife’s death even after five years after marriage. Walter has tried his best to help his father but concludes, “He might never get over her.” (15) Billy doesn’t ring or write letter to his dad after his mother’s death. Brenda is the only one who talks to dad always. Brenda lives in Regina and works as special project manager at the department of Indian and Northern Affairs. She had married at a very young age but now is separated. She is alone and a divorcée. As the writer writes, “the dreams that she and her husband had faded as her professional career advanced beyond his, leaving him bitter, and her overworked. As she grows successful, he turned irresponsible. It was a clean break, no children involved.” (17)

Very implicitly, the novelist hints at the jealousy in her husband. He doesn’t tolerate the success of his own wife’s success and promotion in career. Instead of trying for his own growth, he ruins his career and separates himself from his wife. Brenda spends most of her time at the office. She is almost thirty but “still dreams of having a family.” It is written, “She dates occasionally, but is wary of relationships.” (17) To her friends, she says that she is not ready for having another family. Brenda is worried about the “disintegration of the family.” Billy and Walt don’t get along well. Billy and his father never have a good relationship. Earlier, Walt and Brenda had a rift also after her job at the Indian Affairs. But Walt didn’t want to break the relationship and lose his only
The crisis resolved and they continue to have a good relationship. Billy and Brenda have a close relationship as she considers him as her "baby brother" and forgives him easily. "She remains his only link, calling her when he's depressed, or lonely, his voice at the other end a low, monotone" (17) she phones him regularly and keeps track of his whereabouts.

Billy lives in Vancouver. He works as executive manager in a retail outlet for audio and video equipment, part of a national chain called video shed. He gets a high payment for his job. Julie is his current lower working as a secretary in an office. Most of the time they stay together in Billy's place, taking dinner and watching movies together.

Walt formally identifies his father's dead body that is being sent to Regina for an autopsy. He makes a phone call to Brenda and reports her about dad's death. Brenda recalls a similar call from her father five years ago, when her mother died. She visualizes "a picture of her father as an unhappy, drunk old man tormented by the memories of his dead wife" (20) Brenda recalls their sufferings and pain due to mom's death "how it bought them together, and nearly tore them apart." She remembers still the night "a night of heartache and anger, of betrayal and loneliness." In grief, she tells Walt, "Both our parents are dead now." (20) Walt asks her to phone Billy and give the sad news. Billy hears about his father's death from his sister and asks her to "take it easy." It's quite surprising. Brenda always tries to have a family reunion. She says, "We're still a family, Billy, You, Walt, and I." (23) Billy has booked a reservation at a hotel because he doesn't want to be an inconvenience to his sister. She asks him to go to the funeral chapel first and then to stay at her place. Walt also wanted to stay in a hotel but changes his idea after Brenda asks him to stay with her. She doesn't appreciate this idea of her brothers because they have been together only once in the last ten years. To Billy, She says, "We are going to bury our father this week end and starting now, you and Walt have a responsibility to get along with each other. I'm not going to tolerate any bickering or antagonism between you." (p 25) She again adds, "there's only the three of us now," (27) In her response to
Billy’s query about Regina and about her liking the place, she says that it’s home, and it’s close to home.

Brenda has a strong sense of belongingness, of a family and of kinship relationship. She always wants to be with her own family. She was very close to her mother. After her mother’s death, she made it a point to call her father regularly and to see him on holidays. As she says, “more for duty than affection.” (18) She was worried about his drinking problem also. When Brenda is informed, “everything is set ready for another funeral,” she says, “it’s serving a good purpose” (30). That purpose is none other than the family reunion. She says to Walt “It’s the first time we’ve been together in five years” and asks a rhetorical question “Doesn’t tragedy always bring families together” (P.30) It’s very effective as it indicates a Native custom. Everyone tries to be present on a tragic incident like a death or a funeral. She makes a plea to Walt to try and adjust with Billy. Walt is not so sure and finds his relationship with his younger brother as “a two way street”. Billy also realizes that family unity doesn’t exist and it is a futile attempt by Brenda to bring both brothers to a common point.

Brenda deliberately puts both brothers in the hearse. She says “I thought you two should drive out to the reserve with dad. It only makes sense that the two sons should accompany the body back to the reserve. It would also give you two some time to catch up with each other’s lives” (32) Both brothers don’t complain against this plan.

Walt likes to stay on the reserve, as “it’s a good place to make a living. To raise kids” (37) Billy doesn’t want to raise his kids here, “have them eaten by flies and mosquitoes in Summer, crawling through ten feet of snow from thanksgiving to Easter” (37) He is wondering about his people who prefer to stay here for no good reason. Brenda satisfies his queries and dilemma by giving a reply, “It’s home” (38) and Billy ultimately accepts his sister’s reasoning. Walt drives the hearse while Billy sits as a passenger. The hearse descends into the Qu’Appelle Valley. The snow blows heavily and observes everything Walt drives fast and keeps to the highway until they reach the reserve. When Walt says,” Just be glad we’re almost home” Billy corrects, “Your home I don’t live
here” (42). He doesn’t belong to the reserve and always alienates himself from his family members. As Brenda later says, “Billy didn’t feel compelled to live up to anything, or to stick around for that matter” (44) Walt doesn’t like Billy leaving the reserve and disconnecting himself from others. He resents his younger brother’s approach to life and attitude towards others. Brenda gives a satisfying reply. “We’re becoming assimilated. It’s inevitable. But it’s destroying families.” (45) Brenda believes that in their native culture, they take care of old people and respect elders. Sheila also strongly believes in the survival of native. Thus they believe that changes are inevitable due to western influences. Still the family values and customs would remain intact.

About two hundred yards from the boundary of the reserve, the hearse is stuck in snow and both brothers can’t move without the hearse. Walt informs Billy about his father’s interest in hockey games and how he walked down five miles up to watch games with the grandchildren. He says, “poor old man suffered in the last few years, but he never turned his back on them” (47) When Billy suggests Walt to walk down, he says, “We’d end up like dad, and they wouldn’t find us until spring” (47) Next moment, he doesn’t lose hope and with a positive attitude says, “But it’s not all gloom and doom.” He then searches for the survival Kit in the hearse.

Under heavy snow and severe storm, Walt and Billy continue to struggle. The temperature also falls down to minus fifty. Billy collects a thermal blanket and wraps around him. Walt asks Billy to “make himself more useful” (P.49) and search for more blankets even in the coffin. Initially, he hesitates but soon opens the lid “Preparing him for the worst”. He looks at his father’s dead body and “senses tranquility.” This drives the fear away from his mind. He remembers, “Harry was always a frightful figure to Billy. When they were together working outside or sitting around the house, Harry rarely talked to Billy, but kept up a sheet of silence behind a chiseled, stone face. Billy always feared breaking that silence.” (49) Harry’s death has taken away that fear and the prevailing silence between the two. Walt and Billy are ready to face the challenge and spend the night together in the hearse. Brenda at home recalls how these two were very close, being
afraid of dad. Vince rightly says, “Families are a lot like a flock of birds. They fly off in different directions, but when the wind blows strong, they huddle up.” (52) He hopes for the reunion between the two brothers.

Dream plays a significant role in the lives of natives. Billy has seen a dream of his dead father waking up from the coffin. He sees his father sitting up and saying him, “you’re wasting your time William.” (53) Walt suggests to put his father’s corpse to good use—either to clear the tail pipe or to put outside. As he states, “it’s just a body now. Dad is gone”. (55) They don’t feel guilty in their doings. Walt recalls back childhood story. His father took him to hunting at his eleven. That night they killed two deer and while returning home, his father told him that he had taught him to hunt and “when it’s time for Billy to learn, you’ll teach him.”(56) He remembers his father’s suggestion but have never taken Billy for hunting. Billy again sees a dream and his father appears. When he asks him about their whereabouts, he replies they’re “somewhere between time and beyond space”. (57) He then names his experience as “peace”. Billy is changed and has made a progress.

He openly remarks that he doesn’t resent his father and has no anger. When the silhouette asks, “Billy, did you consider me a good father? He recognizes the fact saying “you’re still my father” (57). They all have been successful in life and they’ll reach one another as the Silhouette professes. He departs to join his wife and Billy joins with his brother. In the meantime, Walt has moved the corpse back in the coffin. The dead father talked to both. Walt says, “The guy wants us to die like he did. To freeze in the snow. Thought I’d oblige him, so I got drunk too” (59). Walt offers a whisky bottle to Billy and asks him to drink the gift from the old man. They both had not discussions over their father’s death and nature. Walt, out of anger, throws his father’s corpse out of the coffin into the snow and rebukes him saying, “That’s where you belong you bastard, the same place you always left me” (61) He blames himself and weeps for the loss of his father. He requests Billy not to hate him for his mistreatment. Billy says, “You’re my brother, just like he was my father...our father.” (62) At last the family union is possible in the
snow. Both brothers come back to their reserve and survive against the odds. Brenda appreciates the change in them. Earlier to her nephew, Brent, she has said, “Stay out their differences, but love them. When they need each other, they’ll get along fine.” (63) This she says with regards to the arguments between Alan and James. When Brant asks her if dad and uncle Bully will die, she says, “Either that or they’ll find each other” (63). The second choice becomes true. They don’t freeze to death like dad but come out of danger and reach home. Brenda remembers some of the children incidents that separated both brothers in spite of their mother’s and sister’s interventions. Their dad’s death makes them aware of the responsibilities. Walt grows old and behaves like an old man who guides and takes care of others in the family. Billy also listens to his sister and brothers and responds properly and responsibly. He joins his hands with those of his brother in order to overcome the dangers/threats of life.

This novella is based on the theme of survival and that is possible only when there is clear understanding and mutual love and respect. Brenda makes an attempt to unite her brothers and succeeds. The title is apt and the story is properly suited to justify the theme. As a modern writer, (crafted) Jordan Wheeler has nicely brought out the contemporary issue in the story.

The second novella is based on the story in super store in a freezing February night again. The location is Vaughan Street in Winnipeg, then Portage Avenue. John, Frankie, Tracy and Cliff have a grand plan of planting explosives in a store building. Then they run away in a stolen vehicle. This charge is as good as an arson conviction. They reach near Garry Street where Frankie was going to dash against parked car. They reach the Smith Street and enter into room 1705 of a large, downtown hotel. They wait for the action and its effect—“Exhilaration” that they have to enjoy honestly. Thus it is narrated “Then the distant building erupts, shedding its mortar skin and sending waves of fiery red into the night sky.” (74).

Mr. Wayne Weenusk works as a journalist in a native multimedia business enterprise named Native Communications Network (NCN). He is presently busy in
producing a film. An unknown caller informs him, “The Hudson’s Bay was bombed by a Native terrorist group.”(80). He remembers a similar bombing in Toronto in a brewery two months earlier and another bombing in Montreal in a Catholic church before four months. He wonders about these terrorist bombings in Canada since the FLQ crisis, or the squeamish five. He asks himself, “Could a Native group be striking out against oppression? Among a sea of moderates who brought “Red power” back after twenty-five years of conservatism, have radicals sprung up?” (81) Wayne realizes that “the church, alcohol, and the Hudson’s Bay have done irreparable damage to Native people”(81). He sympathizes with the bombers and thinks of making a story – “The most exciting news on the Native front since Wounded Knee”(81).

Wayne is working on a one-hour drama about a native family in transition from the reserve to the city. It takes away all his time and energy and he can’t remain with his wife and kids during the production. In his childhood, he used to follow his older brother, John, on protest marches and to Pow Wows. He says, “That’s where my education began – from Cache Creek to the riot on Parliament Hill.” He acknowledges that two years that he spent thus were “the most frightening and most exciting times” of his life. He grew up under the care of his elder brother. He says, “You were always a good philosopher, and a good brother. I was only eleven when mom left and you took care of me instead of slipping me away to relatives.” (84).

John Weenusk doesn’t have “a flourishing career, a family, nice house – the Canadian dream” (85) but he is proud of Wayne’s accomplishments. The author writes, “They stood at the same crossroads years ago. Wayne chose one direction and John another, both knowing the consequences of each other’s choice. Wayne went on to get a degree in Journalism, and John, in the spirit of their grand father who served in World War II, joined the Canadian Armed Forces”(85) John served in engineering for five years building bridges, lower’s and handing explosives. He had to quite because he didn’t get promotion. Due to racism and social discrimination, “promotion always went to others, but never to him.”(85). Then he did a number of menial jobs and joined in Native
right groups being frustrated of bureaucratic interferences in their lives. He never forgot the sad demise of his mother shot by an RCMP staff after being raped.

John and Wayne discuss the Native problems. Wayne thinks about the national leadership. He doubts of the survival of the Federation of Indian Nations in the dissolution of DIA. John have affirmative opinion for the Native leadership. He says, "... We need leaders who are educated and know the system. Not bums shouting empty promises." (86) They also talk about the AIM. John doesn't have a high opinion whereas recognizes its significance in securing better right for Native people. They know, because of AIM, "Indian Brotherhood became assemblies and confederacies" (87) John has a different view. According to him, the Native people of Canada have weakened themselves following the foreign system as model.

Wayne, however, supports such organization in order to survive and have their own self-government. In his view, "unity came slow because the government treated us as one lump of people. The Cree, Ojibway, Mohawk; all had to get along and play the game to be taken seriously" (87).

John blames the band chiefs and councils who are irresponsible. He believes that they don't have national unity. Wayne says, "We have economic networking of reserves." (87) But Native problems are big challenges against any change. He wishes to have a free Native press but isn't sure. He looks at everything from a white perspective without going into the deep. John opines, "We've learned all the bad things from the white man's government: deception, misinformation, patronage." (88)

In the Native communications Network office, Wayne is giving the work of covering the bombing news of the Bay. Janet, the manager of the news magazine, states, "since the Hudson's Bay Company has played a major role in native history, I thought the bombing of one of their stores might be worth mentioning. An evil receiving its due, so to Speak." (93/94). Wayne decides to collect date from the RCMP and the political leaders.

John Weenusk, with his three companions, takes shelter in house no.324 on Furby street. They wait for the next target and the time. John makes a list of items required to make
bombs-explosives, water gels, dynamite, a transmitter and aluminum caps. Tracey makes a list of some other items to be required by John in one basement room while preparing bombs. They have got plenty of food and a van from the sponsor. The Native organizations that are for these bombing have a lot of money and the leaders are very smart not coming out publicly.

A police statement on TV reveals that a native terrorist group called ‘ARM’ has claimed responsibility for the bombing of The Hudson’s bay in Winnipeg, (Feb) The Labath’s Brewery in Toronto (Dec) and the St Jean’s Basilica in Montreal (Nov). John gets instructions for the next bombing: “The target is India Affairs, the seventeenth floor of the Kensington building. Tomorrow at noon There is going to be a demonstration. Enter the building, the do the operation, and blend back in with the crowd, but make sure the place blows after midnight.” (125) John realizes the significance of this last bombing in the Indian Affairs Department. He says to his colleagues, “Upto now, each show has been a symbolic act. We’ve destroyed three symbols of oppression against Native people without any loss of life. This last show will be against the government itself, a final statement. Our point will be made… we stop now while we still have our freedom.” (126)

John, being nervous, asks his friends to move out of the house soon. He wants to change the place because he thinks the RCMP or the police have got some tips about them. Their action or plan may be destroyed before its implementation. When he goes out to dump the excess explosives somewhere, his colleagues are captivated. The police killed two and arrested one, when one arm, John, absconded. John reaches Wayne’s place bringing him fear and worries. Wayne suspects that his own brother is the fourth terrorist. He says, “They’re talking about you, aren’t they?” (132) In hatred and anger, he adds, “For weeks I’ve been busting my ass on a story about Native terrorism that no one would believe. And now I find out I’ve been on the trail of my own brother.” (p 133) Wayne doesn’t reach the office or the place of terrorists nor the Indian Affairs building where the demonstration takes place. A large number of Native people gather round the building with placards like “Self Determination Not for Sale,” “Squash Jameson and Bad Bill,”
"Red power is back", etc. Jim passes out buttons promoting self-determination among demonstrators who come from all parts and reserves of the city. The author writes, "It is a social event where acquaintances are renewed, and a political event where people are united." (136) Janet thinks this protest could stall the new bill introduced by Jameson, the minister of Indian Affairs. The bill will wipe out Native rights, give plenty of power to Indian Affairs to control the band councils and chiefs and Native people will own nothing for the loss of their land. John, in a green parka and with explosives on his body, enters into the office of Jameson and takes him hostage. The entire building is vacated on his instruction. The police uses Janet to bring Wayne to the spot and to help in reissuing the minister from John’s captivity. Frank Lucas, the arrested Native terrorist, reveals that Jameson, the minister himself is in charge of ARM and all the bombings. Betty or Elsie Moore who is also a member of the gang has been arrested as a witness. Jameson is wanted alive to be convicted publicly. John wants to kill him and take revenge of his mother’s death. In the mean time, a cop from the opposite building shoots John. Wayne makes an attempt to murder the minister but Frank controls. They want justice not vengeance.

Wayne like a Native activist gives a long speech about his brother, the minister and the bombings. He gives a newspaper heading to his talk: “The minister of Indian and Northern Affairs sits in his office facing criminal charges while the fourth member of the terrorist group, ARM, lies dead.” (p.152). The news ends with the following historical account: “A hundred years ago we were the Native problem, shuffled onto reserves in the hope that we would go away, but we didn’t. We fought against oppression. We fought with knives and rifles, we fought with our hearts, we fought to get educated, and we fought in the courts. John Weenusk fought another battle and died in victory. Cyrus Jameson will go to prison. Native people have won their chance to be their own masters again.” (153). John fought against racial discrimination, oppression and social injustice. He became a martyr. Wayne became an educated Native leader fighting for self-determination and Native rights.
This is the story about a native family who are disintegrated due to several problems. They are Mitch Morris and Ruby Morris, husband and wife, and their three sons Ralph, Kris, and Martin. They live on a reserve near Bonedry, a Saskatchewan town. Ralph is three years older and Martin is two years younger to Kris. Like other Native children on reserves, they were taken away from home and sent to boarding school. Ralph's hair is chopped off, his Cree language is beaten out of him, and he is made fun of by his seniors. During his summer break, he comes home and says his family about his experience there. "They take away your dignity and then you die." (159) He dies of typhoid. His parents lament the loss of their child.

Kris and Martin are promised that they won't be sent to the "wicked" place where their eldest brother lost his life. After their father's "death by exposure," they are looked after by Aunt Peggy Jane for a while. It is very difficult for her to obtain their food and clothing. In September, they are sent to the boarding school. Martin is scared of this "sad and desolate place." A nun whips Martin for speaking Cree. At every night, Martin cries and Kris tells stories to give him consolation and happiness. The writer gives a vivid description in the following paragraph: "There was always crying at night, among the younger ones especially, huddled alone in the dark, crying for moms, for the warmth of Kookum, to be anywhere else but this ugly building where a supreme god didn't want them to speak cree or remain Indian, and so hired a priest and a pack of nuns to brighten, oppress and defeat them. They were children in prison, in concentration camps where the church strived to alter their minds and their lives forever." (161)

Kris's father begins to booze in order to recover from grief and pain. The author writes, "The drinking created havoc within the family. The booze made their father crazy and he would beat their mother." (160) Kris cries and wishes his father would die. In his drunkenness, he walks into a frozen slough and sinks down himself in ice. The he dies and is found after three days of departure from home. In the town there is a bar named Bonedry Hotel where native people gather to booze at night. Frank Morris, Kris's cousin and a member of the reserve's band council, is a regular visitor of the bar. Kris
also drinks with his cousin. The author writes, "The bar raked a lot of money from the reserve." (p.210) Kris thinks that white people of the town profited immensely from a reserve's drinking problem. Martin is worried about his brother drinking alcohol. Alcoholism made native people weak and sick, and they, being poor and degenerate, try to forget their frustrations under intoxication. Their land, language and cultural values are lost. That is why they hold on to alcohol and live in shame feeling always insignificant.

Native people suffer from several diseases like TB, smallpox and Malaria fever. In this story, Martin and his mother Ruby are also found hospitalized for their incurable diseases. Ruby Morris has a nervous breakdown due to her eldest son's and husband's death. She could not control her emotions while grieving over these two losses. She is being kept in a hospital in Winnipeg and treated there because no one is at home on the reserve to take care of her health. As Kris visits her there, "She was healthy, but neurotic." (179). Her mental health condition is very bad and always a matter of concern for Kris. Each year it improves and she recovers very slowly. Later on, she returns and stays with her sister after knowing about Martin's disease. Martin Morris is a gay and suffers from AIDS. The blue-eyed doctor in the reserve's clinic tells Kris about his brother's health and disease. Martin's immune system is very weak and his health will only deteriorate. Later on, one day he shivers and sweats heavily. He is being taken to the Regina General hospital when the doctor on the reserve expresses his unwillingness to give treatment. Dr. Mike Lewis, a specialist in infections diseases, informs Kris that his brother suffers from "Kaposi's Sarcoma, Pneumocystis carinii pneumonia and dysentery." (191). The dysentery has almost killed him and the pneumonia has posed a strong threat to his life. Dr. Lewis says, "Your brother is experiencing a lot of physical pain. The tumors from the sarcoma are through his body and he has to move slowly." (191) He suggests that his lungs are to be drained. This disease is the cause of his frustration and anger. He takes plenty of painkillers to suppress his pain and get temporary relief. He knows that he's going to die soon. His last wish is to die on the reserve and to be burned there.
Martin has left the reserve and lives in Regina. He is a gay Indian. He doesn’t get any support from that community. He says to Kris, “But for the most part, you’re important (200) not really accepted unless you pretend you’re something else. Being gay is one thing, being Indian and gay is another.” As per his desire, Kris joins him to help him move back to the reserve. He helps him in fixing up their old dilapidated house that requires lots of repairing. “An impression. . . the windows were gone and weeds had forced their way through the floor inside the front door. The door itself lay out front, cracked and splintered. Exposure, Kris said to himself.”(166) The wood that used to be turquoise has suffered from years of exposure to the harsh prairie wind and rain. It has become gray with the fading of colour painted on it. Martin wants to live in his parent’s house before his death. To Aunt Peggy Jane he says, “I’ve come back, Auntie, because, I want to die on the reserve.”(168). Kris comes to know from his aunt and cousin Frank that the band will give financial support to fix up their “old shack” if they decide to stay back there. But the reserve is not like the old one. It has a lot of changes. Frank, listening to Kris’s request for the band’s help, says, “There’s a waiting list longer than my dick. Everyone and his dog have put in requests for housing. The construction boys are busier than shit.”(170) Frank however promises to reimburse for the cost of repairing. He clears two cheques of Kris but then denies paying any more. As his secretary says, “This is the last time we’ll be able to cover your expenses. We’re having a cash flow problem right now.” (p.194) Frank doesn’t give priority to his house repair anymore.

The doctor of the reserve’s clinic denies Martin treatment even though he is native and resident of the reserve. Frank says, “The council found out about Martin when we received the clinic’s report last month. Right away, they wanted him out. They’re paranoid, Kris, they don’t know a damn thing about the disease, but they don’t want it on the reserve. I was out voted nine to one, there was nothing I could do.”(195) Martin’s prescription is not refilled and the doctor does not give the drugs. He says Kris that he would try for the drugs “When you and your brother are off the reserve.”(206) When Martin is trembling on the ground in front of the clinic; several Native onlookers don’t
offer any help. He yells, "I just want to die in peace, to die at home. Is that too much to ask for? Can't you let me do that... Can't I die in dignity?" (207). Everyone in the crowd is uncomfortable listening to Martin's open emotion and Kris is also embarrassed to hold him in his arms. Bev Pratt, Kris's lover, wraps Martin's body with a blanket. Ruby Morris, his mother, doesn't accept her diseased son. Instead of taking care of him, she leaves the house to stay with her sister. She doesn't respond whenever Kris approaches her to come home and support her youngest son. Frank with disgust says, "What the fuck is going on? Frank voted to have the clinic refuse Martin treatment and to quit paying us to fix up the house, and you still won't see him. What ever happened to family values?" (212) Then he adds, "this family stuff must be bullshit, that's all I can see spewing all over this fuckin' reserve, bullshit." (212) Martin decided to stay in the cancer ward of the hospital as Kris thinks "the reserve doesn't want us anyway." (218)

Martin is in the Regina General Hospital, confined to the Cancer ward. He requests his brother, "make sure they bury me on the reserve". Again he insists, "I mean it, I want to be buried on the reserve." (192) Kris tries his best to help his brother and to keep his last wish. He returns to the reserve and continues to work till the completion of the house repairing work. He tries to fix up the old house before his brother's death, so that he can get peace. Dr. Lewis wants Martin to be in the hospital permanently. He needs daily treatment and he can't get it on the reserve. Martin cries, "I want to go home. I don't care how hard it's going to be. That's where I want to go and that's where I will go." (199) Kris can't reject his plea and takes him back home. When Frank doesn't support Kris any financial help, he is completely frustrated and broken down. He returns home to say Martin strongly believes that they've got everything to finish the house and enough food to last a few more days. He predicts, "when they realize we're not going away, things will change." (203) Actually the same thing happens. The reserve takes note of their progress in the housework. Aunt Peggy Jane provides them with three bags of groceries. James Caribou informs Kris, "And a couple of us got together and decided that it wasn't fair, what we were doing. Tomorrow, we're going to do something so he can get
into the clinic and so that you get reimbursed for the house. I’ve driven by, you guys did a good job”. (210) He even gives a fifty dollar note to Kris and requests him to accept it as “past of his reimbursement”.

Frank votes against their cause in the band meeting as he doesn’t want both brothers on the reserve. He has to accept his mother’s order and drive Martin to the hospital. The doctor in the clinic provides several bottles of antibiotics and painkillers to give Martin relief from pain. Ruby Morris visits him at the hospital with Frank and Aunt Peggy Jane. She kisses his hand and tells the half-completed story of Kris. Martin dies after three weeks of hospitalization. In the last chapter, the author describes his return to the reserve and acceptance by his people. Kris is surprised to see people coming to pay their last visit and homage to Martin. Ruby and Aunt Peggy Jane cook a feast and James caribou tells dirty jokes. Martin’s corpse is put in an expensive coffin and buried on the reserve by the side of his father and brother’s graves.

Kris leaves the reserve after his cover Bev Pratt has miscarriage. Both love each other and have sexual intercourse before marriage. She conceives a baby. Kris feels guilty and runs away. He says to Martin, “I really loved her, but I didn’t want to end up like so many of the others. Always broke, unhappy, kids clawing for attention they’d never get. I didn’t want any part of it. So I ran.”(202) He does “a series of menial jobs, none lasting more than three months.” He gets into the school of fine arts, but quits and starts heavy drinking. He does paintings and sells on the street. He gets a job at an advertising firm after lots of struggling. He has to give up his job and his lover Karina for the sake of his brother. To Karina, He says, “Go back to Toronto. Convince my boss to take me back, Convince Karina to take me back, then carry on.”(222) But he promises Bev to come back to the reserve again and again, to stay with Bev and at his house with his mother, Auntie, cousins and people.

Bev Pratt attends university but drops out after a while. She then goes to a business college and completes graduation. She returns to the reserve and gets a job at the band office, as her father is the band chief. After his father’s defeat as the band chief, she
is thrown away from her job by new chief. She leaves the reserve goes to Vancouver but keeps on coming back to see her old father. She has also the AIDS virus and tested HIV positive. She doesn’t have the full-blown disease yet. She has changed her viewpoint and got the right perspective after seeing Martin’s suffering. She decides to handle her disease on her own and stay back on the reserve. She hopes for a cure of the incurable disease soon. She also hopes and requests Kris to give up drinking. “Maybe” is the keyword at the end of the story hinting at lots of possibilities and changes. The condition of the Native people on and off the reservations in Canada will be better soon. The mainstream or the Federal and provincial governments can’t avoid them as they belong to the country and are part of same nation. Their rights are to be protected under the constitution and they are to be treated equally. Then only a nation will progress and have a better future.

A.R. Bobiwash reviews the novellas closely and makes some valuable comments on them. He states: "Hearse in Snow deals with the dissolution of urban Natives, alcohol abuse, and family alienation, Red Wave with the spectre of urban terrorism, media exploitation, state control, and family disintegration; while Exposure deals with AIDS, corruption in Indian politics, nepotism, and again the disintegration of community" (Bobiwash, 340)
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