

A Psychological Analysis of the Struggle with Racism in
In Search of April Raintree

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ABSTRACT

Focusing on Beatrice Mosionier's fictional autobiography *In Search of April Raintree*, this thesis analyzes April and Cheryl Raintree's emotional and psychological responses to oppression and racism and to freedom and love. One of the main arguments is that the sisters suffer internalized oppression and self-hatred after being exposed to colonial control and oppression and suffer internalized racism, self-hatred, and self-alienation and are acculturated to white cultural standards after experiencing racism. The sisters' oppression re-enforces white dominance, and racism fosters white cultural control. The second main argument is that April and Cheryl are freed from internalized oppression when they have personal freedom and experience self-acceptance and embrace their ancestry and Aboriginal culture when they enjoy accepting, prizing love that validates their Aboriginal ancestry. The sisters' personal freedom destabilizes white dominance and their self-acceptance and disalienation subvert white cultural values. The arguments are guided by the psychological theories of Frantz Fanon, Carl Rogers, and Eduardo and Bonnie Duran. This thesis also examines the importance that cultural practice has in April and Cheryl's healing, studies the love the Raintree family shared in spite of the colonial forces tearing the family apart, and examines April as the narrator, showing how she is, at times, unreliable.

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INTRODUCTION

. . . the similarities among the personal experiences of so many are in fact politically, materially, and economically based.

Carol Morrell, *Grammar of Dissent* (12)

At the heart of Beatrice Mosionier's *In Search of April Raintree* are April and Cheryl Raintree's experiences of oppression and racism and, conversely, of freedom and love. Critics of the story have generally focused on how April and Cheryl internalize the racism they experience and embrace white cultural norms and on how others' love and support enable the sisters to claim their Aboriginal identities. But what these studies do not address are the questions of exactly what psychological processes facilitate the sisters' internalized racism and self-alienation and acceptance of white standards and what processes facilitate their self-acceptance. Furthermore, critics have not focused on the sisters' experiences of internalized oppression. How can we begin to explain how external factors affect the sisters if we do not understand the workings of their psyches? In this thesis, I focus on April and Cheryl's emotional and psychological experiences throughout the novel, as they struggle to move beyond oppression and racism and towards freedom and love.

April and Cheryl's story is a realistic one with elements that are common to many Aboriginal people of Canada. In colonial Canada, Aboriginal people have dealt with and continue to deal with Euro-Canadian dominance, cultural control, and racism, all of which April and Cheryl suffer. More specifically, Aboriginal people have faced political, cultural, economic, and social control. In *Capturing Women: The Manipulation of Cultural Imagery in Canada's Prairie West*, Sarah Carter argues that during the last three decades of the 1800s, negative, racist images of Aboriginal people circulated in mainstream media to influence Euro-Canadian settlers living in Canada's Prairie West. Carter asserts that Aboriginal women were portrayed as "dangerous and sinister" and includes a poem in her work that refers to Aboriginal men as "treacherous, scarcely human" (Carter xiii, 97). The racist images insist on a negative meaning of Aboriginal people and strongly encourage readers to dislike Aboriginal people. Carter argues racist images were meant to influence

white settlers in that they were used “to create and sustain concepts of racial and cultural difference, to legitimize tough action against indigenous people, and to convey the message of the necessity of policing boundaries between different peoples” (xiv). As an example, Carter quotes an English woman’s disdainful description of Aboriginal women: “The big cities and towns, with their up-to-date civilization, know her not as a citizen; but at times she is still to be seen with her dirty blanket and moccasins, coarse black hair, high cheekbones, a clay pipe in her mouth . . .” (186-87). The English woman insists on the inferiority of Aboriginal peoples and their cultures, thereby justifying white dominance. As Linda Tuhiwai Smith puts it, “It is because of this relationship with power that [Aboriginal people] have been excluded, marginalized and ‘Othered’” (34). At present, while many Aboriginal peoples of Canada are seeking full self-determination and freedom to practice their cultures, they are still subjected to racism. Tuhiwai Smith asserts that Indigenous people are still subjects of colonialism: “It means that there is unfinished business, that we are still being colonized (and know it),” and that “we are still searching for justice” (34). Writing about the “racism that exists in Canada” today, Jo-Ann Thom insists on the “devastating consequences it has had on the lives of Aboriginal people” (295).

Because of colonialism and disempowerment and racism, many Aboriginal people have lost considerable control over their personal lives while being made to conform to white cultural norms. In colonial Canada during the mid-1900s, scores of Aboriginal children were uprooted by colonial authorities and taken from their communities and families and traditions and put in residential schools or white foster homes. We can see the emotional and psychological results of this colonial strategy by looking at interviews with the Aboriginal clients of Building a Nation (BAN), a treatment centre for Aboriginal people in Saskatoon. As children, many BAN clients were uprooted and placed in residential schools or white foster homes, forced to conform to white cultural standards, and faced racism and abuse. As a result, many BAN clients suffered loneliness, depression, emotional upheaval, and internalized racism. They continue to endure debilitating distress stemming from their experiences when growing up.

One BAN client recounts the distress she experienced because of her being taken from her family and placed in a residential school where she longed for her family: “My

experiences there were very ... lonely. They were ... depressing, I guess, in a way. There was ... like an emotional breakdown for me, because of them taking me away from my parents” (Waldram et al. 9). Another client recalls the racism and other abuse she suffered while being held in foster care:

To me it was a house of hell because they tried to break my spirit. They called down the native people I was trained that native people were dirty, were ugly, a disgrace and because of me being the darker one of the family. They always called me squaw or dirty or filthy things, you know. But, one thing I am grateful for, I never got raped. But I was abused mentally, physically. I was locked up in basements my whole day, when I wasn't in school. I worked hard like a slave, got nothing out of it in return but lickings, you know. And at the age of about seventeen, I got out of that place. (Waldram et al. 12)

One client reports that he internalized the racism he faced when living in foster care and that internalized racism broke his self-worth:

I guess my self-esteem ... was broken I had no sense of identity, I had no sense of belonging I didn't even know what I was supposed to do or what was expected of me, because, you know, being constantly told that I don't have no mom, or nothing, and ... that the only good Indian was a dead Indian and all this sort of stuff. So I started ... to believe that stuff because if you start constantly pounding, pounding it into you, you know, you just [believe it]. (Waldram et al. 10)

Repeated racist remarks persuaded the client to believe racist ideas, a process which destroyed his self-esteem. These three BAN clients testify to the powerlessness and racism and abuse that many Aboriginal people have endured after facing Euro-Canadian control and culture. BAN clients also attest to the emotional upheaval and the psychological conditions of internalized racism and broken self-esteem that some Aboriginal people have suffered as result of being taken from their families and living in a racist environment.

In their experiences of disempowerment and racism, April and Cheryl Raintree's life stories coincide in many ways with those of BAN clients. The sisters are Métis and are taken from their parents when they are young and put in foster care, where they must conform to white culture. Both sisters suffer when they are in foster care, but April suffers the most, especially when she is living at the orphanage and with her second foster family,

the DeRosiers, who are severely oppressive and racist. In reaction to their profound disempowerment, both sisters suffer despair, internalized oppression, and a loss of dignity. They are also subjected to racist and hateful meanings, rejected, and treated as the inferior other, all of which lead them to internalize racism and suffer negative self-meanings and self-hatred. Yet, at times, the sisters, and especially Cheryl, also experience freedom and love. Enjoying unconditional love, they move towards embracing their Aboriginal identity.

Canadian Aboriginal identity is defined by the Canadian Government in Canadian governmental documents. According to Section 35 of *The Constitution Act (1982)*, Aboriginal peoples of Canada are identified as Indian (First Nations), Inuit, and Métis peoples. Section 91(24) of the Act gives the Canadian Government exclusive legislative power with respect to Indian peoples and the lands reserved for them. According to the *Indian Act*, an Indian is a person who is registered as an Indian or entitled to be registered as an Indian. Indians who are registered in the Indian Registry are “Status Indians”, and while they are governed by the Canadian Government, they are also entitled to many services and programs offered by the Canadian Government as a result of it signing treaties with First Nations peoples. The *Indian Act* was amended in 1985, with the enactment of Bill C-31. The Amendments restored status to First Nations people who lost their status through enfranchisement, to First Nations women who lost their status through marriage, and to the children of mothers who lost their status through marriage.

On the other hand, “Non-Status Indians” are those who are not registered in the Indian Registry. “Non-Status Indians” are not entitled to the governmental programs offered to “Status Indians”. Because there is no indication of the status of the Raintrees in the text, I make the assumption that the Raintrees are “Non-Status” Indians. Furthermore, I use the term Aboriginal to refer to the Raintrees and other Aboriginal people in *April Raintree* because all that the story really establishes about the identities of the Raintrees and other Aboriginal characters is that they are not white and have Aboriginal roots. I resist using the term Métis to refer to the Aboriginal characters in the story because April and Cheryl’ parents never refer to themselves or their daughters as Métis.

While many critics have commented on April’s and Cheryl’s identity transformations--their internalization of racism and their changing attitudes towards their Aboriginality--they pay little attention to the sisters’ emotional and psychological states

resulting from these experiences. Their theoretical focus is rather on the societal construction of Aboriginal identities. For instance, Michael Creal draws on the ideas of philosopher Charles Taylor, arguing that people are, for the most part, socially constructed: “We are by nature social creatures, and who we become as individual persons is the outcome of a social process” (252). Insisting that the sisters’ identities are formed in response to “social and discursive practices,” Helen Hoy takes a post-structural approach and argues that April’s and Cheryl’s identities at any given time are “multiple” and “provisional” (282). Heather Zwicker focuses on the political nature of discourse, arguing that the sisters are constructed through it and that their differing identities render them “politically incompatible” (326). For Janice Acoose, April and Cheryl are boxed in by “negative stereotypes” about Aboriginal people (231). As Thom points out, April “learns racist attitudes from her foster family and her social worker” (297).

Removed from their families, the sisters, as children, do not have access to realistic images of Aboriginal people. They therefore turn either to positive stereotypes of Aboriginal people or to white ideals. As Margery Fee argues, April “deploy[s] identifications to resist and survive the negative identities imposed on her” (212). Acoose points out that April “buys into the white ‘fairytale’ ideal” (232). She argues that April begins to reconsider her culture when she is confronted with reality at the Radcliff home: “April has survived by clinging to romantic stereotypes, but the stereotypes collapse when confronted with reality and they ultimately set in motion a reformation of identity and re-consideration of culture” (233). For Creal, April decides to “escape the prejudice” and to “invent her own identity” by choosing the “white’ world and all its material benefits” (253). Cheryl, in contrast, takes up an Aboriginal identity as a result of experiencing positive affirmations of her heritage through books and her idealized view of her parents, but she succumbs to internalized racism when her idealized image of her parents is destroyed (Creal 255). Acoose argues that Cheryl “feeds” off romantic stereotypes of her heritage and “begins to construct an identity by un-packing the antiquated colonial boxes, which contain romantic notions of Indians and Métis” (229, 231). For Acoose, when Cheryl “opens the box filled with family documentation provided to April by colonial authorities,” “fantasy meets reality,” and, she stumbles (232). Likewise, Creal asserts that “it was the total contradiction between the idealized picture of her parents that she created

in her mind, and the reality she eventually confronted, that shook Cheryl to the core of her being” (255). According to Fee, Cheryl takes up an Aboriginal identity “to resist and survive negative identities imposed on” her (212). For Fee, Cheryl idealizes her culture and parents to resist racism, but “Cheryl’s courage falters when she can no longer sustain her fantasy about her parents” (221). Mary Gillis argues that Cheryl stumbles because April lets her believe her fantasy about her parents (63). Thom argues that Cheryl is “proud of her heritage,” but also argues that Cheryl’s “identity is built on a ‘fragile foundation’ (Harmut Lutz 100) because she acquires it from books and has little contact with real-life Métis until she approaches adulthood” (299).

Critics have also focused on the sisters’ gradual search for a more positive and realistic Aboriginal identity, though they disagree on the extent to which April and Cheryl succeed in this search. Creal argues that April finally embraces her ancestry because of Cheryl: “As a Métis, [April] has learned through the best of her long years of experience with Cheryl . . . that she can identify with ‘her’ people” (254-55). For Fee, Cheryl and White Thunderbird Woman help April to identify herself as an Aboriginal woman, and Gillis argues that Cheryl and White Thunderbird Woman help April to see the “worth” of her Aboriginal identity (55, 65). (225, 226). Gillis also asserts that April has a divided self, never being able to turn completely away from Cheryl, who represents April’s Aboriginal self (54). Grant argues that “reporting the rape” and experiencing the “shock” of Cheryl’s death enable April to “move toward reclaiming herself” (245, 246, 245). However, Kathleen Donovan argues that both April and Cheryl search unsuccessfully for an Aboriginal community to support their identities while Thom insists that without returning to her culture, April cannot heal and that the story does not “offer readers much hope of healing from the trauma of racism” (30, 299). Zwicker similarly asserts that Cheryl kills herself because of her “identity politics” and her inability to effect political change (327).

While I agree with critics in their analysis of the April’s and Cheryl’s shifting identities, I would argue that their responses to external pressures cannot be fully understood without a closer look at their inner psychological and emotional processes. Without an understanding of the sisters’ emotional and psychological states, we cannot begin to understand how exactly oppression and racism harm April and Cheryl, how important freedom and love are for their well-being, and how love allows for the sisters’

self-acceptance and, thus, their acceptance of their ancestry. I use psychological theory rather than poststructuralist views to account for April's and Cheryl's identity formation. Unlike Carl Rogers' and Frantz Fanon's theories, which study the psychological basis of identity, post-structuralism emphasizes the linguistic basis of identity. Recognizing that there are many opposing discourses at work in language, post-structuralism provides a linguistic understanding of the fractured, contradictory self. I offer instead a psychological and emotional explanation of the incongruent, dissociated self. In taking into account emotions and mental processes, I offer a wide-ranging account of the processes that foster the formation and transformation of the sisters' identities. I also pay close attention to the relations of the members of the Raintree family, focusing on the love the family shares as a way to underscore that the family does have uplifting, meaningful experiences in spite of colonialism. I examine how April nurtures and sustains Cheryl when she is growing up and how her love allows for Cheryl's acceptance of her ancestry and destabilizes white cultural dominance. I also examine how April, after she starts living as white woman, mostly withdraws her love from Cheryl and sees her as a hateful, inferior other, contributing to her internalized racism and suicide. To understand the complexity of the Raintree sisters' experiences, I draw on three psychological approaches, those of Carl Rogers, Frantz Fanon, who was a psychiatrist, and Eduardo and Bonnie Duran. These different approaches allow me to analyze different aspects of the sisters' emotional and psychological responses.

My primary psychological approach comes from Carl Rogers, a non-Aboriginal counselor from the humanistic psychological camp, who studied how people come to adopt significant others' values. While Rogers' theories are applicable to the Raintree sisters, he did not take into account issues of racism and of political and economic inequity that were powerful shapers of April's and Cheryl's identities. To help develop a more politicized perspective on the sisters' psychological processes, I turn to Frantz Fanon. Fanon devised his own psychological theories about how colonized people acquire a desire to be white and embrace white values. Thirdly, I turn to Native Americans psychologists, Eduardo Duran and Bonnie Duran to understand more specifically how Aboriginal people in North America have been psychologically impacted by colonialism and oppression and

how they have sought to heal through cultural recovery. Much of the remainder of this introduction outlines the major tenets of these three psychological theories.

Carl Rogers:

Carl Rogers was an American psychologist who studied the ways in which people react to others' emotional treatment of them. Rogers' personality theory can be summarized in the following way. For Rogers, when significant others negatively regard and reject people, they set up conditions of love or worth ("A Theory" 209). To secure the love of others, Rogers insists people internalize the negative regard. The internalized negative regard involves negative meanings of the self and self-hatred and sets up conditions of self-worth and self-love. To be rid of self-hatred and to secure self-worth and self-love, Rogers argues people are cut off from parts of their own valuing process, being guided by conditions of self-worth, instead ("A Theory" 225). In the process, people are acculturated to the values of society. According to Rogers, people are subjected to significant others' negative regard, rejections, and conditional love after they engage in behavior that is not in keeping with the values of others and experience internalized negative regard. In order to be free from self-hatred and experience self-worth and self-love and secure love from significant others, people falsify or deny parts of their valuing process or experience, taking up the standards of society ("A Theory" 225). If people are not able to meet the standards, they deny to or distort in awareness that they do not meet the standards, needing to avoid self-hatred and to avoid that they do not meet others' conditions of love and conditions of self-worth ("A Theory" 227). Rogers argued that people express their valuing process unconsciously but consciously act on the values of society.

Specifically, Rogers' theory begins from the notion that people are social animals who need love, and that people will internalize significant others' negative regard and conditions of love in order to secure their love. After experiencing others' negative regard, a person will, according to Rogers, internalize the negative regard, "disliking himself" ("A Theory" 225). After being subjected to others' conditions of worth and love, people will, according to Rogers, internalize them while being cut off from their experience of acceptance of values and behaviors that are not in keeping with others' conditions of worth and of love. Internalizing others' conditions of love or their standards to avoid

“disapproval” and “rejection” and to meet others’ conditions of love, people will value an experience positively or negatively depending on their internalized conditions of worth (Rogers, “A Theory” 225). Rogers explains his ideas regarding the process by which he believes people adopt others’ conditions of worth and make them conditions of self-worth, insisting that people will act solely from internalized conditions of worth and love or, what is the same, conditions of self-worth and self-love:

A condition of worth arises when the positive regard of a significant other is conditional, when the individual feels that in some respects he is prized and in others not. Gradually this same attitude is assimilated into his own self-regard complex, and he values an experience positively or negatively solely because of these conditions of worth which he has taken over from others . . . (“A Theory” 209)

Rogers makes a similar claim: “He now reacts with adience or avoidance toward certain behaviors solely because of these introjected conditions of self-regard . . .” (“A Theory” 225). Rogers also argues that unless people live in terms of conditions of self-worth and self-love, they will not be able to experience self-worth and self-love and will continue to dislike themselves (“A Theory” 225). For Rogers, then, people will adopt others’ standards while avoiding those values and behaviors that are not in keeping with their standards.

According to Rogers, then, as people internalize others’ conditions of worth, they will be cut off from their experience or valuing process or organismic valuing of experience, out of which their standards are formed, and, to preserve the love of others, they will falsify or suppress to the unconscious some of the values they experience and see the values the same way others do:

This, as we see it, is the basic estrangement in man. He has not been true to himself, to his own natural organismic valuing of experience, but for the sake of preserving the positive regard of others has now come to falsify some of the values he experiences and to perceive them only in terms based upon their value to others. (“A Theory” 226)

For Rogers, when people falsify or suppress their valuing of experience, their valuing process becomes incongruent with their self-concept, which becomes based on conditions of self-worth or the values of others.

According to Rogers, as people continue to have an experience that runs counter to conditions of self-worth or are unable to meet cultural standards, they, engaging in a process of defense, distort in or wholly or partially deny to awareness experiences that do not accord with conditions of self-worth: “The essential nature of the *threat* is that if the *experience* were *accurately symbolized* in awareness, the *self-concept* would no longer be a consistent gestalt, the *conditions of worth* would be violated, and the *need for self-regard* would be frustrated” (“A Theory” 227). Rogers explains denial in another way, emphasizing how people must deny the fact that they have experiences that run contrary to conditions of self-worth: “Because the actual experience is threatening to the concept of self (as an adequate person, in this example), this experience is denied, and a new symbolic world is created which enhances the self, but completely avoids any recognition of the actual experience” (“A Theory” 228).

Rogers argues that the process of defense can break down and experiences that violate conditions of self-worth and are therefore threatening can be accurately symbolized in awareness. Rogers explains the break down of processes of defense as he sees it:

1. If the individual has a large or significant degree of *incongruence between self and experience* and if a significant experience demonstrating this *incongruence* occurs suddenly, or with a high degree of obviousness, then the organism’s process of *defense* is unable to operate successfully.
2. As a result *anxiety is experienced* . . .
3. The process of *defense* being unsuccessful, the *experience* is *accurately symbolized* in awareness, and the gestalt of the *self-structure* is broken by this *experience* of the *incongruence* in awareness. A state of disorganization results” (“A Theory” 228-29).

For Rogers, incongruent or dissociated people at times act in accordance with their valuing process, and at other times they act in accordance with their socially acquired self. Experiences are based on the valuing process and actualizing tendency while the self-concept includes socially acquired conditions of self-worth: “Behavior is regulated at times by the self and at times by those aspects of the organism’s experience which are not included in the self. The personality is henceforth divided, with the tensions and inadequate functioning which accompany such lack of unity” (Rogers, “A Theory” 226).

For Rogers, people will experience congruence or wholeness if they enjoy unconditional love. For Rogers, unconditional love means to “value the person, irrespective of the differential values which one might place on his specific behaviors” (“A Theory” 208). Rogers describes unconditional love in another way: “In general, however, acceptance and prizing are synonymous with unconditional positive regard” (“A Theory” 208). If people experience unconditional love, they will not be principally guided by others’ conditions of worth and love and conditions of self-worth and self-love. They will experience unconditional self-worth and self-love and be connected to and act on their valuing of experience:

If an individual should *experience* only *unconditional positive regard*, then no *conditions of worth* would develop, *self-regard* would be unconditional, the needs for *positive regard* and *self-regard* would never be at variance with *organismic evaluation*, and the individual would continue to be *psychologically adjusted*, and fully functioning. (Rogers, “A Theory” 224)

According to Rogers, if incongruent people experience considerable unconditional positive regard, they will gradually move from a state of incongruence to a state of congruence. Rogers argues that “when the individual *perceives* such *unconditional positive regard*, existing *conditions of worth* are weakened or dissolved” and that an “increase in his own *unconditional positive self-regard*” results (“A Theory” 230). Rogers reiterates this point, using slightly different language: “It is the fact that [the psychologist] feels and shows an unconditional positive regard toward the experiences of which the client is frightened or ashamed” that “seems effective in bringing about change” (“A Theory” 208). When incongruent people enjoy unconditional love and unconditional positive self-regard, Rogers argues that the “process of *defense is reversed*, and *experiences* customarily *threatening* are *accurately symbolized* and integrated into the *self-concept*” (“A Theory” 230). People, he argues, move from a state of incongruence to congruence when all of their experiences are integrated into the self-concept. When there is congruence between experience and the self-concept or self, “the *organismic valuing process* becomes increasingly the basis of regulating behavior” (Rogers, “A Theory” 231).

Rogers outlines the valuing process, arguing that it is guided by a self-actualizing tendency:

This concept describes an ongoing process in which values are never fixed or rigid, but experiences are being accurately symbolized and continually and freshly valued in terms of the satisfactions organismically experienced; the organism experiences satisfaction in those stimuli or behaviors which maintain and enhance the organism and the self, both in the immediate present and in the long range. The actualizing tendency is thus the criterion. (“A Theory” 210)

In other words, “The general tendency of the organism [is] to behave in those ways which maintain and enhance itself” (Rogers, “A Theory” 196). For Rogers, people’s valuations of their experiences in the world are guided by a subjective, unique frame of reference that “includes the full range of sensations, perceptions, meanings, and memories, which are available to consciousness” (“A Theory” 210). People’s experiences in their environment influence their frame of reference, and they subjectively and uniquely process them through their valuing process. Rogers argues that when people are behaving in accordance with their experiences, they will be harmonious. He contends that people “will live with others in the maximum possible harmony, because of the rewarding character of reciprocal *positive regard*” (“A Theory” 235). Again, when April and Cheryl enjoy love and self-love, they are mostly loving and harmonious.

Roger, despite his theory’s usefulness in studying the experience of colonization, did not address politics and did not study colonized people. Indeed, Rogers separated politics and economics from psychology and identity, not recognizing or acknowledging that psychology and personality are shaped by politics and economics. Since identity in the story is a matter of political and economic agendas that are filtered through racist bullies and cultural standards, it is impossible for April and Cheryl not to be influenced by the negative regard of racism and its imperative of whiteness. Therefore, the sisters can never have a wholly congruent, unified self.

Frantz Fanon:

Frantz Fanon, unlike Rogers, was profoundly involved in issues of colonialism. Fanon was born in Martinique and worked in France and then in Algeria, finally aligning himself with the communist movement in Algeria because he wanted colonized people there to enjoy equality with the French settlers. He became involved with the political

party the Algerian National Front (ANF) in 1956, working as a writer for the ANF's newspaper during the Algerian War (1954-62).¹ Unlike Duran and Duran, Fanon did not urge colonized people to find healing through cultural practice. In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon writes about the importance of cultural knowledge, but remembering the exploited child laborers of Martinique and Guadeloupe, he is focused on political change:

Let us be clearly understood. I am convinced that it would be of the greatest interest to be able to have contact with a Negro literature or architecture of the third century before Christ. I should be very happy to know that a correspondence had flourished between some Negro philosopher and Plato. But I can absolutely not see how this fact would change anything in the lives of the eight-year old children who labor in the cane fields of Martinique or Guadeloupe. (230)

Fanon believes in communism because he believes people living in a communist state can enjoy human equality and human freedom and human love: "I, the man of color, want only this: That the tool never possess the man. That the enslavement of man by man cease forever. That is, of one by another. That it be possible for me to discover and to love man, wherever he may be" (231). Fanon was concerned about colonized people's lowly economic and social position in the capitalist and imperialist state, advocating communism as a way to raise their position in society.

Fanon was also concerned about the effect the colonizer had on the emotional and psychological state of black people and the colonizer's influence on colonized people's identity. Fanon argues in *Black Skin* that after black people are subjected to the white colonizer's attitude of superiority, black people acquire an inferiority complex and try to rid themselves of it by assuming a white mask. Discussing white colonists' views of colonized black people, Fanon insists that "white men consider themselves superior to black men" (10). When a black person and a white person come in contact, the white person, according to Fanon, "pretends to superiority" and the black person experiences a "sensitizing action," which causes the black person to experience internalized inferiority and an inferiority complex (224,154). For Fanon, the white person, with his or her superior air, insists on the inferiority of the race of the black person and the effect is "the

¹The Algerian National Front was interested in securing Algeria's freedom from French control.

internalization--or, better, the epidermalization—of this inferiority” on the part of the colonized person (11). Wanting to escape from their inferiority complex, black people embrace whiteness as a way to dissociate themselves from their race and, in doing so, become alienated from the self: “Insofar as he conceives of European culture as a means of stripping himself of his race, he becomes alienated” (Fanon 224). For Fanon, black people have only one destiny: “For the black man there is only one destiny. And it is white” (10). Fanon insists that “it is because the Negro belongs to an ‘inferior’ race that he seeks to be like the superior race” (215). Fanon also argues that “social and economic realities” also cause black people to want to be white (11).

Fanon insists that black people experience an inferiority complex and the anguish associated with it, and thus become focused on proving their whiteness to the white other in order to prove their worth to the white person. Black people want the white other to acknowledge them and recognize their worth in order that they can experience self-worth and only the white other can give black people self-worth: “The goal of his behavior will be The Other (in the guise of the white man), for The Other alone can give him worth. That is on the ethical level: self-esteem” (Fanon 154). Suffering with feelings of inferiority, black people, as April does, try to prove their whiteness to white people and to themselves: “At the climax of his anguish there remains only one solution for the miserable Negro: furnish proofs of his whiteness to others and above all to himself” (Fanon 215).

Fanon believed that black people who are suffering with feelings of inferiority can never find relief from such feelings and the anguish associated with it. He insists that black people cannot repress the fact of their race:

The Negro is unaware of [his race] as long as his existence is limited to his own environment; but the first encounter with a white man oppresses him with the whole weight of his blackness.

Then there is the unconscious. Since the racial drama is played out in the open, the black man has no time to “make it unconscious.” The white man, on the other hand, succeeds in doing so to a certain extent, because a new element appears: guilt. The Negro’s inferiority or superiority complex or his feeling of equality is *conscious*. These feelings forever chill him. They make his drama. In him there is none of the affective amnesia characteristic of the typical neurotic. (150)

For Fanon, then, colonized people are always facing the fact of their ancestry and the racial drama, and they cannot use repression or denial as a defense mechanism.

Fanon thought that nothing but political change could change the economic and social position of colonized people and nothing but political change could relieve them of their inferiority complex and self-alienation. Fanon's logic is that human equality and human freedom would eliminate the idea of "superior" and "inferior" races, and communism would put an end to unequal social and economic positions of "superior" white owners and "inferior" black and white workers. Fanon's reasoning is that in a communist state, there is no "superior" other, and, thus, no one feels inferior and suffers with an inferiority complex and experiences alienation. For Fanon, human freedom can pave the way for disalienation and the ideal society:

Before it can adopt a positive voice, freedom requires an effort at disalienation. . . .

It is through the effort to recapture the self and to scrutinize the self, it is through the lasting tension of their freedom that men will be able to create the ideal conditions of existence for a human world.

Superiority? Inferiority?

Why not the quite simple attempt to touch the other, to feel the other, to explain the other to myself?

Was my freedom not given to me then in order to build the world of the *You*?

(231-32)

Bonnie and Eduardo Duran:

Fanon argues that the psychological trouble of colonized people "lies not in the 'soul' of the individual but rather in that of the environment" (213). Eduardo and Bonnie Duran agree. Based on their work in Native American communities, they theorize the ways that colonialism, the authority of the colonial oppressor, and Native Americans' powerlessness affect the psychological experiences of Native Americans. They argue that Native Americans, after being colonized and stripped of their power, experience despair and internalize the power of their oppressors. In their work *Aboriginal American Postcolonial Psychology*, Duran and Duran argue that after internalizing the power of their oppressors, Native American people experience despair that is equivalent to self-hatred or

low self-worth. If the self-hatred and despair are internalized, people might commit suicide and might die from alcoholism:

Once a group of people have been assaulted in a genocidal fashion, there are psychological ramifications. With the victim's complete loss of power comes despair, and the psyche reacts by internalizing what appears to be the genuine power of the oppressor. The internalizing process begins when Native American people internalize the oppressor, which is merely a caricature of the power actually taken from Native American people. At this point, the self-worth of the individual and/or group has sunk to a level of despair tantamount to self-hatred. This despair and low self-worth can be either internalized:

Research has demonstrated the grim reality of internalized hatred resulting in suicide (Duran 1989). Native American people have been dying in great numbers due to suicide. Another way in which the internalized self-hatred is manifested symptomatically is through the deaths of massive numbers by alcoholism. (Duran and Duran 29)

Duran and Duran go on to explain that Native American people might externalize their despair and self-hatred, becoming aggressive and violent.

When self-hatred is externalized, we encounter a level of violence within the community that is unparalleled in any other group in the country. Native Americans have the highest rate of violent crimes of any group, with homicide and suicide rates that are almost double the U.S. all-races rates (Abbas 1982; French and Hornbuckle 1982). What is remarkable about this violence is that for the most part, it is directed at other Native Americans. When we interpret relations in a Native American context as all Native Americans being immediate family, then our community has the highest rate of domestic violence within the Native American nuclear family, no incidence studies are currently available to us. (29)

Duran and Duran offer a perspective on Native American people in therapy with non-“Indian” counsellors, insisting that hegemonic non-“Indian” counsellors often misread Native Americans who are in counselling. The theorists warn non-“Indian” therapists of the need to understand that cultural oppression is causing individual and social unrest in Native American communities. According to Duran and Duran, western therapists, seeing

through a hegemonic lens, often engage in the politics of “blaming the victim” (42). Duran and Duran believe non-“Indian” therapists must recognize the challenging contexts in which Native Americans are situated and how historical issues and the suppression of Native American culture continue to influence their lives:

Therapies involving communication, structural, and other systemic approaches can be quite effective if the therapist has knowledge and also validates some of the historical issues that have had a profound intergenerational effect on the Native American family. The validation must be done within the context of the actual therapy, so that the family becomes empowered through the realisation that some of the family craziness is due to outside forces--such as the long term oppression of Native American culture within the social milieu of occupation that persists this day. (158)

For Duran and Duran, then, therapists must admit that disempowerment and the oppression of Native American people and their culture cause some of the upset in Native American families, and must stop solely blaming Aboriginal people for their personal and social problems.

Duran and Duran offer suggestions for Native American healing, encouraging Native Americans to turn to Native American healers, traditions, and community to heal individually and communally. These psychological theorists insist that Native American people need to turn to Elders, Shamen, and Medicine men to heal. To Duran and Duran’s minds, Aboriginal people need to take up traditional social roles and practice Aboriginal rituals such as smudging, prayer, meditation, and dancing to heal. As many Aboriginal healers do, Duran and Duran also insist that community members must come together to support each other and to heal: “The Native American community can help itself by legitimizing its own knowledge and thus allowing for healing to emerge from within the community” (53). They go on to assert that “presently, there is a lot of healing happening in the Native American community” (158).

My thesis, then, focusing on Beatrice Mosionier’s fictional autobiography *In Search of April Raintree*, analyzes April and Cheryl Raintree’s emotional and psychological responses to oppression and racism and to freedom and love. My study is different from other studies in that it argues that there are psychological processes

resulting from oppression and racism. One of the main arguments is that the sisters suffer internalized oppression, despair, and self-hatred after being exposed to colonial control and methods of pacification and suffer internalized racism, self-hatred, and self-alienation and are acculturated to white cultural standards after experiencing racism. The sisters' oppression re-enforces white dominance, and racism fosters white cultural control. The second main argument is that April and Cheryl are freed from internalized oppression when they have personal freedom and experience self-acceptance and embrace their ancestry and Aboriginal culture when they enjoy accepting, prizing love that positively affirms their ancestry. The sisters' personal freedom destabilizes white dominance, and their self-acceptance and disalienation work to de-center white cultural values.

When April is growing up, she is oppressed and suffers internalized oppression and is acculturated to white standards by internalized racism, which she experiences after being exposed to racism or negative meanings of Aboriginal people and after being disliked and rejected by white people. April experiences profound internalized oppression at the orphanage, becoming physically ill because of her despair and the oppression. April experiences deep internalized racism after being exposed to the DeRosiers' and others' racism. Wanting to be rid of the negative meanings she has internalized about herself and Aboriginal people in general and her self-hatred and wanting to experience the acceptance of white people, April embraces white values and decides to live as a white woman. In this way, she is cut off from her valuing process and is acculturated to white values. She becomes defensive when she is threatened with the fact of her ancestry, and at times, she steps away from her white identity, and behaves in accordance with her valuing process. April's behavior, then, is contradictory after she assumes a white identity.

When Cheryl is attending university she feels oppressed and is acculturated to white values by racism. Cheryl is oppressed to some degree when she is growing up, but when she attends university and when she commits suicide, Cheryl is profoundly affected by internalized oppression. April and Garth, Cheryl's white boyfriend, and the university all display racism, which Cheryl internalizes in a deep way when she is on skid row looking for her parents. When she finds her father, she attaches a racist meaning to him and experiences dislike for him. Connecting herself to him, she applies racist meanings to herself and experiences self-hatred. She goes on to blur her internalized racism and tries to

cope with her internalized oppression by drinking alcohol. When Cheryl is exposed to April's racism and rejection in court, she again experiences internalized racism. The people from the Friendship Centre cannot give Cheryl the profound love or prizing love she needs to be rid of her internalized racism. Unable to live as a white woman and live up to white cultural standards and unable to bear her internalized racism, Cheryl kills herself. April, narrating Cheryl's story, downplays the effect her racism has on Cheryl.

While Mosionier, a Métis woman born in Manitoba, writes about racism in *April Raintree*, she also writes about it in her essay "Images of Aboriginal People and their Effects." In this essay, Mosionier writes about the distress associated with experiencing racism. She maintains that some Aboriginal people try to escape from negative images by using alcohol or by denying their ancestry and others are bogged down in internalized racism: "Some of us drink. Some of us deny our heritage. Some of us merely exist from day to day, with no ambitions and no dreams" (50). In *April Raintree*, Alice and Henry Raintree, like Cheryl, use alcohol to escape the pains of internalized racism and internalized oppression, but they also drink to escape the pains of dislocation, cultural loss, illness, marginalization, alienation, unemployment, poverty, and so on. April denies her heritage. Alice and Henry mostly live with no ambitions or dreams, especially after their baby Anna dies and April and Cheryl are taken away. Like Cheryl, Alice kills herself.

After April relocates to Toronto and experiences positive regard that positively affirms her ancestry, she begins to take back her valuing process, which allowed for self-acceptance and acceptance of her family's ancestry. Cheryl and White Thunderbird Woman, along with the people at the Powwow, offer April unconditional love and positively affirm her Aboriginal ancestry. The unconditional love negates white people's conditions of love and April's conditions of self-love, which insisted on whiteness and white values. Having the love she needs, April is free to be who she wants to be and to embrace her valuing process, and she builds positive meanings of her Aboriginal identity as she internalizes the positive meanings of her ancestry that Cheryl and the others offer her. Unconditional love, then, turns April toward her ancestry and Aboriginal people and culture and turns her away from white cultural standards. April also heals from the cultural events at the powwow.

When Cheryl is growing up in foster care, she experiences only mild oppression and racism and experiences considerable love from April, Mrs. MacAdams and a school teacher, both of whom encourage Cheryl to embrace her ancestry and Aboriginal culture. The Steindalls also love Cheryl and accept her ancestry. Cheryl is bothered by the oppression and racism she is exposed to, but she mostly experiences freedom and love and self-acceptance. She, then, mostly avoids being acculturated to white values by way of racism and, thus, never suffers the internalized racism, incongruence, and defensiveness that April suffers. When living at home, both Cheryl and April experience their parents' love, and although Alice and Henry Raintree neglect their children, there are happy family moments. Despite the colonialistic elements of oppression and racism that are working to tear the family apart, the Raintrees offer love to each other.

Freedom and unconditional love, then, affect April and Cheryl Raintree's psychological processes such that they are able to be free from internalized oppression and internalized racism and from being acculturated to white standards. But it is clear the sisters, their parents, and other Aboriginal people in the story need to have self-determination in order to be free from white dominance and white cultural control. The Aboriginal people in the story need to be free from politicized institutions that insist on white dominance and white cultural practice and that use racism to acculturate Aboriginal people to white standards. As Fanon argues, psychology cannot address the political concerns of colonized people and their need for self-determination and cannot address the matter of their being free from white dominance and cultural oppression.

In Chapter One, I examine April's experiences of oppression and pacification and internalized oppression when growing up, and I study her resistance to oppression and her attempts to rebel against oppressors in order that she can be reunited with her family and escape her bad situation at the DeRosiers'. I also study April's experiences of racism when she is a child and analyze her incongruent, defensive behavior after she is free from foster care. I study April's few experiences of freedom and love, self-acceptance, and growth when she is growing up. In Chapter Two, I examine how April begins to refuse oppression and racism at the Radcliffs' as a result of Cheryl's love and how she relies on racism when she learns Cheryl has prostituted herself. I study April's experience of freedom, love, Aboriginal culture, and self-acceptance after she relocates to Winnipeg. In Chapter Three,

I study Cheryl's experiences of freedom, love, Aboriginal culture, self-acceptance, and growth when growing up. I also study her experience of internalized oppression and self-alienating racism when she is an adult while I also analyze April's unreliability as a narrator.

CHAPTER ONE

APRIL'S EARLY EXPERIENCES: INTERNALIZED OPPRESSION AND ACCULTURATION TO WHITE VALUES VS. FREEDOM, LOVE AND ACCEPTANCE

Beatrice Mosionier's *In Search of April Raintree* shows, through April Raintree's life experiences, how white dominance and racism can have a profound effect on Aboriginal people's emotional and psychological experiences. Like April, some Aboriginal people internalize the power of colonial oppressors and the racism around them, and internalized racism often compels them to try to deny their ancestry and assimilate into white society (Duran and Duran 29; Mosionier, "Images" 50). Subjected to oppression and racism and cut off from her own valuations of acceptance of her ancestry as she internalizes racism, April becomes a non-threatening, acculturated colonial subject.

When she is a child, April's parents experience disempowerment and racism. April begins her story by describing how, when they were living in Winnipeg, her family was impoverished and on welfare and subjected to the racism of the 1950s colonial society of Winnipeg. April's family was plunged into poverty after Henry became ill with tuberculosis, and the family had to leave Norway House and their Métis community to move to Winnipeg. The Raintrees arrived in the city without financial resources, April reports, "Then we moved to Winnipeg. I used to hear him talk about TB and how it had caused him to lose everything he had worked for" (11). Being sick, Henry cannot go to work to earn an income. He is ashamed of being on welfare, evidently being exposed to negative images of Aboriginal people who are dependent in this way: "And of course, we were always on welfare. I knew that from the way my dad used to talk. Sometimes he would put himself down . . ." (11). Alice is subjected to the rejection and superior attitude of white people in the stores, which leads her to experience internalized racism: "Mom didn't like going shopping. I guess it was because sometimes people were rude to her. When that happened, Mom would get a hurt look in her eyes and act apologetic" (13). Alice segregates or marginalizes herself from white society to avoid racism and the pain it causes her. In this way, Alice becomes alienated from the white world. In these vignettes

about her family's poverty and experiences with disempowerment and racism, April shows that she, like her parents, is negatively impacted by her family's poverty and by the oppression and racism to which her family is subjected.

Nevertheless, when April is at home, she feels free, and also, her parents love her deeply. Henry exhibits his love for April and Cheryl by telling them stories and taking them to the Santa Claus Parade, after which Henry "carried sleepy-eyed Cheryl in his arms" (14). Alice, at times, also looks after her daughters: "My mother didn't always drink that medicine, not as much as my father did. That's when she would clean the house, bake, and do the laundry and sewing" (12). At times, Alice also exhibits prizing, validating love for her children: "If [Mom] was really happy, she would sing us songs, and at night, she would rock Cheryl to sleep" (12). Alice builds snowmen and houses from snow with her daughters and reads stories to them (13, 15). Therefore, in spite of colonialism, the Raintrees have loving, happy family moments. April's parents also accept April's Aboriginal identity as being just a part of her, and thus April accepts it, too: "My sister, Cheryl, who was eighteen months younger than me, had inherited [my father's] looks: black hair, dark brown eyes . . . and brown skin. . . . Like [my mother], I had pale skin, not that it made any difference when we were living as a family" (11). April, then, is loved deeply by her parents, and they accept her ancestry, which destabilizes white cultural domination.

Still, April suffers neglect at home, which renders her a child in need of love. Caught in the turmoil of their own lives, Alice and Henry often neglect April and Cheryl, not giving them enough attention and love. When Alice and Henry are drinking, they disregard April, and when Alice is not drinking, she is often sad and preoccupied with her inner conflicts. At these times, April "chatter[s]" to her mother to avoid silences, which create an opening for painful sentiments and memories to flow into and linger in Alice's mind (12). Alice's pain and depression, evidently linked to experiences with colonialism, remove her from her daughters' world and detach her from them. April describes her mother's disinterestedness as being "her normal remoteness" (12). Steeped in internalized racism, neither Alice nor Henry validates or prizes April's Aboriginal heritage. Not receiving positive affirmations of her ancestry from her parents, April does not show confidence in her Aboriginal identity. She is not, for instance, self-assertive in the stores

and at the park when facing racism. In many ways, April has little idea about who she is. Her apparent low self-esteem has been created by the behavior of her parents and other members of her extended family, behavior that is ultimately traceable to colonialism and racism.

When they are drinking, Alice and Henry neglect April and jeopardize her emotional and physical security and, thereby play a role in effecting her low self-confidence. Henry and Alice drink to blur the pain of being impoverished and on welfare, the pain of racism and internalized racism, and the pain of being part of a disempowered, marginalized group. During their drinking parties, Alice and Henry allow violence to erupt in their home. Forgotten by her parents during the drinking parties and mostly trapped with Cheryl in their bedroom, April is scared, fearing for her safety when violence erupts: “I would lie on my cot listening to them . . . Sometimes they would crash into our door and I would grow even more petrified, even though I knew Mom and Dad were out there with them” (12). April is scared during the parties, but, apparently, she does see her parents as a safety net. Also, there are protective boundaries in place at the Raintrees’. Boundaries ensure that intoxicated, violent adults never try to enter the sisters’ bedroom. Boundaries also ensure that no one ever hurts the girls physically. Since her parents are a safety net and boundaries exist, generally, April does experience emotional and physical safety: “Cheryl and I were always safe in the house” (13). When she later is living in foster care, April recalls the safety and security she felt when living at home: “I had found that this home could be as safe and secure as the tiny one on Jarvis Avenue” (26). However, whether they are drinking or not, Alice and Henry often neglect to meet their daughters’ basic physical needs. April assumes a parental role with Cheryl, being the one who attends to Cheryl’s and her own physical needs: “Cheryl and I always woke up before our parents, so I would tend to Cheryl’s needs” (13). Tending to Cheryl’s physical needs and need for love, April makes sure that her sister has happy memories of her life at home and that she is firmly bonded to her. April’s parents’ neglect of April and Cheryl, then, is a form of negative regard that only takes away from April’s self-image and weakens her self-esteem, makes her lonely, and contributes to her need for love.

April’s experiences in the park both reveal and contribute to her internalized racism. The playground in the park is inhabited by many racist children who are typical

bullies. The children make April a subject of racist interpellation, hailing and placing her into a subject position with names, and they beckon April to internalize and apply to herself their racist meanings and dislike of her: “They called us names and bullied us” (16). What is more, the white children “didn’t care to play” with April and Cheryl (16). The children negatively regard and reject April and Cheryl because of their ancestry and also their poverty. When they are adults, April reveals to Cheryl that the name-calling, dislike, and rejection led her to experience “shame” or negative self-meanings and self-hatred and that “if they had let [her and Cheryl],” she “would have played with the white kids” (153). April, then, internalizes the white children’s racism because she wants the children to like her and wants to play with them. In internalizing the children’s racism, April forsakes her own valuing of experience, which enables her to accept her Aboriginal identity. She takes up the value of whiteness and also of wealth. Rogers insists that people give up their experiences for the sake of positive regard and take up the values or standards of others (“A Theory” 226). April, then, wants to play with the white children, and she internalizes their racism and their standards that insist April be a wealthy white person if she wants their affection. Rogers explains how these kinds of conditions can be internalized (“A Theory” 209). In adopting others’ conditions of worth, April is acculturated to white values.

Subscribing to white values, holding negative self-meanings and feelings about her ancestry and poverty, and believing she is a member of an “inferior’ race,” April, then, envies the white children whom she believes are rich: “I used to envy them, especially the girls with blond hair and blue eyes. They seemed so clean and fresh and reminded me of flowers I had seen. . . . To me, I imagined they were very rich and lived in big, beautiful houses . . .” (Fanon 215, *April Raintree* 16). The white children have “the upper hand” in the “name-calling” that takes place (16). When they are adults, April also reveals to Cheryl that she believed the white children were superior to them, telling Cheryl that she saw the white children as the “winners all the way” (153). Experiencing the superior manner of the white children and their intimation that she and all Aboriginal people are inferior to white people, April is “sensitize[ed]” in the way Fanon describes and accepts that she is inferior to the white children, thus internalizing racism (Fanon 154). Fanon argues that “white men consider themselves superior to black men” (10). He also insists that when faced with

white people's superior attitude and the "social and economic realities" in the colonial world, colonized people suffer with an inferiority complex (11). Because April's experience of inferiority is caused by her acceptance of the idea that white children are superior to her, wanting them to give her worth and rid her of her feelings of inferiority. Writing about the behavior of colonized people who have internalized inferiority, Fanon insists that they need to be deemed worthy by the white other (154). When she is living at home, however, it is not only the white other who can give April self-worth but also her parents who give her self-worth with their accepting love. In the park, April's desire is to prove her whiteness to others and herself.

Enjoying some self-acceptance at home and suffering negative self-meanings at the park, April develops two selves. When she leaves the park and returns home, April moves back toward her experience of self-acceptance. Because April is loved by her family and it accepts her Aboriginal identity, she can temporarily forget about the racist children in the park and lose sight of their conditions of love. For Rogers, after people experience unconditional love, such conditions of self-worth are weakened or dissolved ("A Theory" 230). Experiencing her family's love and acceptance, April re-experiences some self-acceptance. Rogers argues that when the individual perceives unconditional positive regard there is an increase in the person's own unconditional positive self-regard ("A Theory" 230). It is not only the racist white other who can give April self-worth and her destiny is not limited to whiteness. However, April is reminded of the racism she experiences in the park when Aboriginal children whom she sees there come to her house. Influenced by her internalized racism, she holds negative meanings of them and dislikes and rejects them (12).

Experiencing degrees of self-acceptance at home, April does enjoy some growth. Influenced by white cultural values but following her own valuing of experience and actualizing tendency, April does engage in activities that make her happy and fulfill her. April's first love, of course, is her family, but she also has a passion for reading books. When she receives a book for her birthday, she is excited, carrying the book with her "everywhere," and she reads the book to Cheryl: "I would pretend to read to Cheryl, and as I turned the pages of my book like Mom did, I would make up stories to match the pictures in the book" (15). April is also excited about starting school: "I looked forward to school. I

promised Cheryl I would teach her reading and printing as soon as I knew how” (15). Rogers insists that when people experience unconditional love, they are in tune with their valuing processes, following their own actualizing tendency (“A Theory” 196).

Later, encouraged by the loving Dions, April excels in school. At the DeRosiers’, April is steeped in incongruence and is demoralized, sad, insecure, nervous, and scared, so she cannot excel in school studies. When Cheryl is living at the DeRosiers’, April’s love of books and learning is rekindled by Cheryl’s disalienating love, and April receives good grades. Cheryl rekindles a passion in April that was kindled by Alice when she gave April a book for her birthday and read stories to her and Cheryl. Finally, after Cheryl’s death, April, having embraced her ancestry, becomes a storyteller, writing her own story about her life and her family.

Because she loves her family, April’s story when growing up is largely one of her repeated attempts to be reunited with members of her family after she is separated from them by the Children’s Aid Society. April’s love for and strong desire to be with her family charges and empowers her and, at times, leads her to refuse her disempowerment by boldly resisting and threatening colonial authority and white dominance. Soon after the social workers arrive at April’s house on Jarvis Avenue, April boldly tells them to go away (17). When she is at the orphanage, April attempts to escape with Cheryl to be with their father (21). When April realizes that she and Cheryl have been placed in different foster homes, April complains to Mrs. Semple: “I want my sister” (23). At the Dions, April tries to convince Mrs. Dion that she belongs with her family (31). When April is living at the DeRosiers’ and her parents stop attending family visits, April tells Cheryl that they will “always have each other” (44). When Cheryl is living with April at the DeRosiers’, she resolves to run away with her sister after learning that she and Cheryl are again going to be separated and put in different foster homes (59). When she is in foster care, April demonstrates her love for her family in other ways. During family visits, April kisses and hugs Cheryl (29, 44). Through letter writing, April, helps Cheryl solve the problem of her dropping the MacAdams’ radio. April feels “warm and happy that she had been able to help Cheryl” (34). When Cheryl is living on the DeRosier farm, April tries to protect her from the DeRosiers’ abuse. Then, just before Cheryl is taken from the DeRosier farm by

social workers, April tells her that they will live together when they are out of foster care (64).

April loves her family deeply when she is at home, and when living at the Dion home, April explains the relationship that she has developed with her family since being taken from her home, showing that, truly, her family members still are and always will be what is most important to her. April is tied to them by family love or by her love for them and their love for her: “But for those few hours, I was with my real Mom and Dad, and I was with my real sister. I loved them and they loved me. And there were no questions of ties or loyalties. Just family” (32). April’s family’s acceptance of her is deep, and at this time she accepts them and their ancestry, “no matter what” (32). During her visits with her parents and Cheryl when she is living at the Dions’, April is on a “constant high,” experiencing much happiness (32). April “love[s] the Dions,” but Alice and Henry are April’s “real Mom and Dad” and Cheryl is her “real sister” (32). No one can love April the way her family does, and more than anything, April wants to live with her parents: “Cheryl and I did ask them when we would go back with them—we would always ask them that . . .” (32). For April, “It didn’t matter that [her parents] were sick and couldn’t give [her and Cheryl] anything” (32). Being loved by her family, April reciprocates the love, loving her family and having fulfilling moments during family visits.

Despite this family love, however, the Raintrees are powerless against a government system that does not support maintaining Aboriginal families and Aboriginal identity. April and Cheryl are taken from their parents in the 1950s. In the 1960s, scores of Aboriginal children were taken from their families. This occurrence, known as the Sixties Scoop, was studied by Patrick Johnston, Program Director for the Canadian Council on Social Development. Sharon Smulders summarizes Johnston’s findings, published in 1983:

Johnston identified two main reasons for the Sixties Scoop: First, middle-class ideas about the child’s best interests allowed social workers to see themselves as saviors rescuing Aboriginal children from poverty and its attendant ills; second, colonialist attitudes toward Aboriginal life prevented them from acknowledging that a child’s best interests involved preservation of his or her language and culture of origin. (42)

Protesting against the large number of Aboriginal children who have been taken from their parents and placed in white foster homes, Maria Campbell insists in her story “Jacob” that Aboriginal children need to stay with able family members when their parents cannot look after them: “If dah parents dey have troubles den dah aunties and dah uncles or somebody in dah family he help out till dah parents day gets dere life work out. But no one, no one he ever take dah babies away from dere peoples” (104). For Campbell then, the sisters would benefit from living with Aboriginal family members who are able to care for them. But the Children’s Aid Society of April and Cheryl’s day does not seek out Aboriginal family to care for Aboriginal children whose parents are not able to do so. The society does not seek out ways for April to see her parents often and does not ensure that April and Cheryl live together. By cutting April off from her family in such a severe way, the Society mostly cuts her off from her primary source of love.

The people of the Children’s Aid Society also render the shamed Alice and Henry powerless players in their children’s lives. Alice is intimidated by the presence of the social workers in her home. She recognizes the power of the authority figures, and she becomes deferent and obliging while also being inhibited by her internalized racist sentiments about herself, by her idea that she is inferior to the white social workers, and by the shame she feels for neglecting her children. Because she is intimidated, Alice paves the way for the social workers to take charge. She obeys all of their orders, telling April she must go with the social workers after one of them whispers in Alice’s ear: “April, I want you and Cheryl to go with these people. . . . You’ll be alright. You be good girls, for me” (18). While she carefully avoids telling the powerful social workers to be good to her daughters, Alice tells her children to be “good girls.” With her imperative, Alice is teaching April that she must please authority but that it does not have to please her. April must monitor her actions but not the actions of the authorities.

April is not intimidated by the social workers at this point, so she refuses to be deferent and obedient when interacting with them. For Fanon, after black people were freed from slavery, they, still gripped by feelings of inferiority, continued to be deferent when they were with white people: “The black man contented himself with thanking the white man . . .” (220). Fanon insists black people encouraged their children to be deferent with and look up to white people by expressing thanks to them: “Say thank you to the

nice man,' the mother tells her little boy . . . but we know that often the little boy is dying to scream some other, more resounding expression. . . ." (220). Unlike her mother, April is not concerned about looking up to and obliging white people but, rather, is guided by her strong urge to stay at home, and she, like the little boy in Fanon's anecdote, is dying to scream. Indeed, April does scream, in a way, telling the social workers, "You can go away now . . ." (17). Her boldness when facing and defying the authority figures is motivated by her deep desire to stay with her parents. Also, their love for her empowers April and enables her to resist boldly the colonial oppressors. She desperately pleads with her mother not to surrender her and her sister to them: "Mommy, please don't make us go. Please, Mommy. We want to stay with you. Please don't make us go. Oh, Mom, don't!" (18).

When in white institutions, the sisters are not even assured of enjoying basic human rights. The orphanage and the foster care system allow for the abuse April suffers by not ensuring that April is able to visit her family often and live with Cheryl and by not ensuring that foster parents are focused on their foster children's freedom, equality, rights, and love. In April's world, authority is often abusive. Pointing to the sisters' lack of rights and the abuse they suffer, Agnes Grant argues that "there is no movement in Canada today, nor has there ever been one, that examines the rights of children the way feminists have exposed the abuse of women" (238).

For example, the racist nuns at the orphanage insist on control, using corporal punishment and using abusive language to maintain control. Before separating April and Cheryl, the nuns cut the girls' hair. The symbolism in the gesture is evident. The sisters are denied one of their traditions while being transformed into subaltern, demoralized, and subdued colonial subjects. April lives in a sterile environment characterized by its absolutism and harshness, and she is in constant fear of physical and mental attacks: she "fear[s] getting the strap," "fear[s] even a harsh word," and "fear[s] being ridiculed in front of the other children" (20). When April is eating, a nun uses racist, abusive language to establish her authority and control April: "Don't gulp your food down like a little animal" (20). Because April lives in fear of the strap and abusive, demeaning words, she is obedient and passive. Scared, she is always obeying, without question, the "constant orders" (20). Being held back by her fear of physical and psychological attack and losing her inner strength and morale, April does not even contemplate complaining to the nuns

about their controlling ways. She does not even consider telling them she yearns to be with Cheryl and her parents. Given the harsh environment at the orphanage, the children playing alongside April are indifferent and hostile. Disconnected from each other and reduced to hostilely competing for toys, the children are divided, conquered, and pacified.

Because she is being controlled and longs to be free to be with her parents, April is depressed at the orphanage. She knows and feels the power of her oppressors and has internalized it, experiencing hopelessness. Her internalized oppression has robbed her of her dignity, and her inner power and morale have been sapped by the controlling nuns. April acknowledges that much of her unhappiness is due to her wanting to be with her mom and dad (20). When she sees her father lingering outside the orphanage, April tries to escape with Cheryl to be with him. April's desire to be with her father and also her father's arrival at the orphanage empower her such that she becomes mentally strong and rises up to a fearless state of resistance. But her resistance effort is in vain because the doors of the orphanage are locked. April is defeated by oppression and is devastated: "I pounded the window with my fists, trying desperately to get his attention, but he kept walking further and further away. When I couldn't see him anymore, I just sank to the floor in defeat, warm tears blurring my vision" (21). As April is crying, she is found by a paternalistic, abusive nun. The nun subdues April by attacking her physically and psychologically: she gives April the strap and tells her to quit "sniveling" (21). The nun, then, pacifies April, rendering April a non-threatening subject of her colonial world. Because of the control and abuse she suffers at the orphanage, her feeling of inferiority, her longing for her parents, her torment at separation, her loss of inner strength and power, and her powerlessness, April is sad and scared and physically and mentally overwhelmed. Her powerlessness causes her to feel hopelessness that is tantamount to self-hatred. The "huge, white, doughy thing" April sees when she is delirious is the colonial oppressor whose power she has internalized (22). April's oppressor refuses to stop hovering around her and refuses to let her have freedom. At the orphanage, April comes to know the extensive power of her colonial oppressors and comes to know and be habituated to severe, cruel methods of pacification, suffering large psychological and emotional struggles as a result.

Mrs. Semple, April's social worker, actively promotes April's pacification. When she drops April off at the Dions, her first foster family, Mrs. Semple encourages Mrs. Dion

to keep April mute about the matter of her living apart from her family: “Mrs. Semple explained to Mrs. Dion that I would be moody for a while because of the family visit, but not to coddle me or I would carry on like this after every family visit” (29-30). Mrs. Semple uses the words moody and coddle to discourage Mrs. Dion from supporting April when she experiences emotional turmoil after a family visit. If Mrs. Dion does refuse to coddle April when she becomes moody after a family visit, April will have no one to express her feelings to and will be forced into silence. Mrs. Semple, then, advises Mrs. Dion to emotionally abandon April to effect her silence or passive acceptance of her living apart from her family. The social worker’s air and demonstration of a lack of concern for April also later prevent her from confronting her social worker with the DeRosiers’ oppressiveness and racism.

At first, Mrs. Dion, who is kind and loving, refuses Mrs. Semple’s advice. Not silencing April, Mrs. Dion allows April to express her desire to be with her family and allows her, then, to protest against her predicament. Talking to April after Mrs. Semple’s departure, Mrs. Dion uses a “gentle, coddling voice” (30). Mrs. Dion reaches into April’s heart with empathy, sympathy, and validation: “You poor angel. It must be so hard on you” (30). April senses Mrs. Dion’s affection for her and candidly shares her experience with her. First, April “sobs and tears [break] loose” (30). Then, April speaks her mind to Mrs. Dion. April speaks resolutely, questioning her predicament and telling Mrs. Dion exactly what she wants: “I want to be with my Mom and Dad. I want to be with Cheryl” (30). April is still in touch with her own valuing of experience and with what will bring her satisfaction. For Rogers, following one’s valuing process and frame of reference is vital in that it guides one toward engaging in satisfying behaviors (“A Theory” 196).

But Mrs. Dion is convinced that there are no viable solutions to April’s problem and is unable to see how April might benefit from seeing her parents often, telling April to “trust God’s wisdom” or to accept her situation (30). Turned inward to her valuing process that insists she wants to be with her parents, April ignores the remark. She begins to sort out the problem of her being separated from her family. April begins to use her frame of reference, based on her past experiences and her perceptions of them, and problem-solving processes to help her sort out the problem. She thinks out loud, forming her own analysis of her situation, answering her own questions, and finally reaching a truthful conclusion:

Mom and dad say they're sick. They say that when they're better, then we can go home to them. But they used to take a lot of medicine before, and it never made them any better. So, will they ever get better, will they? They never will take us home with them, will they? (30-31)

April, then, reaches her conclusion by way of her own way of knowing, starting to see that her parents cannot look after her. Then, she reiterates that she wants to be with her parents: "I belong to my mom and dad" (31). So although April is beginning to understand that her parents cannot look after her, she is also sure that she wants to be with them. Experiencing a desire to be with her parents, April is searching for a viable solution to her problem.

However, Mrs. Dion cuts April off or silences her. She will not let April go any further: "Mrs. Dion gave me a big hug and then stood up. 'Come and join us . . .'" (31). April has lost her voice. Mrs. Dion, for the time being, intercepts April's valuing process and frame of reference while stopping her from questioning her situation and sorting out her problem and, perhaps, identifying workable ways for her to see her parents often and to be able to live with Cheryl. Mrs. Dion's behavior is manipulative and is an attempt to prevent April from carrying on in this way. On a larger scale, Mrs. Dion's behavior serves as an attempt to lead April away from her valuing of experience. April's actions have been largely controlled since she was taken from her parents, and now Mrs. Dion is discouraging April from relying on her valuing process and also on her instinct to question. When it comes to the matter of her living apart from her family, April does not engage her problem solving processes at the Dions', again. When she leaves the Dions, April takes with her Mrs. Dion's pacifying ideas that insist April accept bad situations rather than rely on her valuing process, instinct to question, and frame of reference and problem solving ability when facing a bad situation. When April is without Cheryl on the DeRosier farm, she does not use her valuing process in a way that enables her to think resolutely about rejecting her situation at the DeRosiers' and need and desire to find a way to be free from the DeRosiers.

April never expresses her desire to live with Cheryl and her parents to Mrs. Dion again. At the Dions', then, April is not really given the freedom to express what she experiences, let alone act on her experiences. In a gentle and subtle way, Mrs. Dion does what Mrs.

Semple wanted her to do. She pacifies April, leading her to be silent about her dislike of her separation from her family.

The Dions also acculturate April to white standards through their use of language and their actions. Writing about how language is imbued with culture, Fanon states, “To speak a language is to take on a world, a culture” (38). At the Dions, April mimics those in her environment, speaking and practicing white culture. As they centre their white values, the Dions refuse to acknowledge April’s heritage, trying, in a way, to erase it. But, unlike the DeRosiers, the Dions never harshly oppress April and never exhibit racist behavior in that they never deliberately make April feel ashamed of her ancestry. Mrs. Dion even tells April that she can grow long hair (26). What is more, Mrs. Dion encourages April and Cheryl’s close relationship by giving April a teddy bear to give to Cheryl (27). And unlike Mrs. DeRosier, Mrs. Dion never disparages April’s parents and never leads her into believing that they do not care about her. Mrs. Dion even encourages April’s love for her parents, telling her to “keep loving them” (31).

As April is preparing to leave the Dions and move to the DeRosier farm, Mrs. Dion gives April a maxim for her to use when life is cruel to her: “When life seems unbearable, remember there’s always a reason” (36). The maxim encourages April to passively accept difficult life circumstances; still, Mrs. Dion offers the maxim to April as a way to help her survive. After giving April the maxim, Mrs. Dion proceeds to tell April that she is going to a fine home. Losing sight of her knowledge of the cruelties of life, Mrs. Dion creates a superb, idyllic new start for April based on what Mrs. Semple told her: “Mrs. Semple says that the home you’re going to is a fine home. I’m sure you’ll be happy there” (36). Mrs. Dion’s supposedly factual statement obliterates the cruelty of the world and lulls April into an unquestioning, passive state. Yet the cruelty April suffers at the DeRosiers’ is similar to that which she suffered at the orphanage.

The DeRosiers, firmly tied to their desire for power, use some of the same methods of control and pacification that the nuns do: corporal punishment and abusive discourse. They also physically abuse April. The DeRosiers’ methods of control, then, hold April in place. Experiencing the power of her white oppressors and their ability to hold her in place, April is made to be “bitterly passive,” and her inner strength and morale are robbed from her (50). She lives in fear of physical and mental attack and is unable to experience the

inner power she needs to rise up and resist the DeRosiers' oppression (50). April cannot turn to her social worker for help and feels she cannot turn to any of her teachers for help. She is made vulnerable on the farm because she has no one who can serve as a protective barrier. As she does at the orphanage, April internalizes the DeRosiers' power, being downcast over and over, again, and being so "lonely and miserable" that her experience of internalized oppression is tantamount to self-hatred (105). The DeRosiers' methods of control are effective, but April is also held in place because she follows her mother's imperative, being mostly a "good" girl while facing control, punishment, and abuse. She is held in place as she tries to trust in God's wisdom and "say [her] prayers" (40). She accepts her situation without truly turning to her valuing of experience and saying, "I do not accept this bad situation and I need and want to be free from the DeRosiers." April does not consider finding a way to break free and never considers running away until Cheryl is on the farm.

When April first arrives at the DeRosier farm, she is stripped of her basic rights while being subjected to the DeRosiers' power and racism. Her emotional and psychological state on the DeRosier farm is characterized by her internalized oppression and internalized racism. Mrs. DeRosier gives a chilling speech, insisting on obedience. She lets April know that she will be made to be obedient and positions her as a servant:

You will get up at six, go to the henhouse, and bring back the eggs. While I prepare breakfast, you will wash the eggs. After breakfast, you will do the dishes. After school, you'll have more chores to do, then you will help me prepare supper. After you do the supper dishes, you will go to your room and stay there. You'll also keep yourself and your room clean. I know you half-breeds, you love to wallow in filth. You step out of line once, only once, and that strap will do the rest of the talking. . . . You do any complaining to your worker, watch out. (37-38)

In this chilling speech, Mrs. DeRosier, invokes the stereotype that Métis people are not clean and then attributes the behavior to April and all Métis people, whom she degradingly refers to as "half-breeds." Mrs. DeRosier brandishes in April's face that she and all Métis people are bad, wrong, inferior, unacceptable, and unworthy. The implication of Mrs. DeRosier's statement is that to be white and clean is to be good, right, superior, acceptable, and worthy. Mrs. DeRosier, then, implies to April that if she were not an Aboriginal

person or if she were a white person, she could love her or at least would not hate her. Maggie is as hungry for power and is as racist as her mother is: “You didn’t even sweep the floor. I heard you half-breeds were dirty but now I can see that it’s true” (39). April is shocked by the DeRosiers’ treatment of her and yields to despair. Before she goes to her bedroom, she laments her loss of rights: “Helpless fury built up inside of me, but I was alone here, unsure of what my rights were, if I even had any” (40). Sitting in her bedroom, she laments her loss of love: “Was it only this morning I had felt loved and cherished?” (40). While Mrs. DeRosier and her children torment April, Mr. DeRosier, a “shady” man, sits on the “sidelines,” “condon[ing] the racism of his wife and children by his refusal to get involved” (Grant 241). April is encircled and isolated by oppression and racism on the farm.

April is also exposed to racism when she is on the school bus, and the school’s history lessons on Aboriginal people are based on racist thinking. Maggie and Ricky make sure April is isolated on the school bus by telling the lie that she had lice when she arrived at their home. The children on the bus “would call [April] names” (42). April thinks about what she has learned in school. Accepting the lessons as truth, April recalls Louis Riel was “a crazy half-breed” (42). She also recalls that First Nations people in history were savage and recalls “the various methods of tortures [Aboriginal people] had put the missionaries through” (42). April applies the racist meanings, which create in her a feeling of dislike for Aboriginal people, to people of her day: “So, anything to do with Indians, I despised” (42). Having applied the racism to herself, April is “relieved” that “no one in [her] class [knows] of [her] heritage . . .” (43). She does not want anyone in class to know her heritage because she is scared that if children in class discover her ancestry, they will act superior and scorn and reject her and push her into a more extreme position of isolation and internalized racism.

The DeRosiers also seek to give April a negative meaning of her family. When Alice and Henry miss the first family visit that has been scheduled since April arrived on the farm, Mrs. DeRosier subjects April to more racism, offering her derogatory meanings of her parents. Mrs. DeRosier insists that April’s parents were “too busy boozing it up to even come to visit . . .” (44). Mrs. DeRosier’s interpretations of April’s parents’ alcoholism and of their absence from family visits are based on the tenets of individualism

or the idea that the Raintrees are free to choose their behavior and are based on the tenets of racism or the idea that the Raintrees' alcoholism is a function of their ancestry. Mrs. DeRosier's message is that Alice and Henry are weak, bad, wrong, hateful, unworthy, and inferior. Like their mother, the DeRosier children use April's parents' absence from the family visit as "new ammunition" to "use against" April (45). The children taunt April for the rest of the month, insisting she has "drunkards for parents" (45).

April automatically questions the DeRosiers' hateful ideas about her parents because her ideas about her parents are different from the DeRosiers' ones and are based on love and sympathy for them. April offers her understandings of her parents to displace the DeRosiers' meanings and to defend her and her parents' worth. She also defends her parents because she loves them: "They're not drunkards. They're sick" (45). Helen Hoy, using the theory of deconstruction, notes the "discursive self-consciousness" of *April Raintree*, asserting that April is embedded "in systems of meaning-making" throughout the story, and "the story is an intricate choreography of (mis)representations" (277-78). Hoy destabilizes opposed, politicized meanings by focusing on the "multi-valence" of the meanings and "contrary conclusions" reached in the text (279). For Hoy, the contrary conclusions convey the "indeterminacy of the text" and show that no meanings are inherent or truthful (279). But the DeRosiers' understanding of April's parents is not as important as the hate that stands behind them. April's conception of her parents is not as important as the love that stands behind them. Family love and loyalty bring meaning to April's life.

The DeRosiers, following their racist sentiments, including their idea that they are superior to Aboriginal people, dismiss April's meanings of her parents. The DeRosier children insist to April that she is a "dummy" and then generalize their comment by insisting that "half-breeds and Indians are pretty stupid" (45). April is unable to listen to the DeRosiers' comments anymore, and running from the house and screaming "No!", she is internalizing the DeRosiers' racist sentiments regarding her parents and believing the sentiments are "truth[ful]" (45). She is cut off from her idea that her parents drink because they are sick and from much of her experience of their love for her and from her loving valuations of them. Now, to her mind, her parents are "Liars!" who lie about why they drink alcohol, and they "never cared" about her and Cheryl (46). April feels betrayed, is

distrustful, and never wants to see her parents again: “I hate you both for lying to us. I hope I never see you again” (46). Still, after she internalizes the DeRosiers racist sentiments about her parents, April’s first instinct is to experience her love for her parents: “Sometimes, I would think of the life I would have been leading if we were all together” (50). At other times, April re-internalizes and reasserts her racist views of her parents and her idea that her parents did not care about her: “Other times, I would remind myself that my parents were weak alcoholics who had made their choice” (50). Evidently, April is incongruent, experiencing her valuing process and then experiencing her internalized racism. At some level, April has come to understand that her parents are now consumed by their drinking and that she is losing them to it. Family loyalty has been so important to April, and her parents’ loyalty to her has been destroyed. April buries her love for her parents because she has a racist view of them and thinks they do not love her. April’s scream of “No!” is a manifestation of her acquired racist view of her parents, their betrayal, and her belief that they do not love her. The scream also voices the deep loss, insecurity, anxiety, anger, and sadness she is experiencing. April is desperate in that she experiences at once her parents’ abandonment of her and the racism around her and her isolation and her need for love.

As she is running from the house, April is also profoundly accepting racist sentiments about her self. Being mostly cut off from whatever self-acceptance she had left, April succumbs to internalized racism in a profound way, and she embraces white culture in a profound way:

It seemed to me that what I’d read and what I’d heard indicated that Métis and Indians were inclined to be alcoholics. That’s because they were a weak people. Oh, they were put down more than anyone else, but then, didn’t they deserve it? Anyways, I could pass for a pure white person. I could say I was part French and part Irish. If I had to, I could even change the spelling of my name. Raintree looked like one of those Indian names, but if I changed the spelling to Raintry, that could pass for Irish. And when I grew up, I wouldn’t be poor; I’d be rich. Being a half-breed meant being poor and dirty. It meant being weak and having to drink. It meant being ugly and stupid. It meant living off white people. And giving your children to white people to look after. It meant having to take all the crap white

people gave. Well, I wasn't going to live like a half-breed. When I got free of this place, when I got free from being a foster child, then I would live just like a real white person. (46-47)

As Jo-Ann Thom argues, "It is no surprise that April . . . accepts completely the racist beliefs that engulf her" (297). April does choose to live as a white woman and continues to choose all of her behaviors after she internalizes racism, but all of her choices are swayed heavily by her immediate social world and the larger colonial world. Michael Creal argues this point: "We *do* have a measure of freedom in the choices we make, but we don't make these choices in a social vacuum" (252). April decides to forsake her Aboriginal identity and to live as a wealthy white woman to "escape the prejudice which had made her life at the DeRosiers' so lonely and miserable" (Creal 253). She wants to be rid of negative self-meanings and self-hatred and feelings of inferiority. As Margery Fee asserts, April's decision is an "evasive" move (220).

The DeRosiers' meanings for April and her parents are not based on only thoughts, Ideas, or cognitions. Those meanings are charged with a feeling of dislike, a white attitude of superiority, and a refusal of Aboriginal people's worth. Thus, when April is subjected to racism, she is not being subjected just to word meanings. Rather, she experiences this racism emotionally. April's experience of profound internalized racism and her acceptance of white values come about as a result of her being rejected and her need for love. She needs love and self-love to survive emotionally and psychologically, so she falsifies her valuing process and desires to be a wealthy white woman. According to Rogers, once people falsify their valuing of experience and take up the values of others, they cannot experience self-worth and self-love unless they live up to conditions of self-worth ("A Theory" 225). April feels she needs to prove her whiteness to others and to herself. Again, Fanon argues that colonized people who have internalized inferiority feel the need to prove their whiteness (215).

April's emotional situation changes when Cheryl comes to live with April on the DeRosier farm. April reaches out to Cheryl, feeling "alone, unloved, with nothing to look forward to" (50) and is empowered by her love for Cheryl. She is compelled to stand up to, and protect Cheryl from the DeRosiers' oppression: "From the day she arrived, I changed. I was more alert and openly defiant towards the DeRosiers, sending them silent warnings

to leave my sister alone” (52). But Cheryl is the truly bold one, refusing the DeRosiers’ and school teachers’ oppression with actions and the spoken word. Cheryl, unlike April, has not been subjected to oppression and pacification methods. Instead, she had freedom and love and equality and power when living with the MacAdams, so she has been empowered by their love. She acts and speaks freely, exuding an enormous amount of inner strength and defying authority to ward off oppression. Thus, unlike April, Cheryl does not send “silent warnings” to the DeRosiers. Cheryl talks backs to them. Speaking out and refusing to be oppressed and passive, Cheryl refuses to get Maggie lemonade: “Get it yourself” (52). Being confident in her Aboriginal identity and seeing the worth of her ancestry because she was accepted and prized and supplied with positive affirmations of her ancestry by her first foster family, the MacAdams, Cheryl, unlike April, freely and quickly speaks out against racism. She refuses racism at school. After she is taught that “Indians scalped, tortured, and massacred brave white explorers and missionaries,” Cheryl insists the lessons are lies (53).

Soon, April is almost as bold in the face of oppression and as confident in her ancestry as Cheryl is. Being empowered by Cheryl’s love, April develops considerable inner strength, rising up against the DeRosiers’ oppression. Also, Cheryl serves as a protective barrier for April. The DeRosiers back away from using harsh physical and mental abuse. Mrs. DeRosiers’ abuse is far less severe than it was when April was alone on the farm, during which times April was “shaken around like a rag doll” (49). After Mrs. DeRosier cuts Cheryl’s hair, April confronts Mrs. DeRosier, driven by her desire to protect Cheryl and feeling mentally strong and feeling powerful. April, then, refuses to be a “good” girl. April questions Mrs. DeRosiers’ act of oppression and also questions her racism: “Why did you scalp my sister?” (55). April does not need to bend to Mrs. DeRosier’s oppression and racism to secure her approval and love. Cheryl, then, has given April worth and self-worth and, thereby, has destabilized cultural control that insists on the value of whiteness. After Mrs. DeRosier “slapped” April, she boldly refuses the oppressive, authoritarian act by talking back (55). Not scared of Mrs. DeRosier’s anger and aggression, April, finally asserting her rights, “yell[s]” at Mrs. DeRosier: “You had no right to do that” (55). When they are alone in their bedroom together, the defeated sisters, strengthened by their love for each other, even laugh about the matter: “It was good to be able to laugh

defeat in the face” (56). April has been largely freed from the internalized oppression she suffered before Cheryl arrived on the farm and has been largely relieved from despair and self-hatred. Cheryl’s love empowers April so that she is free altogether from internalized oppression. In resisting the DeRosiers and feeling powerful when doing so, April is relieved of her despair and the self-hatred associated with her internalized oppression. On the farm, the sisters, being largely free from internalized racism, experiencing self-acceptance, and valuing their ancestry, have loving relations, as they did at home. For Rogers, when people are in tune with their experiences, they build loving relations (“A Theory” 235). Finally, April questions and refuses to accept her and Cheryl’s situation at the DeRosiers, deciding she will run away with Cheryl.

After the sisters are caught running away, they are sent to Mrs. Semple, who once again seeks to instill a negative self-meaning in the sisters. Before conquering them by dividing them and reaffirming colonial power, Mrs. Semple tries to demoralize them with racism and individualist understanding of behaviors:

It starts out with the fighting, the running away, the lies. Next come the accusations that everyone in the world is against you. There are the sullen, uncooperative silences, the feeling sorry for yourselves. And when you go on your own, you get pregnant right away, or you can’t find or keep jobs. So you’ll start with alcohol and drugs. From there, you get into shoplifting and prostitution, and in and out of jails. You’ll live with men who abuse you. And on it goes. You’ll end up like your parents, living off society. In both your cases, it would be a pity because Miss Turner and I knew you both when you were little. And you both were remarkable youngsters. Now, you’re going the same route as many other native girls. If you don’t smarten up, you’ll end up in the same place they do. Skid row!
(62)

For Mrs. Semple, the sisters have caused their own problems. And according to Mrs. Semple, the sisters better “smarten up” and start to make the right choices or they will acquire what she calls the “Native girl syndrome.” For the social worker, Aboriginal individuals on skid row, including those who have what she calls the Native girl syndrome and who, like Alice and Henry, are alcoholics cause their own problems and are the way they are because of their ancestry. Duran and Duran point to the environmental causes or

the colonial context to explain the plights of Aboriginal people while allowing for the idea that Aboriginal people are free to make choices. For Duran and Duran, counselors such as Mrs. Semple need to help families be “empowered through the realisation that some of the family craziness is due to outside forces” (42).

April’s response to Mrs. Semple is divided. Knowing the oppressive, racist environment she is living in at the DeRosiers’, she first automatically questions Mrs. Semple’s position and sides with and defends Aboriginal people on skid row and those who have what Mrs. Semple calls the Native girl syndrome: “I thought if those other native girls had the same kind of people surrounding them as we did, I wouldn’t blame them one bit” (62). But, finally, she begins to internalize Mrs. Semple’s valuations: “I was still angry and felt like a criminal. We hadn’t done anything wrong. Well, maybe I shouldn’t have laid such a beating on those two brats” (63). Cheryl thinks in one direction only. She speaks “vehemently” against Mrs. Semple and the DeRosiers: “All of them are the ones who are doing wrong” (63). Cheryl does not move from her own valuations to Mrs. Semple’s. At this time, Cheryl is not influenced by Mrs. Semple’s racism and criminalizing comments, and, unlike April, she avoids being influenced by Mrs. Semple’s oppressiveness. Still vulnerable, April cannot do what Cheryl does. She is influenced by Mrs. Semple’s defeating oppressiveness and racism, instead, and guided by her understanding that Cheryl is going to be taken from the farm. Feeling her sense of power and pride in her ancestry starting to drain away, April cannot refuse and resist Mrs. Semple’s oppression and racism.

April is reconstructed and re-acculturated by Mrs. Semple’s racism and individualism, adding it on to all the racism to which she has been subjected in the past and to whatever traces of internalized racism that were lingering in her before Mrs. Semple gave her speech on the Native girl syndrome. April, in the company of Cheryl at the DeRosiers’, was taken toward an experience of self-acceptance, just as she was at home when she was in the company of her family. Going back to a highly racist milieu without Cheryl, April resolves, once again, to live as a white woman when she is free from foster care.

April’s decisions to live as a white woman and mostly abandon Cheryl and her parents will enable April to live up to white standards but will also enable her to blur

continuously in her consciousness the painful fact that she does not meet white people's conditions of worth and love and does not meet conditions of self-worth and self-love. April's defensive decisions will, then, enable her to partially deny and distort the painful fact of her ancestry. Rogers argues that people need to experience self-regard and that they use processes of defense if they do not meet conditions of self-worth ("A Theory" 226). For April, to live as a white woman and mostly abandon Cheryl is to disconnect herself from her ancestry and thus from her negative self-meanings and the associated anguish. Rogers asserts that people use processes of defense to avoid the anxiety they would experience if they were to become aware that they do not meet conditions of self-worth ("A Theory" 227). When April is living as a white woman, the fact of her ancestry still threatens her with self-hatred.

Yet, despite her desire to distance herself from her Aboriginal identity, April never stops loving Cheryl: "I could never cut myself off from her completely" (47). But if April associates with Cheryl, she will be reminded of their ancestry and feel shame and self-hatred. For April, to be seen by white people with Cheryl is to violate conditions of self-worth. Also, April sees Cheryl through a racist lens, looking down on her. April's internalized racism leads her to conditionally value or devalue Aboriginal people, including herself.

April's divided feelings about her family lead her to behave in conflicting ways. At times, she shows her love for her family, forgetting her adopted conditions of worth. Just after April decides to live as a white woman when she gets out of foster care, her love for Cheryl strikes her so that she asks: "What about Cheryl?" (47). Similarly, April's love for her parents enters her mind the last time she sees Mr. Wendell: "I heard myself asking about my parents, and what were the chances of finding them" (88). After she is acculturated, April, then, behaves paradoxically. She is pulled down different paths, often living by internalized conditions of worth, but periodically acting on her valuing process and actualizing tendency or her experiences.

April's valuing of experience and actualizing tendency lead her to go searching for her parents when she is living in Winnipeg alone, but once she begins her search on skid row, April begins to behave in accordance with her racist views of Aboriginal people. She is genuinely appalled by the poor living conditions of the Aboriginal people living there.

Her racist conditions of worth lead her to turn people on skid row into her hateful, inferior others. She sees the poor woman with whom she speaks about her parents and the woman's poverty and poor, unclean living conditions as "Ugly!" (90). Being threatened with her connection to the people on skid row, April needs to erase her link to the Aboriginal people on skid row and especially her link to her parents. She flees from the lady and from the search for her parents: "I really have to go now. I'm supposed to meet someone" (90). When she is back at home having her bath, she thinks about her parents in terms of her racism and individualism: "I would not go out of my way for a long, long time to try and find the parents who had abandoned Cheryl and me—all for a bottle of booze!" (91). April, then, behaves contradictorily, being guided sometimes by her valuing of experience and an unconditional love for her parents and at other times by her acculturated self, which takes her away from her valuing of experience and unqualified love for her parents. To avoid the "emotional pain" that she believes she would suffer if she saw her parents, April resolves to cut herself off completely from her parents (91). Then, April ups her defensive behavior because she is threatened with the fact of her ancestry. She defensively engages in fantasy to blur that she does not meet white people's conditions of worth. She imagines herself meeting all of those conditions: "I'd buy magazines that featured beautiful homes. . . Then I would lie back and daydream of myself being in one of those homes . . ." (91). In her daydream, April has possessions and friends "surrounding" her (91).

When April is going to school and working in Winnipeg during the summers, she mostly abandons Cheryl to furnish proofs of her whiteness. And when Cheryl moves to Winnipeg, April mostly avoids being seen with Cheryl in public. Being made aware of her ancestry when she is with Cheryl in restaurants, April experiences shame: "I just felt embarrassed to be seen with natives, Cheryl included" (98). To defend against further attacks of self-hatred and feelings of inferiority, April stops going to restaurants with Cheryl. When the sisters are living together, April does not form positive sentiments about Cheryl's commitment to her Aboriginal identity. Also, she thinks negatively about Cheryl's friends from the Friendship Centre, seeing them as "strays" (97). But as she is preparing to move to Toronto with her husband Bob, April is confronted with the love she feels for Cheryl.

April married Bob to up her defensive behavior. Being threatened with the pain of internalized racism because she was living with Cheryl, April needed to find a way to run away from her sister. Yet, paradoxically, April begins to form positive meanings of Cheryl's Métis identity. She tells Cheryl she is proud of her because of her commitment to her Métis identity and her studies and Aboriginal people: "I can't accept being a Métis. That's the hardest thing I've ever said to you, Cheryl. And I'm glad you don't feel the same way I do. I'm so proud of what you're trying to do" (101). Then, April tells Bob that she "just had a good honest talk with the other most important person in my life" (102). On the plane, April forms very positive meanings of her sister, being impressed with Cheryl because she is a loving and "giving, unselfish person" who is following her own path of approval (102). Recognizing that Cheryl "just accepted" her, April laments somewhat that she is leaving Cheryl and moving to Toronto to live as a white woman and laments that she cannot just accept Cheryl (102). April even thinks about her life in foster care and how what she experienced in her childhood made her a person who cannot accept Cheryl's and her own identity: "I wished I could do that whole part of my life over again" (102). April's lamentation is a manifestation of her valuing process and self-actualizing tendency, which guide her to experience her love for Cheryl. Again, then, April's behavior is contradictory as she moves away from and then toward her love for Cheryl, who is her link to her ancestry.

Living in Toronto, April's love for Cheryl comes over her again and she invites Cheryl to Toronto for Christmas. After she hangs up the phone, April regrets that she made the call. April recalls that Cheryl is her threatening Aboriginal other and that her sister and their ancestry could stand between her and Mrs. Radcliff and, thus, her and Bob:

I should have thought twice about inviting Cheryl to visit. I wanted to show off to her so much that I had forgotten that, in turn, I would have to show her off to these people. . . . If Bob were ever forced to make a choice, what would it be? In his mother's hands he was like putty. (104)

The working of April's valuing process leads April to call Cheryl, but April's acculturated self regrets that she invited Cheryl because she suspects she will be violating Mrs. Radcliff's conditions of worth and love. When she is in Toronto, April is happy that Cheryl is visiting her, but then April abandons her sister by going to the parties to which

Cheryl is not invited to meet white people's conditions of love and conditions of self-love. Also, during her talks with Cheryl, April acts on her valuing process and experience of love for Cheryl, praising her for the work she is doing with children from the Friendship Centre: "Helping some of the teenage girls avoid the native girl syndrome thing is certainly worth the effort" (105). At other times, April is made defensive by Cheryl's trying to dismantle her negatively acculturated self, and acts on her acculturated self. Irritated and defensive, April describes her dislike of Aboriginal people from skid row and, at one point, tells Cheryl her work with people from the Friendship Centre is a "lost cause" and then tells Cheryl to "go home" (108).

As April did when she was parting company with Cheryl and moving to Toronto, April begins to yearn for her sister as Cheryl is leaving Toronto: "I watched her plane taxi down the runway . . . Suddenly, I felt so empty. So alone" (112). Cheryl's visit takes April in the direction of self-acceptance and toward Cheryl, and April is spurred to return to Winnipeg to be with her sister. But all of April's reclaimed love for Cheryl is suddenly blocked from her, again, when she discovers that Cheryl prostituted herself. April is still vulnerable to internalized racism and is not yet able to accept her sister even though Cheryl prostituted herself. April detaches herself from Cheryl, turns her into a hateful, inferior other, and then fatally inflicts racism on her sister, rejecting her to avoid the painful fact of her ancestry.

To explain April's dissociated or divided self and her contradictory behavior, Mary Gillis uses the doppelganger motif. For Gillis, April's second self is her repressed Aboriginal self. Although the ghostly double or the doppelganger is often represented in literature as the true but sinister side of the self, Gillis sees April's Aboriginal self as her ghostly, repressed self. Gillis also asserts that Cheryl represents April's suppressed Aboriginal self and that the battle between the sisters represents the battle between April's Aboriginal self and her white self: "April and Cheryl are simultaneously alter egos and two distinct, antithetical personalities, suggesting that their relationship symbolizes the protagonist's divided self" (47). April's incongruent self is created after she is taken from her home and placed in foster care. Her dissociated self develops at the DeRosiers', and it leads April into behaving paradoxically when she is living as a white woman. Therefore,

after she starts living as a white woman, April, in a way, is a riddle. It is hard to read and pin her down because she is divided into two selves and her behavior is contradictory.

Living in an orphanage and in foster care when growing up, April suffers serious internalized oppression and internalized racism. At home and at the orphanage, Dions', and DeRosiers', family love makes April an empowered rebel who defies authority to try to be with her family and who finally defies authority to be free from her bad situation at the DeRosiers. Yet, once she is living as a white woman, April is incongruent and defensive and is not focused on her family, the people who made her so happy and who held her to them with accepting love. When April is living by white ideals, she is trying to meet white people's conditions of love and worth, which become her conditions of self-love and self-worth. April lives as a white woman until Cheryl begins to guide her onto a path toward defiance of authority and acceptance of her ancestry.

CHAPTER TWO

APRIL'S MOVEMENT FROM WHITE TOWARDS ABORIGINAL IDENTITY

In Beatrice Mosionier's *In Search of April Raintree*, April Raintree has difficulty identifying as Aboriginal because of "pervasive racism in the surrounding culture" (Margery Fee 215). While growing up, April, unlike Cheryl, has limited access to accepting, prizing love that positively validates her Aboriginal ancestry and insists on the worth of Aboriginal people. What is more, she, unlike Cheryl, has little cultural exposure and little access to an Aboriginal community. When April is an adult in search of her identity, she is not connected to her birth community and cannot go back to it in order to find herself and reclaim her ancestry and culture. In an attempt to understand being Aboriginal, April goes to a Powwow on a First Nation outside of Winnipeg and goes to the Friendship Centre in Winnipeg. She is positively influenced by these cultural events, but remains influenced by internalized racism. Tragically, Cheryl dies, in part as a result of April's racism. As she faces that she has lost Cheryl to suicide, April is jolted into accepting Cheryl. Through her experiencing her loss of and deep love for Cheryl and Cheryl's deep love for her, April sees the worth of Cheryl's and her ancestry. She starts forming her own prizing sentiments about her ancestry while proudly embracing it and the value of family love, and, thereby, she upsets white cultural control.

Psychological theories offer insights into the changes in April's identity. Eduardo Duran and Bonnie Duran's post-colonial theories are useful for comprehending April's healing at the Powwow and Friendship Centre. Carl Rogers' theories can be applied to April to explain her psychological and emotional reactions to accepting, valuing love and how it works to move her away from her internalized racism and toward embracing her Aboriginal ancestry by removing colonial conditions of worth that insist she be a white woman in order to be worthy of esteem. Rogers' ideas can also help us understand April's defensive reactions to Aboriginal people on skid row and to Cheryl in court. His concept of incongruence can be applied to April when she is wavering between

internalized racism and acceptance of her ancestry while his concept of congruence can be used to explain April's experience of considerable wholeness or disalienation at the end of the story. Furthermore, Fanon's ideas that colonized people will enjoy disalienation only if they are free from colonialism and recognized as equal to white people are relevant given that April lives in a racist world.

When the sisters were at home, both April and Cheryl were focused on family and love. After April internalized racism at the DeRosiers', she mostly forfeited her old values as she took up the values of white society to meet white people's conditions of love, which she turned into conditions of self-worth and self-love. Later, living in white society with the Radcliffs, April tries to prove her whiteness to be rid of her racist self-meanings. By forsaking her Aboriginal identity and assimilating into white society, April seeks to meet white people's conditions of love and conditions of self-love. In continuing to live as a wealthy white woman, April is somewhat able to continue to deny to and distort in awareness the painful fact that she is an Aboriginal woman. In continuously using processes of defense, April largely avoids experiencing the pain of internalized racism.

Cheryl, when visiting April in Toronto, is set to help her move toward her original experience of self-acceptance and family love and toward resisting oppressive authority. Before April moved to Toronto with Bob, Cheryl made her objective clear to April: "I decided that I was going to do what I could to turn the native image around so that one day you could be proud of being Métis" (102). When Cheryl arrives in Toronto for her visit with her sister, she is determined to take April away from her acculturated white self, including her materialism, and to help her accept her heritage. To accomplish her task, Cheryl criticizes and questions April's materialism. When April shows Cheryl the "mansion" just after she arrives at the Radcliff home, Cheryl says that she is not "that impressed" (104, 105). Cheryl also criticizes April's materialism when the sisters are airing their opposing views of Aboriginal people on skid row: "Who are you to sit around up here in your fancy surroundings and judge a people you don't even know?" (108). As Cheryl is preparing to leave Toronto, she tries again to take April away from white people's conditions of love by questioning April's large wardrobe: "What do you need all these clothes for? I bet you don't wear half of them" (111). However, because she is defensive and self-alienated, April refuses Cheryl's views on materialism for the majority

of the sisters' visit, beginning to change her views as Cheryl is preparing to leave Toronto. During most of Cheryl's visit, April continues to put materialism and white people ahead of family love and Cheryl by going to the fancy parties to which Cheryl is not invited.

Cheryl embodies the values of family and love. Cheryl's love and compassion for her sister as well as for the young girls and others who go to the Friendship Centre are also apparent. As Cheryl is preparing to leave Toronto, April, experiencing much of her old love for Cheryl, thinks about Cheryl's capacity for love and compassion: "That stalk could bend to the gentle breezes of compassion" (111). After Cheryl has left Toronto, April continues to feel her love for Cheryl and to consider her sister's values. Having experienced Cheryl's accepting love, April also begins to experience her old values of family and love. At the same time, white people's conditions of love, which insist on wealth as a measure of value and which April internalized as conditions of self-love at the DeRoisers, begin to be neutralized. April begins to watch the people around her to see if they embody the value of love and if they can give her the love that her sister has given her.

Notably, Cheryl criticizes April's values but not April's person and never withdraws her love from April. Cheryl, then, never makes her love for April and or her estimation of April's worth conditional. Cheryl makes clear to April that she loves her in spite of her materialism: "I didn't mean to criticize you. I just wanted to rouse you out of your passive state" (110). Rogers argues that unconditional love involves loving people no matter what their values are ("A Theory" 208). Thus, Cheryl never does to April what the DeRosiers and Mrs. Semple did to her.

When visiting April in Toronto, Cheryl also evinces confidence in her and April's Aboriginal identity. Cheryl directly offers April positive affirmations of their ancestry as she shows she accepts and values their ancestry: "I just wanted you to be aware of who we are, what we are, and what's been happening to us" (110). The way that Cheryl's confidence and Cheryl's unconditional positive regard for April's Aboriginal identity counteract April's internalized racism is in accord with Rogers' view that unconditional positive regard counteracts internalized negative regard or, in April's case, internalized racism.

As Cheryl is preparing to leave Toronto, April, experiencing deep love for Cheryl, is impressed by Cheryl because she does not bend to others' racism to gain their approval:

“Cheryl never worried about what other people thought about her” (111). April, it is remarkable that Cheryl refuses to bow down to authority figures: “Cheryl was that stalk in the field of grain which never bent to the mighty winds of authority” (111). April, then, is positively influenced by Cheryl and is beginning to see her worth. After Cheryl has left Toronto, April begins to turn away from white people’s conditions of love and conditions of self-love that insist April be a white person. As April’s valuing of experience begins to be released, her old acceptance of her ancestry begins to come to the foreground. Cheryl’s love gives April the love and self-love she needs to begin to re-experience her old values and the self-acceptance she experienced at home. Eventually, April refuses to bow to Mrs. Radcliff’s racism, mimicking Cheryl and operating from her experience of self-acceptance.

When she is in Toronto, Cheryl recognizes that April’s racism is contributing to her inability to embrace her ancestry. April’s racism is evident during the sisters’ conversations about Aboriginal people on skid row: “I didn’t feel sorry for them Cheryl. All I felt was contempt. They are a disgusting people” (110). April also voices her extreme individualism: “If you’re referring to all the negative aspects of native life, I think it’s because they allow it to happen to them. Life is what you make it. We made our lives good. It wasn’t always easy, but we did make it. And they are responsible for their lives” (110). April’s racism and individualism line up with the philosophies of Mrs. Semple and of Mrs. DeRosier. For April, Aboriginal people have plenty of opportunities to make their life good; they just have to make the right choices. Cheryl, in contrast, offers a sympathetic understanding of Aboriginal people from skid row. She insists that they do not have as many opportunities as she and April have had: “I don’t agree with you. We had a lot of luck in our lives. We’ve had opportunities which other native people never had. Just knowing what being independent is like is an opportunity” (110). April, being self-alienated and incongruent because of her internalized racism, is cut off from her initial positive valuations of Aboriginal people from skid row, valuations she formed right after she heard Mrs. Semple’s speech on the Native girl syndrome. At that point, April’s valuing of experience led her to believe environmental forces play a role in Aboriginal women acquiring what Mrs. Semple called the Native girl syndrome: “I thought if those other native girls had the same kind of people surrounding them as we did, I wouldn’t blame them one bit” (62). Now, in accord with Mrs. Semple and Mrs. DeRosier’s racism, April

sees Aboriginal people from skid row through a racist lens. And to be confronted with her link to these people is to experience a racist meaning of herself, self-hatred, anxiety, and internalized inferiority.

It is to avoid these feelings that April rejects Cheryl when April discovers her sister prostituted herself on skid row. Defensive, April pushes her sister away to try to disconnect their link and to thus save herself from succumbing to the pain of internalized racism. In disconnecting from Cheryl and turning her into her hateful, inferior other, April saves herself from the painful awareness that she does not meet white people's conditions of love and conditions of self-love. But in seeking to save herself, April destroys Cheryl, psychologically and emotionally, leading her in turn to internalize racism and be overwhelmed by negative self-meanings, self-hatred, and feelings of inferiority. Cheryl does not have another source of love and enough access to Aboriginal culture to defuse April's racism.

April's rejection of Cheryl, however, began to impact her much earlier. After Cheryl leaves Toronto, while April begins to focus on family and love, Cheryl begins to detach from April, no longer able to withstand April's racism and rejections, which Cheryl has endured ever since April started attending St. Bernadette's Academy and living as a white woman. Because she is defensive when Cheryl is in Toronto, April harshly pushes Cheryl away when the latter disagrees with April's materialism: "So go home. And live by what you believe in" (108). After she returns home, Cheryl disconnects herself from April and her self-alienating racism. At the same time, Cheryl, desperate to secure April's love, begins to internalize April's racism. When looking for her parents on skid row, Cheryl finally embraces April's racism and individualism, takes up racist views of Aboriginal people, and blames them for her problems. When she finds her father, she succumbs to racist self-meanings and self-hatred and herself takes up a life on skid row. As Cheryl pulls away from April, April repeatedly tries to reconnect to her. She buys an IBM typewriter for Cheryl for her birthday. To fill her "empty" feeling and the "loneliness" she has felt since Cheryl left, April thinks, "It might be nice to go back to Winnipeg to spend some time with Cheryl" (112, 113). She phones Cheryl but her phone is disconnected (113). She writes to Cheryl, but the latter writes back to convey she is disconnecting from April (113). April is unable to acknowledge to herself that she has pushed Cheryl away with racism and

that Cheryl is “abandoning” her because of it (113). April must focus on the point that Cheryl is abandoning her and be silent about her own mistreatment and rejections of Cheryl to avoid experiencing guilt.

As she is experiencing her love for Cheryl and yearning to be with her, April begins to put love before materialism. Recognizing that the people around her are not focused on love and growing tired of their materialism and their company, April loses interest in the “socially prominent people” in her society (113). She feels uncomfortable being a part of their group: “I didn’t belong because I didn’t care” (113). Then, April condemns and rejects Mrs. Radcliff and her friends because of their focus on money: “I was just as disgusted with [Mrs. Radcliff] and her snobbish friends and her card games and her charitable works, done only so she would be identified as a philanthropist. All these people lived for one of two things: money or power. They were all hypocrites, all of them” (114). As Mary Gillis argues, April begins to “see her new friends through Cheryl’s eyes” (54). Taking back her value of love, April wants to leave the Radcliffs because their values are not the same as hers anymore. April is being released from her self-alienated white self and sees she has not been getting the love she needs from the Radcliffs but has received ample love from Cheryl.

Experiencing this love, April decides to emulate Cheryl by being confident in her ancestry. She also decides to model herself after Heather, who is self-realized: “She lived by her own approval, not that of others” (113). Experiencing Cheryl’s love for her, April is free to not have to bow to racism or to abusive authority to gain others’ approval. April, then, is going to refuse authority and be proud of her ancestry and, thereby, live by her own approval. She revolted against Mrs. Radcliff, refusing to bend to her oppressive authority and refusing to please her: “On different occasions, I had rebelled and refused to perform my social duties” (114). April also readily rises up against Mrs. Radcliff’s racism to declare and defend her heritage after Mrs. Radcliff tells Heather that she “would simply dread being grandmother to a bunch of little half-breeds!” (116). April, experiencing acceptance of her ancestry, asserts and defends her identity by refusing Mrs. Radcliff’s identity: “Thank God I didn’t become pregnant by your son. I wouldn’t want the seed of your blood passed on to my children” (116). Evincing bold confidence in her ancestry, April refuses Mrs. Radcliff’s conditions of love that insist April be a white person. April

reacts to Mrs. Radcliff the way she reacted to Mrs. DeRosier when Cheryl was with her on the DeRosier farm. Experiencing the worth of her family's ancestry and her old values of family and love, April is ready to return to Cheryl. But after April returns to Winnipeg, she cannot hold onto her bold confidence in her ancestry. She is still guided by racism and, therefore, holds onto her white identity and is held back from embracing her ancestry and experiencing all of her love for Cheryl. She also suspects Cheryl is an alcoholic with connections to skid row, which also holds her back from experiencing all of her love for Cheryl. Her love for Cheryl is dependent on her not having what Mrs. Semple called the Native girl syndrome. At the Powwow, April tells her sister about her stubborn racism: "Shame doesn't dissolve overnight" (153).

Still, when she is living in Winnipeg again, April continues to focus on family and love and leans more and more toward embracing her ancestry. In Winnipeg, she no longer compelled to live as a white woman and her focus is on Cheryl and on helping Cheryl to get back on her feet and to "renew her interest in her native cause" (148). This effort, along with the Powwow and White Thunderbird Woman, help April to move closer and closer to being able to truly identify with her Aboriginal ancestry. Although Cheryl offers April sympathetic understandings of Aboriginal people from Main Street and April begins to accept them, she remains defensive, unable to find relief from her racist views of the people from Main Street. Grant insists that April's attitude toward her ancestry changes slowly: "With agonizing slowness, April's attitude toward her culture was changing . . ." (246). For Rogers, unconditional love weakens or dissolves conditions of self-worth ("A Theory" 230). April's conditions of self-worth are gradually weakened and then mostly dissolved at the end of the story after Cheryl's death.

We can see this gradual weakening of April's conditions of Cheryl's worth when she decides to return to Winnipeg where Cheryl is in the hospital. April arrives at the hospital with family on her mind and with love for Cheryl. But really April still has two selves, and they are present in the hospital room. One of April's faces is based on her whole but denied experience of unconditional love for Cheryl, and one is based on her racist ideas about Aboriginal people from skid row. April's behavior in the hospital is incongruous or contradictory. Rogers argues that when people are incongruent, their behavior is contradictory ("A Theory" 226). In the hospital room, April lovingly reaches

out to Cheryl. She soothes Cheryl with a warm voice while using vitalizing words: “Cheryl, it’s me, April. Everything is all right. I love you, Cheryl” (122). But April’s other self surveys Cheryl with judgment. April probes Cheryl to find out what she has been up to and why, putting her on the “hot seat”: “It’s the letters you’ve been sending me for the past two years. Why didn’t you tell the truth? . . . But why did you quit university? How come?” (124). April locates her sister in the faltering and inferior position, and she locates herself in the strong and superior position. April’s forcefulness compels Cheryl to answer April’s two questions: “I just didn’t want you to worry about me. . . . It wasn’t going very well . . .” (124). Cheryl hedges and even lies, being defensive because she is scared that April will demean and reject her because, being an alcoholic and prostitute on skid row, she does not live up to white standards.

Cheryl goes on to give April a sketchy overview of her recent life. She talks around her alcoholism while she avoids telling April that her partner Mark beats her, that she is a prostitute, and that she was beaten by a john: “Mark and I used to party a lot, and I started drinking a bit. Anyway, the day I got fired, I had a big row with Mark, and then I went out and got all tanked up. So that’s how I ended up here” (125). Cheryl cannot confide in her sister because she knows April’s opinions of women who have what Mrs. Semple called the “Native girl syndrome” all too well. Sensing April’s harsh view of her, Cheryl instantly internalizes April’s view to give her sister what she wants. She offers April a negative view of herself so that her sister will not withdraw her love: “I feel so stupid” (125). Eliciting the plea of guilty she wanted from Cheryl, April is free to be understanding: “Well, anyone who drinks goes overboard once in a while” (125). Thus, April places another wedge between her and Cheryl. Cheryl cannot broach the topic of all of April’s past betrayals and cannot tell her about Henry Lee and their parents. After April returns to Winnipeg, Cheryl’s healing is only partial because of April’s racism.

April’s racism comes out in full force after she is raped. Before she is thrown from the rapists’ car, April is called a “squaw” (132). Once she is outside of the car, she approaches a house looking for help. When a man looks out the door, April projects her rapists’ and her own racism onto the man and believes he will mistake her for an Aboriginal woman from skid row and have a disdainful view of her. April is threatened with a negative self-meaning, self-hatred, and the anguish associated with feelings of

inferiority: “From the way he looked at me, I’m sure he at first thought I was some drunken squaw who had gotten into a fight and had been thrown out of a car” (133). To prove to herself that she is not a “drunken squaw,” April disconnects herself from Aboriginal women from skid row, using a highly pejorative term to describe them and to turn them into her hateful, inferior others. Highly defensive, April denies to and distorts in awareness the fact of her ancestry. For Rogers, people engage in defensive behavior to ward off threats of self-hatred and anxiety (“A Theory” 227). April’s defensive behavior after she is raped foreshadows her defensive behavior in court.

As April is engaged in her effort to get Cheryl to take back “her native cause” (148), the former moves more and more toward her Aboriginal identity, though she wavers between it and her white self. At the Powwow, April is drawn towards Aboriginality by her experience of cultural ceremonies and by Cheryl’s love. When experiencing the ceremonies, April begins re-forming accepting, prizing meanings of her ancestry. In accordance with Duran and Duran’s assertion that “there is a lot of healing happening” in Aboriginal communities, April also begins to heal (158). Inhabiting a wholly accepting, prizing environment and being exposed to Aboriginal culture, April freely experiences her old values, feeling peace and pride in her Aboriginal identity:

That night, we sat, Indian-style, around a bonfire, listening to the chanting and tales of Indian singers. Cheryl told me that was probably how it had felt on those long-ago buffalo hunts. I was impressed by all the sights and sounds. It went deeper than just hearing and seeing. I felt good. I felt alive. There were stirrings of pride, regret, and even an inner peace. For the first time in my life, I felt as if all of that was part of me, as if I was a part of it. (151)

We can see here the process of an Aboriginal community coming together to heal of which Duran and Duran speak.

Once back in the tent, however, April turns back to her white identity when she recalls the Aboriginal people from Main Street and is threatened by self-hatred and feelings of inferiority: “On Monday, we’ll go home, and to what? I’ll go back to see the drunken Indians on Main Street, and I’ll feel the same old shame” (152). April will continue to avoid experiencing self-hatred by continuing to inhabit the white world: “I’ve made my choice on how I want to live my everyday life” (152). Cheryl, in turn, positively

affirms April's Aboriginal identity, trying to neutralize April's internalized racism and conditions of worth: "Yeah, but the Indian blood runs through your veins, April. To deny that, you deny a basic part of yourself. You'll never be satisfied until you can accept that fact" (152).

Cheryl also tries to redefine Aboriginal people who live in poverty, explaining that their plight can be seen as caused by the colonial environment. If April can accept Cheryl's definition, she will be able to accept and prize Aboriginal people and, thus, will no longer be ashamed of them and herself. Cheryl gives a sympathetic portrait of her friend Nancy, insisting that she earns little money because of her lack of education and the colonial environment, telling April that Nancy has "been at the minimum wage for a long time. They use her and she knows it. And she gets depressed about it. But with her education and the way things are, she knows she doesn't have many choices" (152). Cheryl also highlights Nancy's dignity and integrity by telling April that she "helps support her mother and her sister and a brother" (152). Then, Cheryl offers another sympathetic accounting for Nancy's life struggles: "The reason why she left home in the first place was her father. He was an alcoholic who beat her mother up and raped Nancy" (152). April is struck by Cheryl's comments: "I didn't know that" (152). With Cheryl's help, April is beginning to acquire a different and more positive conception of Aboriginal people and, thus, is being moved closer to being able to have a positive feeling about her own ancestry.

Cheryl also recites the satirical essay that she wrote for university to explain to April that colonialism has had devastating effects on some Aboriginal people. Cheryl addresses Aboriginal disempowerment, poverty, and illness and insists that in having to live under these conditions, Native people are robbed of their dignity, purpose, and hope and are led into a life of alcoholism and self-destruction:

White man, you say that we are a people without dignity. But when we are sick, weak, hungry, poor, when there is nothing for us but death, what are we to do? We cannot accept a life which has been imposed on us.

You say that we are drunkards, that we live for drinking. But drinking is a way of dying. Dying without enjoying life. (154)

Here, Cheryl voices her own struggles with alcoholism and her experiences of wanting to die. Cheryl's understanding of the effects of Aboriginal disempowerment is similar to that

of Duran and Duran. Duran and Duran explain that after Aboriginal people internalize the power of the colonial oppressor and experience despair that is equivalent to self-hatred, they can internalize the self-hatred, which leads to alcoholism and death (29). Cheryl's alcoholism and loss of her dignity and her suicide are caused in part by Aboriginal disempowerment and her internalizing the power of her oppressor.

After hearing Cheryl's speech, April wavers, again. She is not ready to fully accept Cheryl's claims: "I think you put too much blame on white men for everything" (155). As Lundgren argues, April was "convinced by her teachers, her foster family, and social workers that Native people are responsible for their own disempowerment . . ." (63). Still, April begins to accept Cheryl's assertion that white people play a role in the plights of encumbered Aboriginal people. She has, then, been moved away from her extreme views. In Toronto, April could only think in one direction, solely guided by her racist sentiments about Aboriginal people.

When the sisters are at the Friendship Centre, Cheryl offers sympathetic understandings of non-Status Indians and Métis people in particular. Cheryl points out that they are often poor and on welfare because it is hard for them to find employment, and that they, unlike Treaty Indians, are shut out of housing programs and do not receive treaty payments. April's reaction to Cheryl's assertion reveals that she believes that colonialism is partially responsible for the predicaments of non-Status Indians and Métis people: "I didn't know what to say. I felt it was good that they didn't have the federal government to rely on, that it would help them be independent, to a certain point. But I also knew what Cheryl said was true about non-status Indians and Métis, and employment was hard for them to come by" (158).

At the Friendship Centre, April also experiences the accepting, prizing love of White Thunderbird Woman, who insists on the worth of April's Aboriginal identity by positively validating it and by evincing a dignified manner that serves as a positive reflection on April's Aboriginal heritage. White Thunderbird Woman, an elder, helps April to form an accepting, prizing view of Aboriginal people: "Her gaze held mine, for I saw in her eyes that deep simple wisdom of which Cheryl had spoken. And I no longer found her touch distasteful. Without speaking a word to me, the woman imparted her message with her eyes" (159). Giving April the healing love that she needs and that insists on her worth,

the elder weakens white people's conditions of worth and love and April's conditions of self-worth and self-love. The elder frees April to experience some self-acceptance as she takes her away from her internalized racism. Internalizing the elder's positive regard and recognizing the dignity of the woman, April begins to experience love for White Thunderbird Woman as well as positive self-meanings. She begins to generalize her positive view of the elder to all Aboriginal people. Recognizing that the elder could have prevented the identity crisis she suffers, April states, "If I'd had such a grandmother when I was growing up, maybe I wouldn't have been so mixed up" (159). Then, April wavers again, not trusting the experiences that she had with White Thunderbird Woman and thinking, instead, that this is just an "emotional" time for her (160). April's sentiments about her ancestry are changing, but she continues to struggle with the issue: "Still, I continued to waver back and forth as to just how I felt about being a Métis. It was a part of me. I was part Indian. But so what?" (160). As April is wavering, the trial for her rape begins.

When it is revealed in court that Cheryl has prostituted herself, April's racist white self comes to the forefront because she is threatened with the painful knowledge that she is connected to someone who she sees as having what Mrs. Semple called the Native girl syndrome. April is still guided by her racist views of Native people from skid row. Becoming highly defensive, April becomes aggressive, turns Cheryl into her other and rejects her. April's defensive measures enable her to partially deny the painful fact that Cheryl is her sister. She uses bitter sarcasm and insults to describe Cheryl's prostitution: "My own sister? Champion of native causes. A whore?" (166). April turns Cheryl into her hateful, inferior other, condemning Cheryl with her tone: "'We'd better go now.' My voice sounded cold, even harsh" (167). Finally, April openly rejects her sister: "Cheryl stood up then and looked right at me. I saw her face in that split second before I looked away from her. I just couldn't look her straight in the face, not at that moment. I didn't even know how I felt towards her" (167). April, then, cannot do for Cheryl what White Thunderbird Woman did for her. April cannot not look Cheryl in the eye and accept her and deem her to be a worthy Aboriginal woman, no matter what.

Still guided by internalized racism, April seeks to prove her whiteness. Fanon insists that colonized people who have internalized inferiority are moved to prove their

whiteness when threatened by the anguish associated with internalized inferiority: “At the climax of his anguish there remains only one solution for the miserable Negro: furnish proofs of his whiteness to others and above all to himself” (215). April furnishes proofs of her whiteness to avoid feelings of inferiority and self-hatred. It is too painful for her to be aware that she does not meet white people’s and her own conditions of worth and love. April’s internalized racism leads her to see her sister through a racist lens, and she is ashamed of her. To April’s mind, Cheryl chose to prostitute herself and live on skid row because she is foolish. She believes that she was raped because Cheryl chose to be reckless: “A victim of my own sister’s folly. . . . All because Cheryl insisted in going out of her way to screw up her own life. And thus, screwing up mine” (167). Without a strong community of people supporting her Aboriginal identity, April cannot see past her internalized racism.

April experiences deep conflict in her feelings for Cheryl. Cheryl is always on her mind, and one moment she thinks from her old self, wanting “to hug her” (171). The next moment, she thinks from her racist identity, wanting “to give [Cheryl] hell” (171). After April receives the call of warning from Nancy, April is jolted into experiencing her original valuations of Cheryl and, thus, she experiences her old unconditional love for Cheryl, wanting to give her sister “a big hug” (190). April’s entire system is shocked by the idea that she has lost Cheryl to suicide. Gillis argues this point: “Cheryl’s death forces April to realize Cheryl’s worth and the enormous loss her suicide represents” (65). April’s loss of Cheryl and her suicide note also jolt April into experiencing Cheryl’s deep love for her. Cheryl’s suicide note contains a strong message of love and acceptance and prizing of April’s Aboriginal identity: “April, you have strength. Dream my dreams for me. Make them come true for me. Be proud of what you are, of what you and Henry Lee are” (207).

Experiencing her love for Cheryl and Cheryl’s love for her, April’s valuing process mostly breaks free, and, thereby, her denial is mostly lifted. April, then, experiences unconditional self-worth and unconditional self-love and experiences Cheryl’s positive affirmations of her ancestry. In her mind, April asserts her new found pride in her ancestry, insisting that her denial of her ancestry has been lifted: “As I stared at Henry Lee, I remembered that during the night I had used the words ‘MY PEOPLE, OUR PEOPLE’ and meant them. The denial had been lifted from my spirit. It was tragic that it had taken

Cheryl's death to bring me to accept my identity" (207). Evidently, white people's conditions of worth and love and April's own conditions of self-worth and self-love have been neutralized. April is free to be herself.

Guided by her valuing process, April now forms her own positive affirmations of her ancestry, being able to accept and value Aboriginal people, including those from skid row. Wanting to give others the love that Cheryl gave her, April plans to bring satisfaction to her life by being an Aboriginal healer and activist who makes it "better" for her family and all colonized people: "But for Henry Lee and me, there would be a tomorrow. And it would be better. I would strive for it. For my sister and her son. For my parents. For my people" (207). Disalienated and congruent, April now sees that people are equal and worthy of love, no matter what. For Harmut Lutz and Gillis respectively, April has "come full circle" and enjoys much "wholeness" (102, 45). April was being held in her self-alienated, incongruent, and acculturated state by white people's and her own conditions of worth. Cheryl's and others' unconditional love gives April the love she needs and the unconditional positive regard she needs to choose her Aboriginal self.

Despite her new sense of congruence, however, April inhabits a colonial world in which white power is formidable and racism is rampant. April, then, will continue to be influenced, to some degree, by white power and white culture. She will not be able to experience complete wholeness. She needs to be free from colonialism and racist images and the constructs of superiority and inferiority and needs to enjoy love and equality so that she can truly experience congruence. The ending of *April Raintree* is tragic in that Cheryl is dead and April is mourning her loss of her sister. April is facing loneliness. Inevitably, April will continue to face loneliness in her colonial world. Her sister and mother are dead, her father lives on skid row, and she cannot turn to her extended family or to the community at Norway House for love or for support of her Aboriginal identity because she is not connected to the people there. The Friendship Centre cannot offer her the amount of love, community, and culture she needs in order to support her identity.

Yet, April has some personal freedom and love in her life. She no longer has to accept racism to gain white people's approval because she has love in her life. She resists a racist man after she discovers Cheryl by the Louise Bridge. The man verbalizes his racism: "Those Indians are always killing themselves. If they aren't shooting each other on the

reserves, it's this" (190). In response, April, no longer defensive, stands her ground: "She was my sister, mister" (190). The ending of *April Raintree* insists that April will enjoy her ancestry and will have love in her life. April is prepared to start a life based on her Aboriginal identity and family love. She has Henry Lee and Nancy and her mother. As Grant argues, "Culleton chose a happy ending for her book. . . . There will be love, peace, and serenity in April's life, and that, too, is part of Aboriginal culture" (246).

CHAPTER THREE

CHERYL'S MOVEMENT FROM ABORIGINAL PRIDE TO INTERNALIZED RACISM

Many Aboriginal people growing up in foster care have experienced the oppression and racism that Beatrice Mosionier's character April Raintree experiences. But Cheryl Raintree, the other central character in *In Search of April Raintree*, enjoys considerable freedom, love, and Aboriginal community and culture while growing up in foster care. Cheryl's foster families and April sustain Cheryl with love. Her first foster mother, Mrs. MacAdams, is a Métis woman, and she, as well as one of Cheryl's teachers, prizes Cheryl's ancestry, encouraging her to embrace it proudly. Also, the Steindalls, who are white, accept Cheryl's ancestry. Therefore, when growing up, Cheryl asserts her Aboriginal identity while enjoying confidence, vitality, and growth. While she is subjected to and bothered by the racist sentiments and superior air of other school children, love enables Cheryl to continue to accept her ancestry and protects her self-worth. She mostly avoids internalized racism and being acculturated to white standards because she has the love she needs. Rather, she remains linked to her own valuations, which enables her to accept her ancestry. She learns about Aboriginal culture and is assertive in maintaining her self-acceptance and self-confidence.

Cheryl's life takes a turn towards tragedy when she leaves her foster family and April begins living as a white woman, which is when Cheryl mostly loses her. April, an unreliable narrator, obscures her and others' racist mistreatment of Cheryl in Winnipeg and Toronto and obscures the idea that Cheryl is really suffering because of the racism to which she is subjected and loss of April. When she finishes grade twelve, Cheryl loses her foster parents and then begins to experience colonial oppression at university as well as April's and others' racism. Cheryl enjoys love, community, and culture at the Friendship Centre in Winnipeg, but the racism to which she is exposed begins to outweigh the love and culture she experiences. Cheryl finally stumbles onto skid row, plagued by internalized racism after being exposed to April's and others' racism. At this point, Cheryl

is, then, self-alienated and acculturated to the white standard that insists on whiteness. Since Cheryl has brown skin, she, unlike April, cannot live as white woman to meet her internalized white conditions of worth and love. When she is living on skid row, Cheryl is cut off from her valuations of self-acceptance, and her life is one of self-hatred, alcoholism, depression, anger, cynicism, aggression, poverty, domestic abuse, prostitution, and lost culture. April returns to Winnipeg with the intention of helping Cheryl get back on her feet, but after she learns that Cheryl prostituted herself, April re-enacts her racist performance with Cheryl. Assuming the role of the white other, April fatally inflicts her superior air and racist sentiments on her sister. Cheryl finally succumbs to internalized oppression and internalized racism and commits suicide.

Their theories also help explain Cheryl's experience of internalized oppression or experience of despair and self-hatred when she is an adult, as well as her eventual suicide. Carl Rogers' ideas are useful for understanding how Cheryl avoids internalized racism and self-actualization when growing up and why she succumbs to internalized racism when she is an adult. Rogers also helps us explain Cheryl's anxiety when she cannot defend against the pain of internalized racism and her use of alcohol and aggression to defend against or blur racist self-meanings. She turns to suicide when alcohol no longer works as a process of defense. Frantz Fanon's theories help explain Cheryl's often painful experience of internalized inferiority and the pain she experiences because she cannot prove her whiteness to April, her white "superior" Other, and to herself at the end of the story. Eduardo Duran and Bonnie Duran's theories are valuable for comprehending how Cheryl overcomes racism because of the Aboriginal community and culture she enjoys while growing up.

Cheryl experiences acceptance and love as a young child. When with her first foster family, the MacAdams, she feels free and enjoys considerable love both from them and from April. Cheryl and April demonstrate their deep love for each other during their first family visit after being separated at the orphanage. April explains in her story exactly how excited Cheryl was to see her: "When Cheryl saw me, her face lit up and she screamed, 'Apple! Apple!'" (27). According to April, she is "just as happy to see [Cheryl]" (27). Cheryl's description of her life with the MacAdams shows that she feels free and is loved well by them: "Oh, yes. We have lots of good things to eat. There's lots

of other boys and girls there. And I got my own bed. At night, Mrs. MacAdams reads us stories” (27). Cheryl’s excitement is also a sign of the light-heartedness, absence of inhibition, and positive outlook she enjoys as a result of feeling free and being well-loved by April and the MacAdams. But it is April’s shows of love that Cheryl holds onto in her mind and that are most dear to her. Therefore, although Cheryl enjoys the stories Mrs. MacAdams reads to her, she is more thrilled by the memory of April’s story telling: “But no one reads good stories like you, Apple” (27). April is the one who primarily stabilizes Cheryl and makes her feel secure. She is Cheryl’s sustaining lifeline of family love, a lifeline that supports her even while she is living apart from her family. Enjoying April’s and the MacAdams’ love and society, Cheryl learns at a young age that “people matter. The group matters” (Williams 158). April and the MacAdams love Cheryl and she loves them.

Cheryl’s life of love and harmony at the MacAdams’ is disrupted once she starts school, where she is subjected to other children’s racism at school. She reveals their cruelty to April during one of their visits: “Mrs. MacAdams gave [the books] to me to read because no one at school would talk to me or play with me. They call me names and things, or else they make like I’m not there at all. This one girl and her friends would follow me home and make fun of me, so I slapped that girl” (43). Cheryl is exposed to white oppressors and to negative meanings of herself, but she has plenty of freedom and love at her foster home and has April’s love. When Cheryl reveals the other children’s racism, Mrs. MacAdams promptly shows her love for Cheryl, offering her more attention and offering her many accepting, prizing meanings of her ancestry to offset the school children’s racist meanings: “Mrs. MacAdams says we should be proud of our heritage. You know what that means? It means we’re part Indian and part white” (43). Cheryl experiences all of Mrs. MacAdams’ affection and internalizes her positive affirmations of Métis ancestry, showing she does not believe she is of an inferior race: “I wish we were whole Indians” (43). The books Mrs. MacAdams gave Cheryl positively affirm Aboriginal figures in history and, thus, positively validate Cheryl’s identity. Still vital and confident, she speaks “proudly” about Louis Riel and is proud of her link to him: “He’s a Métis, like us” (43). Mrs. MacAdams’ concerted effort to ensure Cheryl heals from the pain of racism is largely successful.

Having a secure source of love, Cheryl, then, is not compelled to internalize the children's racism in order to secure the love of the white children. Instead, Cheryl holds onto her valuing of experience, which insists on self-acceptance, and builds positive sentiments of her ancestry while experiencing unconditional self-love. Rogers argues that, if people experience unconditional love, they experience unconditional self-love ("A Theory" 224). Cheryl is not moved to want to be a white person in order to meet the white children's conditions of love. Because she does not believe she is of an inferior race, she shows no desire to furnish proofs of her whiteness to the racist white other and to herself. Because it is not the white other alone who can give Cheryl worth in her colonial world, she does not suffer self-alienation. At this point in the story, then, Cheryl's destiny is not whiteness.

However, Cheryl's positive view of her Aboriginal identity is perhaps oversimplified. The books that the MacAdams give Cheryl to read describe Aboriginal people and "how they used to live a long time ago" (43). For Acoose, since the books Cheryl reads were written by white people, the books are based on "colonial boxed constructs of Native identity" "wherein they pack a brown blob of 'Nativity,' singular and indistinguishable" (231, 228). Cheryl's conceptions of Aboriginal people and traditions are generalized and rudimentary. She does not understand that there are many groups of Aboriginal people and that they have similarities and differences. To refer to Cheryl's parents as Métis people is to be general and to overlook the distinctness of their ancestry. April, with her limited knowledge of her heritage, tries to be specific when describing her ancestry: "My father, Henry Raintree, was of mixed blood, a little of this, a little of that, and a whole lot of Indian. My mother, Alice, on the other hand, was part Irish and part Ojibway" (11). Not having first-hand knowledge of her specific cultures, Cheryl's conceptions of her ancestry and traditions are, as Acoose argues, based on white authors' uninformed, generalized, and idealized conceptions of Aboriginal people. Still, Cheryl benefits from reading the books. They teach her to be proud of her heritage and give her some knowledge about the history and heritage of Aboriginal people. But as Acoose insists, readers need to look "outside" of *April Raintree* to "come to know something about Métis history and culture" (235).

Despite her limited education in Aboriginal culture, while living with the MacAdams, Cheryl blossoms. Encouraged by the MacAdams, Cheryl follows her passions, which are school studies and Aboriginal culture. Cheryl becomes excited when she is learning how to “read and print and count,” and, like April, Cheryl anticipates going to school “I wish I was going to school” (32). Passionate about learning, Cheryl excels in school. She also excitedly pours over the books that the MacAdams give her. For Rogers, people will be “fully functioning” and grow if they are connected to their valuing of experience (“A Theory” 224). Although Cheryl grows and moves forward when living with the MacAdams, her life has difficult elements. She is separated from her family and then her parents stop attending family visits: “Three more visits were arranged, but our parents never showed up. Each time, Cheryl would end up crying” (50).

Because of the MacAdams, Cheryl proudly embraces her Aboriginal identity, and as the years go by, she continues to proudly assert her identity. Cheryl’s firm commitment to her identity, her study of Aboriginal people and of the injustices done to them, and her essay writing help her to ignore Aboriginal disempowerment and the racism around her (71). By focusing on her ancestry, Cheryl is more grounded as she lives apart from her family and faces the loss of her parents. By the time she is in her second year of university, Cheryl, according to April, is “so religiously Métis!” (105). At this point in her life, Cheryl’s sense of self is being seriously threatened by internalized oppression and internalized racism. Yet she continuously focuses on her Aboriginal identity and her work with young girls at the Friendship Centre as a way to feel free and powerful and to try to confirm the worth of her race and to try to hold onto her positive feelings about her ancestry.

Like the MacAdams, the Steindalls also encourage Cheryl to be vital and confident, proudly asserting her Aboriginal identity. The Steindalls show affection for Cheryl, and her teacher Mr. Darnell encourages Cheryl’s pride in her ancestry by positively validating her school projects. Cheryl enjoys April’s love until the latter starts attending St. Bernadette’s Academy. Experiencing freedom and power at the Steindalls, Cheryl is “not the least bit self-conscious” when talking to Mrs. Steindall (81). Cheryl does not see Mrs. Steindall as a colonial oppressor or as an authority figure to which she has to bow to in order to secure approval. Cheryl reveals to April in a letter that Mr. Steindall nurtures her

by giving her horseback riding lessons and that he makes her happy: “He’s been teaching me how to ride. We went on a sleigh ride last week. Oh, April, it’s so much fun” (68). When living with the Steindalls, Cheryl does not experience blatant racism in her environment at school: “The kids at school are all right. They don’t make fun of me or anything” (68). But Cheryl does perhaps experience subtle racism. She confides to April that children at school try to make friends with her only because they want to come to the Steindall farm to ride horses (68). Yet, this sense of alienation is offset by the Steindalls and April and also by her teacher Mr. Darnell: “We had to make speeches in front of the class, and I made mine on buffalo hunting. Mr. Darnell, my teacher, said I was an exceptional Métis, ’cause most would have avoided such subjects. That made me so proud that I just had to send you what I wrote” (68). When Cheryl is faced with the blatant racism in one of her school textbooks, she writes “the Métis side of things” because doing so helps her to ward off internalized racism: “I don’t know what I’m going to do with it, but it makes me feel good” (78). When living with the Steindalls, Cheryl grows, continuing to follow her passions just as she did when she was living with the MacAdams. She excels in school studies, focusing on learning the history of Aboriginal people and writing papers about them, and excels in sports, being “so smart and athletic” (72).

When April arrives at the Steindalls after being freed from the DeRosiers, Cheryl continues to show vitality and confidence and that her thoughts are often on April. Cheryl is jubilant when April arrives, showing that April is a life-force for Cheryl: “When she saw our car pull into the driveway, she bounded off the steps and came running up to greet me. She was practically jumping up and down” (81). During their visit, Cheryl also reveals her fantasy, one that she imagined when living with April on the DeRosier farm and one that involves her living with her family. Her dream is to live far away from white people and live in accordance with traditional Aboriginal cultural practices she has read about in books. Cheryl’s dream, then, involves what is for her the all important familial and communal “we” and reveals her urgent desire to hold onto April and to be with their parents:

Well, I used to think that when Mom and Dad got better and took us back, we could move to the B.C. Rockies and live like olden-day Indians. We’d live near a lake, and we’d build our own log cabin with a big fireplace. And we wouldn’t

have electricity, probably. We'd have lots and lots of books. We'd have dogs and horses, and we'd make friends with the wild animals. We'd go fishing and hunting, grow our own garden, and chop our wood for winter. And we wouldn't meet people who were always trying to put us down. We'd be so happy. Do you think that would ever be possible, April? (83)

Because April is at the centre Cheryl's life and, evidently, her parents are, too, Cheryl's fantasy must include her family. Family love will make what her family does in the B.C. Rockies count.

After revealing her fantasy to April, Cheryl tells her sister that thinking about her fantasy "picks [her] up" when she is "feeling down" (83). At times, then, Cheryl is very affected by colonial oppression and racism and her separation from her family such that she feels sad. Her fantasy helps her to defend her self-worth. Cheryl also has fantasies about her parents, envisioning them in terms of the romanticized Aboriginal people she read about in books: "I always think of Dad as a strong man. He would have been a chief or a warrior . . . And Mom was so beautiful to me, she was like an Indian princess" (83). Cheryl's romanticized view of her parents picks her up and boosts her self-image.

While Cheryl holds onto her fantasy about her parents, she soon gives up on her fantasy to live in the B.C. Rockies, creating a supposedly realistic and hopeful life plan for herself when she is preparing to begin grade nine. Cheryl reveals her life plan to April when she is visiting Cheryl and preparing to begin grade eleven at St. Bernadette's Academy. Cheryl's life plan involves April, of course. In a way, it is April who makes everything that Cheryl does in her life matter to her. Cheryl senses that "without family," "you're nothing" (Williams 162). Cheryl plans to go to university and to work in the Aboriginal community helping children whose life circumstances are similar to her and April's: "You know, April, I think that since we have made it, or we're going to make it, we ought to help other kids like us make it, too. . . . I'm going to become a social worker when I finish school" (85). Cheryl's life plan ends up being a fantasy, too, never realized because of colonialism. Cheryl's predicament once she starts attending university, at which time she is subjected to considerable racism and experiences colonial oppression, shows, again, that the sisters need to be free from colonialism.

When she is growing up and formulating her life plan, Cheryl, unlike April, really has no idea how oppressive and racist her colonial world is and how deadly it can be. Her life in foster care has enabled her to enjoy freedom, equality, love, and confidence in her Aboriginal identity. No one has ever told her what her world is really like and how bad it is. Cheryl has suffered oppression and racism, but lacking knowledge and experience, she does not perceive in a deep way that fierce oppression and racism are all around her. Cheryl senses April's racism but does not know how deadly it is. Cheryl does not know that psychological and emotional responses to oppression, inequality, and racism can lead to ever tormenting self-hatred, anxiety, anger, and sadness. Cheryl, then, does not know that colonialism can rob her of her life plan and that colonialism can be deadly. Not knowing that April's racism is deadly, Cheryl wants to have April beside her as she lives her life. And, of course, Cheryl does not know that April plans to live her life mostly without her in it, although she senses it, hanging onto April. Cheryl has no idea how difficult it could be for her to find someone to take April's place or to find a tight-knit Aboriginal community. Cheryl has no one, except for April.

During her childhood, when her positive feelings about herself were challenged, Cheryl used aggression to experience power and to defend her worth. When Cheryl is living with the MacAdams, she "slap[s]" the girl who follows her home (43). Cheryl periodically gives racist children a "good whack" to push them back (44). Confident in her Aboriginal identity, Cheryl becomes angry at a school teacher when she is living with April on the DeRosier farm, insisting "loudly" to the teacher that she is telling "lies" about the role of Aboriginal people in Canadian history (53). Because Cheryl, unlike April, is an unruly, "bad" girl at the DeRosiers', she is set free from them, being sent to a good home. When she is living on skid row, suffering from internalized racism, Cheryl uses aggression as she seeks to reclaim her lost power in relation to white people:

Sylvia comes into my path and stops. I stop. I look her in the eye. "If I'm a squaw, honey, what's Mark? He's as much an Indian as I am." I feel ridiculous and powerful at the same time. I know what I'm capable of. I give her my coldest stare. I know I've won this round. She can't match my gaze. The "blond bombshell" jabs a finger into my shoulder, telling me what she's going to do to me.

I twist around slightly and bring my fist into the side of her face, not real hard but hard enough to back her off. (202-03)

Cheryl's aggression is also a defense mechanism she uses to defend against self-hatred caused by internalized racism.

Cheryl also becomes highly aggressive when April condemns and begins rejecting her after Cheryl learns her sister prostituted herself. She is defending against ballooning self-hatred arising from April's racism and mistreatment of her and from internalized oppression: "She was enraged. She glared at me furiously, and before I could speak to her, she brought her hand up and struck me as hard as she could across the face" (181). For Duran and Duran, internalized oppression leads to self-hatred and can also lead to violent behavior (29)

Yet, aggression is not enough to ward off racism. At the time that she leaves the Steindalls, Cheryl really has no idea what she is in for when she starts university in Winnipeg. When she starts dating Garth, Cheryl does not know that he will subject her to his racism and that, as a result, she will start to feel uncomfortable with her large circle of white friends, and will finally exit the circle. When Cheryl starts going to the restaurants with Nancy and April, she does not realize she will be exposed to so much racism. Cheryl does not know that when she submits her "controversial" paper to the university, it will be rejected by neocolonial oppressors (153). Furthermore, Cheryl is truly in the dark and unprepared when April deters her from joining her at St. Bernadette's Academy, does not contact her at all one summer, avoids inviting her to lunch near her workplace, and stops going to restaurants with her and Nancy. Cheryl suffers more blows in Toronto, where she is subjected to April's, Mother Radcliff's, and her friends' racism. As she experiences oppression and racism, Cheryl shows no signs of awareness of the effect that these forces have on her. Even when she is back in Winnipeg and all alone on skid row and is looking for her parents and using April's colonial meanings of the people she sees there, Cheryl does not show signs of understanding what is happening to her. She does not show that she consciously perceives that her vitality and confidence are draining from her and being replaced by bitterness and self-hatred. When Cheryl finds her father, her shame is excruciatingly painful as she succumbs to internalized oppression and internalized racism. The people at the Friendship Centre are a long way from her when she stumbles and then

takes her first drink of alcohol from her father. She decides to quit school and give up her work at the Friendship Centre, and begins living on skid row. She has no one to heal her psychologically and emotionally with accepting, prizing love that affirms her Aboriginal identity.

April's life plan, meanwhile, is vastly different from Cheryl's. April first envisioned her life plan after she internalized racism at the DeRosier home and decided to live as a white woman. Her plan is solidified when she is living in Winnipeg as a white woman and working at Harbison and Associates. At the centre of her life plan is the language of the "I" and of whiteness and wealth:

I'd buy magazines that featured beautiful homes and study how they were decorated. Then I would lie back and daydream of myself being in one of those homes, giving lavish parties, and I'd have a lot of friends surrounding me. . . . I had no idea how I was going to become rich. All I knew was that one day I would have a beautiful home, a big fancy car, and the most gorgeous clothing ever. Yes, when fortune kissed me with wealth, I'd be well prepared. (91)

Avoiding the language of "we" and leaving Cheryl out, April is in a self-alienated state.

As the storyteller who is relating her own and also Cheryl's life experiences, April can never be a truly reliable narrator. April's story is limited by what she does not remember about her and Cheryl's lives, by what she does not want to tell, and by her misperceptions. Furthermore, she can never tell the entire story of Cheryl's life, not knowing all of her experiences, especially her inner ones. When April starts living as a white woman, she is a highly unreliable narrator, seeking to downplay and cover up her and others' mistreatment and rejection of Cheryl. April also avoids the idea that Cheryl is really hurt by this racist treatment in order to avoid the fact that she played a part in Cheryl's eventual death. Being an unreliable narrator, April misleads herself to avoid feeling guilt and misleads readers to avoid their scrutiny. It is thus essential to dissect April's narrative strategies and to consider how she mistreats Cheryl and plays a role in Cheryl's pain.

April has a limited view of Cheryl's inner life. After April starts living as a white woman and starts mistreating her sister, Cheryl stops confiding in April. She stops talking to April about how oppression and racism, including April's racism, affect her. The last

time that Cheryl truly confides in April occurs when she writes to her sister after not hearing from her during the summer after April has completed grade eleven. In her letter, Cheryl tells April exactly how hurt she is. But, from this point on, Cheryl mostly stops confiding in April. As a result, April is really in the dark when it comes to knowing Cheryl's experiences. But after April condemns and rejects Cheryl in court, she begins to relate many of her experiences to April again. She reveals the extent to which she was affected by April's abandonment of her. Therefore, when Cheryl is attending university and her behavior suggests that she is fine, we can conclude that she is putting on an act and is actually moving toward internalized oppression and racism.

Furthermore, once April starts living as a white woman, she does not want to know about Cheryl's struggles with racism. She does not want to know how she and others' mistreatment of Cheryl has hurt her. Detached from Cheryl, April has no intention of changing. She manages her and Cheryl's conversations by not providing a space for Cheryl to air her sentiments.

Cheryl first senses that her sister is avoiding her when April is living with Cheryl at the Steindalls' for the summer and she tries to persuade her sister not to join her at St. Bernadette's Academy for the next school year. April, in her explanation of the situation, downplays her rejection of Cheryl: "When I first came for the summer, I'd tell Cheryl how great it was to be at the Academy. But by the end of it, when she started talking about going there, too, I changed my tune" (84). April explains to Cheryl that "there are hours and hours of praying in the chapel and then there's also the hours of study periods" (84). Although April avoids telling Cheryl directly that she does not want her to attend the Academy, Cheryl senses that April does not want her there. Still intimate and open with April, Cheryl speaks out: "Sounds to me as if you don't want me there" (84). After April introduces more reasons why Cheryl would not like the Academy, Cheryl finally "shrug[s] and accept[s]" April's "reasoning" (84). But April has no intention of making room for Cheryl to speak her mind. Also, Cheryl's reactions suggest she is not that bothered by April's slight. And April, as the narrator, emphasizes that Cheryl accepts her "reasoning" while she avoids writing the idea that Cheryl might be really hurt by her slight. April is "relieved" that the discussion has ended because she does not want Cheryl to speak about her feelings and does not want to experience guilt and pressure to invite Cheryl to the

Academy (84). Because April is controlling the narrative and the conversation the false impression that is created is that Cheryl is not really affected by April's racist exclusion.

It becomes very clear to Cheryl that April is avoiding her when she overtly rejects her by not even contacting her when she is living in Winnipeg after completing grade eleven. In her letter to April, Cheryl confides that she is very angry and hurt by April's actions, and she pleads with April to remain loyal:

Dear April,

How are you? In case you forgot, it's me, Cheryl, your sister. How come you never came to see me once this past summer, and you never even wrote to me? Your last letter made me very sad. It's like you don't want to have anything to do with me anymore. . . . We're family, not just friends. Are you coming for Christmas? I hope so. (86-87)

Cheryl's assertion that she and April are family expresses her need for April's lifeline of family love. April's love has served to boost Cheryl's confidence in her Aboriginal identity and has made her life matter to her. April, self-alienated and acculturated and, thus, detached from Cheryl, now must make a "special effort" to go and see her sister more often (87). The narrator April acknowledges that Cheryl must have felt "abandoned," but she downplays her mistreatment and abandonment of Cheryl and avoids the idea that Cheryl is really affected by her racism (87). At this point, Cheryl stops questioning April about her rejections of her. The sisters' intimacy is mostly destroyed.

After Cheryl moves to Winnipeg to attend university, April eventually stops going out in public with Cheryl, and, then abandons her by moving to Toronto. Cheryl never says a word to April about this rejection and how it affects her. The sisters become further estranged after Cheryl returns to Winnipeg from Toronto, not communicating at all during the time Cheryl is on skid row until Cheryl is hospitalized. Cheryl does not verbalize her anger and sadness after April condemns and rejects her in court. But finally, months later, April's betrayal causes Cheryl to erupt. She voices her anger at April's rejection of her in the courtroom. Cheryl also expresses her anger at April's other betrayals, showing that beneath her anger is sadness, anxiety and insecurity and that she has internalized April's negative regard: "You turned your back on me a long time ago. You think I don't know why you married Bob? It was to get away from me, that's why. I'll bet you wished you

were an only child. I bet you wished I was dead. . . . Half-breeds aren't good enough for you" (175).

Cheryl is intoxicated when she makes these explosive comments to April, but her comments are not drunken nonsense. On the contrary, Cheryl's displays of anger and aggression in the months after the trial are Cheryl's efforts to defend against her internalized oppression and feelings of inferiority. Cheryl's eruptions are also a cry for help; she wants April to rid her of her internalized racism and her life-threatening self-hatred. She wants April, for whom she reserves most of her love, to throw back her familial lifeline and to brighten her blackening mental and emotional state. Cheryl's disclosure of the tragic nature of their parents' lives is also a cry for help and is really her speaking about how angry and sad she is over her loss of her parents. Cheryl's remark "I bet you wished I was dead" is a kind of suicide threat, which April cannot recognize because she has a colonial mindset.

It is not only April who contributes to Cheryl's internalized racism, but also the men in her life. While April is avoiding inviting Cheryl to have lunch with her near her workplace so that she is not seen with Cheryl by her colleagues, Cheryl's white partner Garth also rejects her when he and Cheryl meet up with his friends. Like April, Garth experiences shame when he is seen with Cheryl and is ashamed of her. Cheryl tells April about Garth's behavior, demonstrating anger over his betrayal but also defensively using anger to defend her self-worth: "You know what that creep did? He left me there and went for a beer with them. He didn't want them to know about me. That goddamned hypocrite. He's ashamed of me" (94). Receiving such a blow of betrayal from Garth, Cheryl shows the first signs of bitterness and cynicism as she is destabilized by racism. It affects her characteristic zeal, lightheartedness, and optimistic outlook and takes away her confidence in her Aboriginal identity.

After Cheryl reveals to April what Garth did to her, April sits in silence, not saying a word to Cheryl because she has been doing what Garth did: "I didn't say anything. I didn't say anything because I was guilty of that, too. I had never invited Cheryl to come and meet me for lunch because I didn't want anyone at work to see her, to know she was my sister" (94). April remains silent and refuses to draw out Cheryl's feelings. April does not want Cheryl to talk about her struggles with Garth's racism lest Cheryl begin to talk

about her similar treatment by April. When Cheryl tells April about Garth's rejection of her, she opens up a space for her and April to have an intimate conversation. But April will not allow them to have an intimate talk. Instead, she downplays the seriousness of Garth's and her own rejections of Cheryl by making glib remarks after Cheryl indicates that she is going to start writing about her experiences with racism in a diary: "I smiled and told her she shouldn't start a journal with an unhappy opening" (94). April, insensitive, goes on: "Wait until something good happens to you, something special" (94). While Cheryl talks about Garth's betrayal, she does not say a word about April's. Because of this silence, readers cannot learn the exact nature of Cheryl's suffering.

Cheryl turns to a diary for solace, knowing she is going to experience much racism in her life: "I want to start this thing right now. I have a feeling there will be a lot more of this kind of thing" (94). However, writing in her diary ultimately does not help the communal Cheryl whose focus in life is on the "we." Her diary does not give her the love she needs. Furthermore, after Garth's rejection, Cheryl turns away from her crowd of friends at university, friends among whom she was "outgoing" and popular (93). Having been rejected by April and Garth and removing herself from her friends at university, Cheryl turns to Nancy and other people at the Friendship Centre for love.

Then, April rejects Cheryl in another way, avoiding going out for meals with Cheryl and Nancy because she "felt embarrassed to be seen with natives, Cheryl included" (98). In response, Cheryl starts to "spend more evenings at the Friendship Centre" (98). At this point, there is a silent conflict brewing between the sisters. April is blatantly abandoning Cheryl. Although Cheryl appears to be fine, perhaps, she thinks that April wants "to get away from me" and, then, avoids it to avoid the pain of April's racism and rejection (175). Readers do not know Cheryl's feelings about April's refusal to go to restaurants with her because the sisters do not discuss it. The impression that is left is that Cheryl is not significantly bothered by the racism. April further implies that such is the case by suggesting that Cheryl wants to avoid her as much as she is avoiding Cheryl: "I gradually began to go out with them less and less. Anyhow, Cheryl was starting to spend more evenings at the Friendship Centre. . ." (98). April's point is that her rejection of Cheryl is not serious because Cheryl is rejecting her, too. She avoids the idea that Cheryl is hurt by her betrayal, misleading herself and the reader.

Cheryl seeks love and community at the Friendship Centre, but while Nancy is Cheryl's closest friend, the two are not intimate. While Cheryl is loved by Nancy and Nancy's mother, and others at the Friendship Centre, they do not offer her a tight-knit, intimate community and do not provide her with positive affirmations of her ancestry, all of which she needs to maintain her confidence in her Aboriginal identity in a racist society. Dealing with their own issues arising from disempowerment and racism, cultural loss, poverty, domestic conflict and abuse, the people at the Friendship Centre cannot ground Cheryl and offer her prizing love that she needs to resist racism. Kathleen Donovan applauds Friendship Centres but questions whether they offer the community that is needed to support Native women's identities:

Culleton's novel underscores the necessity of community in the formation of Métis identity, and the difficulty that contemporary urban Métis women encounter when they search for a community. The Friendship Centres are one possibility, but the novel suggests that new parameters of community may be necessary. (30)

During her conversations with April about Cheryl, Nancy reveals just how superficial her and Cheryl's relationship was. Nancy reveals that Cheryl never told her about all the racism to which she was subjected when attending university, about her estrangement from April after she left Toronto, about finding her father on skid row, about learning that her mother was dead, and about all her suffering: "She changed real sudden, but I never knew why" (191). Then, when Cheryl gives birth to Henry Lee, she is alone. Nancy and her mother love Cheryl and take care of Henry Lee. But when Cheryl leaves Nancy's home with the intention of killing herself and Nancy telephones April to warn her that something is wrong, she reveals, again, the lack of intimacy between her and Cheryl: "[Cheryl] just left here. . . . She seems okay but in a funny way. . . . She said goodbye to me as if she wasn't going to see me again" (188). Nancy and other people at the Friendship Centre, then, could not offer Cheryl what she needed to open up to them and to survive all the racism to which she was subjected when she was an adult living in Winnipeg. It seems the only one who was really privy to Cheryl's suffering was Cheryl. Her adult life was torturous; yet Nancy does not really see this truth. April, who in many ways does know the truth, wants to obscure it.

In Toronto, April continues to obscure the reality of how she is treating Cheryl. April invites Cheryl to Toronto and then excludes her by going to the Christmas parties to which Cheryl is not invited. April's explanation of this situation is drawn-out, overdone, and full of equivocation and justification:

I had taken it for granted that Cheryl would be able to attend the dinners to which we had been invited, but Mother Radcliff took me aside, actually she summoned me to her study, and informed me that it would cause upsets to have an uninvited guest. She also stated that Cheryl would feel out of place, and although I agreed and understood, it was unthinkable that I would leave Cheryl alone. Mother Radcliff pointed out that we were giving a New Year's party so Cheryl would not be left out of all the festivities. I left her study wondering how much of this I was going to tell Cheryl. At the same time, I was relieved that Cheryl's debut into my society was to be delayed. When I made my explanations to Cheryl, she made it easier by saying it was alright because she hadn't really wanted to go to the big fancy gatherings anyhow, and she was relieved to be able to avoid them. (106)

Although the narrator April hints at Mrs. Radcliff's and her own mistreatment of Cheryl, acknowledging that she is "relieved" that Cheryl's "debut" into her society is going to be "delayed," April attempts to downplay the seriousness of her betrayal of Cheryl while also denying Mrs. Radcliff's betrayal of her sister. April emphasizes that Mrs. Radcliff made the decision and that Cheryl wants to avoid going to the parties while underplaying the fact that she does not want Cheryl at the parties. April avoids the idea that Cheryl is really hurt by her exclusionary behavior and leaves the impression that Cheryl is not bothered by her exclusions. But when Cheryl is alone at the Radcliffs, perhaps, she is thinking that April married Bob "to get away from [her]" (175). Readers never learn how Cheryl feels about April's exclusionary actions in Toronto because the sisters never discuss the matter. Again, the impression that is left is that Cheryl is fine.

At the Radcliffs' New Year's party, Cheryl is subjected to the racism of the guests. When a guest probes her about her heritage and asks racist "exclusionary question[s]," Cheryl rises to the occasion and appears to be confident (Fee 218). Enduring so much racism since starting university and since arriving at the Radcliffs, however, we can imagine that she works to hold on to her confidence while feeling the pull of self-hatred,

anxiety, anger, and sadness. In her speech, Cheryl appears to be fine, refusing to acknowledge the guest's racist categories:

“Oh, I've read about Indians. Beautiful people they are. But you're not exactly Indians are you? What is the proper word for people like you?” one asked.

“Women,” Cheryl replied instantly.

“No, no, I mean Nationality?”

“Oh, I'm sorry. We're Canadians,” Cheryl smiled sweetly. (107)

April finally draws attention to the racism to which Cheryl is being subjected and raises the possibility that Cheryl is hurt by it: “I was wondering how she was taking it. It was the questioning stares that bothered me the most” (107). Yet April and Cheryl never do talk about the matter and readers never learn what Cheryl's thoughts and feelings really are.

During their discussions at the Radcliff home, April herself imposes more racism on Cheryl:

I admire your devotion and your confidence in native people, but to me, they're a lost cause. I can't see what anyone can do for them except the people themselves. If they want to live in their rundown shacks that are overridden with flies, and who knows what other kinds of bugs, and that stink of filth, and soiled clothing and mattresses, and if they want to drink their lives away while their children go hungry and unclothed, then there's not much that can be done for them, except to give them handouts and more handouts. (108)

April feels contempt for Aboriginal people on skid row. She then legitimizes her outbursts by insisting that Cheryl puts her on the defensive with her criticism (108). But Cheryl never criticizes April's lifestyle and the people around as much as April criticizes Cheryl's lifestyle and friends. Although Cheryl does not reject April during their talks, April rejects Cheryl: “So, go home. And live by what you believe in” (108). By insisting that Cheryl attacks her as much as she attacks Cheryl, April downplays the seriousness of her racist remarks to and rejection of Cheryl. When Cheryl is on skid row looking for her parents, she deeply internalizes April's racist remarks.

Rather than reflect on the effect that her words have had on her sister, April emphasizes Cheryl's problematically optimistic view of her parents and of Native people in general. April implies that Cheryl lives for her parents and her hope for the future of

Aboriginal people: “I had given her cherished memories of them. I couldn’t take that away now. They were too important for her. Those memories and her too idealistic outlook for the future of native people. Those things helped her and gave her something to live for” (109). Thus, April leaves the impression that Cheryl’s downward spiral can be accounted for by her discovery that her father lives on skid row. But it is April who turns Cheryl’s optimism to pessimism. Cheryl also falters because she has lost April, the person whom she has looked to for love all of her life. In not putting herself in the list of things that Cheryl lives for, the narrator April is engaging in a cover up.

After Cheryl’s death, April insists that it is Cheryl’s overly optimistic view of her parents that caused her positive self-image to be destroyed. Reading Cheryl’s diary, April suggests that Cheryl fell because of her idealized image of her father: “That meeting with Dad, maybe it destroyed her self-image. . . . Was it that image of long ago that had sustained her?” (201). In other words, Cheryl’s positive self-image was derived only from her belief that her parents were traditional Aboriginal people, the kind whom Cheryl idealized. But Cheryl’s self-love was based on much more than just her idealized view of her parents. Cheryl’s self-image was destroyed when she applied April’s racist view of Aboriginal people on skid row to her father and then to herself. April continues to read Cheryl’s diary, finding out that Cheryl had a son and never even told her: “A son is born to me. It should have been a very special day for him. A day when his aunt, his grandparents, and all his relatives rejoiced. Instead, it’s just him and me” (201). After April reads the lines, she begins to see that she played a role in causing Cheryl’s stumble: “I felt anger and bewilderment. Not at Cheryl or anyone else. Mostly, I guess the anger was for me. For being the way I was. Because it had caused Cheryl to feel so alienated from me that she couldn’t share the most important event in her life with me” (205).

When Cheryl is looking for her parents, she begins to internalize April’s racism. Her view of the people there is almost as harsh as April’s is. She records this view in her diary, revealing how depressed and cynical she has become:

I see more and more of what April sees, broken people with broken houses and broken furniture. The ones I see on Main street, the ones who give us our public image, the ones I see puking all over public sidewalks, battling it out with each other, their blood smearing up city-owned property, women selling what’s left of

themselves for a cheap bottle of wine. No wonder April ran. She was horrified that this was her legacy. She disowned it, and now she's trapped in that life of glitter and tinsel, still going nowhere. Charitable organizations! What a load of crap. Surrounded by a lot of people, business-wise but empty. Just like the Main Street bums.

The more I see of these streets, the more I wonder if April isn't right. Just maybe. Better to live that empty life than live out on the streets. What if I do find our parents? Sometimes I can't help it. I feel like April does, I despise these people, these gutter-creatures. They are losers. But there is a reason why they are that way. Everything they once had has been taken from them. And the white bureaucracy has helped create the image of parasitic natives. But sometimes, I do wonder if these people don't accept defeat too easily, like a dog with his tail between his legs, on his back, his throat forever exposed. (196)

As Donovan puts it, "Cheryl begins to see her people through April's eyes" (29). Cheryl has internalized racism and internalized oppression.

Alone and in need of love, April's racist views of Aboriginal people on skid row infiltrate Cheryl's mind. Her psyche internalizes April's racist views in hope of securing her positive regard. If Cheryl accepts April's views, she hopes, April will stop rejecting her and will not tell her to "go home" anymore (108). Rogers argues that when people are compelled to meet significant others' conditions of love to secure their love, those conditions are turned into conditions of self-worth ("A Theory" 209). When Cheryl finds her father, she attaches the label of "gutter-creature" to him and even sees her work with Aboriginal people as a "lost cause" (198). She, then, uses the same words April used during their conversations in Toronto. Her parents' fall from grace is particularly hard on Cheryl because she had idealized them: "*The imagination of my childhood has played a horrible, rotten trick on me*" (198). As Acoose argues, "When fantasy meets reality, Cheryl's voice is suppressed" (232). Applying her racist view of her father to herself, Cheryl recoils as she experiences self-hatred: "*Disgust, hatred, shame...yes, for the first time in my life, I feel shame*" (198). Cheryl applies her racist thoughts about her father to herself and begins to believe she is of an inferior race. She accepts the alcohol her father puts in front of her, finding a way to blur her self-hatred. Cheryl also takes the drink

because she has lost April, sees her father cannot love her the way she needs to be loved, and needs a way to blur the pain of her losses. Once living on skid row, Cheryl drinks often to loosen the grip of internalized racism, but she can never truly forget the painful fact of her ancestry. Drinking only dulls her pain.

When she is living on skid row, Cheryl struggles with depression caused by her unhappy life and internalized racism and internalized oppression. Her relationships with her father and Mark DeSoto are not functional, and Cheryl struggles with poverty. She not only works as a prostitute to support her father and Mark but also suffers their abuse. Lonely and isolated, she can no longer use alcoholism as a way to escape: "*I need a drink. A couple of drinks. The depression is bitterly deep. The booze doesn't help this time. . . . I want to run in front of a car*" (205). According to Rogers, the process of defense does break down and people become aware that they do not meet conditions of self-worth, leading to depression and self-hatred ("A Theory" 229).

After April moves back to Winnipeg, she helps Cheryl to recapture some vitality and confidence in her ancestry. At the Powwow April notices that Cheryl "seem[s] so relaxed" and sees her "old animation" (151, 152). Cheryl even starts drinking less and making "more appearances around the house" (157). Her interest in "events concerning native people" is rekindled, and she begins going to the Friendship Centre, again (157). April sees that the "old fire [has] been rekindled" (157). But Cheryl is only in the early stages of healing, just beginning to show vitality and pride in her ancestry, again. And there is still much unresolved pain and loss behind her shows of "animation" and "fire." Then, April condemns and rejects Cheryl, again.

April fatally imposes racism on Cheryl, holding her responsible both for the rape April rape suffered and for her prostituting herself. To April's mind, Cheryl has what Mrs. Semple called the Native girl syndrome. April chooses to condemn Cheryl: "Cheryl, say this isn't so . . ." (166). Then, April fatally rejects her sister:

Cheryl stood up then and looked right at me. I saw her face in that split second before I looked away from her. . . . I didn't even know how I felt towards her. She followed me to the bus stop. All the way home, we were silent. . . . I waited for her explanations, her excuses, but she didn't make any. When we had eaten supper, she went out. (167)

As Fee puts it, “April can’t look Cheryl in the eye. And it is this refusal of recognition to someone, the refusal to look someone else in the eye as a fellow human being, that leaves Cheryl with no one she can look to for help in seeing a way to identify herself as a mother and an activist” (Fee 225). April continues to withhold her love from Cheryl, playing the role of the racist white other who insists on Cheryl’s inferiority. Cheryl wants April to acknowledge her and recognize her worth in order that she can experience self-worth. The racist drama is played out such that Cheryl is drinking heavily but never able to dull the pain of internalized inferiority and racist self-meanings. Suffering because of her inability to move to a state of depression, Cheryl kills herself. She makes a choice but is largely swayed by and overwhelmed by the painful fact of her ancestry. As her suicide note indicates, she also commits suicide because of her internalized oppression: “The Great Spirit has made nature stronger than man by putting into each of us a part of nature. We all have the instinct to survive. If that instinct is gone, then we die. . . . And I can’t live this living death any longer. To drink myself to sleep day in and day out” (206-07). Duran and Duran assert that once Aboriginal people internalize the power of the oppressor, they can turn to suicide for relief from despair (29). Cheryl commits suicide because of internalized racism and internalized oppression.

Growing up, Cheryl has considerable freedom, love, and culture, which mostly enables her to resist internalized oppression and internalized racism and to be a vital, proud Aboriginal woman who embraces Aboriginal culture and protests against oppression and racism with defiant resistance. But after she starts going to university, Cheryl she does not have the freedom she needs to ignore colonial oppression and does not have the love and culture she needs to ignore April’s and others’ racism. Cheryl lives in a colonial world that is marked by the oppression of Aboriginal people and self-alienating racism. Finally, Cheryl succumbs to white dominance and white cultural control. She turns to aggression and alcoholism and finally to suicide to cope with colonialism. In her suicide note Cheryl laments the brokenness of her family: “All my life, I wanted for us to be a real family, together . . .” (206).

CONCLUSION

Beatrice Mosionier's *In Search of April Raintree* explores the psychological process through which Aboriginal people can be impacted by white domination, cultural control, and racism, even to the point where the psychological pain is unbearable. In the novel, Alice and Henry Raintree drink to try to forget the pain they experience as a result of their internalized oppression and internalized racism. Alice's and Henry's tribulations in the colonial world finally lead them to put alcohol before their daughters and to neglect them, which leads to April's and Cheryl's being taken from them and put in foster care. April suffers internalized oppression and internalized racism when growing up. Seeking to avoid the pain of internalized racism, she lives as a white woman for a time and largely abandons Cheryl, denying and distorting the fact of her Aboriginal ancestry. She seeks to meet white people's conditions of worth, conditions that she turned into conditions of self-worth. April, however, is deeply conflicted, and at times, she does act on her valuing process by moving toward Cheryl and her parents and her unconditional love for them. Cheryl is also profoundly affected by colonialism. When Cheryl is an adult attending university, she internalizes racism, and defensively turns to drinking and aggression. Unlike April, Cheryl cannot live as a white woman to escape from the pain of internalized racism because she has brown skin, which makes it apparent that she is Métis. After April imposes her racist sentiments on her and rejects her, Cheryl cannot experience relief from her internalized racism. She, like her mother, commits suicide to end the pain of internalized oppression and internalized racism and her loss of family.

However, this is not a novel without hope. At times, freedom and love and Aboriginal culture have an insulating effect on April and Cheryl such that the sisters are relatively free from internalized oppression and internalized racism. At these times, the sisters have experiences of acceptance of their Aboriginal identity. When April is living at home and when Cheryl is living with her on the DeRosier farm, April has experiences of self-acceptance. On the DeRosier farm, Cheryl's love for April helps her to be free from self-alienation or incongruence by neutralizing white people's conditions of worth. After Cheryl's death, April has considerable freedom and firmly embraces her ancestry, experiencing confidence and pride in her Aboriginal identity. When growing up, Cheryl is mostly proud of her Aboriginal identity, always asserting it and embracing the Aboriginal

culture she learns from books while working with young girls from the Friendship Centre to help them survive colonialism.

Mosionier's novel offers an account of everyday experiences of Aboriginal people affected to varying degrees by white dominance and cultural control or by Aboriginal disempowerment and self-alienating racism. The importance of Aboriginal voices supplying more stories about Aboriginal people living in a colonial environment cannot be overstated since they are needed to create social change. I view this novel as a protest against colonialism, racism, and white dominance. Thus, I focus on how the sisters are overwhelmed psychologically and emotionally by racism. I show how April is subdued by strategies of pacification to reveal how she is rendered a non-threatening colonial subject, who will not protest her mistreatment. I seek to the negative emotional effects of colonialism by highlighting the pain that April and Cheryl experience as a result of being separated from their parents and each other and focusing on the dysfunctional quality of the sisters' relationship. Yet I also want to portray that these characters have the potential to be happy and free. I zero in on how the Raintrees, at times, have happy family moments and share considerable love despite colonialism. I focus on the extent to which Alice and Henry love their daughters and how they are devastated when they are taken from them. I show how Cheryl and April's unconditional love for one another enables the sisters to sometimes be free from internalized racism or from negative self-meanings and enable April and Cheryl to embrace their Aboriginal ancestry. Thus, I hope that my reading of this novel can itself function as a protest against the devastating psychological effects of colonialism.

By applying Duran and Duran's, Rogers', and Fanon's psychological theories to April and Cheryl, the complex nature of their characters emerges. As I examined how the sisters' are influenced by oppression and negative regard grounded in racism, it became clear that the sisters' complex of characteristics are largely psychological driven. Their actions are the result of complicated psychological processes that are driving them. April and Cheryl are, then, often guided by their internalized oppression and racism. Their desire is to escape racism and internalized racism and to secure love and self-love by living up to white cultural standards. Furthermore, when the sisters experience freedom and love, their psychological experiences shift as they begin to be free from internalized oppression and

internalized racism. When they enjoy love, they begin to come back to an experience of self-love and acceptance of their ancestry. Therefore, their characters are changed by love and the effects it has on their psychological processes.

If I had not examined April and Cheryl from a psychological perspective, I would not have come to really understand the intense pain they experienced when they confronted oppression and racism and the sheer happiness they enjoyed when they had freedom and love. That my psychological responses to oppression fall into line with Duran and Duran's theories on Aboriginal oppression only demonstrates that psychological reactions to oppression can be common human reactions. That the sisters' psychological responses to racist negative regard and love fall into line with Rogers' theories, which are not based on Aboriginal people, only shows that responses to negative regard and positive regard can cross races such that the psychological responses can be seen as universal responses based on people's common humanity. As a result of my study of April and Cheryl, I know that the pain I experience when I am negatively regarded because I do not meet dominant white cultural standards is largely the same as the pain they experienced when they faced racism. Therefore, I now know that I not only mostly understand but also often share April's and Cheryl's pain and surely that of other Aboriginal people exposed to racism. I also understand that the happiness and self-acceptance I experience when I am loved unconditionally is likely, in many ways, the same as the happiness and self-acceptance the sisters enjoyed when they received love. I can, then, carve out a connection to the sisters and to all Aboriginal people, one that is derived from what appears to be the commonalities of our humanity, and can experience this connection even while living in a colonial world where race relations are often founded on harsh political struggles for power and cultural control. Finally, now that I truly understand the importance of love and how it can lead to self-love and personal growth, I can reach out to Aboriginal people as they endeavor to secure self-determination, offering them accepting, prizing love that validates their ancestry and hope that they reach out to me.

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