

STOLEN DAUGHTER-BIRTH MOTHER BONDING IN TAYLOR'S TRILOGY

S. Nisha* and S. Patchainayagi**

Abstract: Canada, the place of wilderness, is a nation whose indigenous people were deterred from compiling records on the history of their nation and from writing their own history. Many writers like Tomson Highway, Drew Hayden Taylor, Marie Clements and Monique Mojica break decades' of silence in their plays. Their works focus on throwing light on the 'other' side of the truth, in contrast of the white people's portrayal of Canadian history.

The colonisers came up with different schemes and policies to assimilate the natives into the European culture. One such policy is the 'Scoop of the Sixties', which majorly comprised removing Aboriginal children from their families and expunge the nativity in them. This paper is an attempt to explore the consequences of the scoop through the character of Janice Wirth, the protagonist of Taylor's trilogy, *Someday, Only Drunks and Children Tell the Truth and 400 Kilometres* and to trace her bonding with her birth mother, Anne Wabung.

Keywords: Canada, Scoop of the Sixties, Drew Hayden Taylor, Mother-Daughter bonding, Native Identity, Colonial mentality, Revelation, Ojibway.

The strongest person in the world is a grieving mother that wakes up and keeps going every morning.
– Tara Watkins Anderson

White imperialism is a global concept that shook the lives of many nations; it is renowned as a period of overseas expansions and acquisitions during the 19th and 20th century. Many nations were victimized by their invasion and had their histories rewritten and Canada is one of them. Canada, the place of wilderness, was a nation rich in tradition and culture, something that was deterred by the colonization of the whites. Thousand-year old tradition was shattered beyond repair; brother torn away from brother, mothers ruthlessly separated from children. Uprooted from their ancestral homes, millions of Aboriginals found themselves in strange and alien soil. Children who were taken away from their homes were either left with no identity whatsoever or with a double identity where their quest for belonging somewhere is left unanswered. After colonization, the natives were pushed to the margins and were left with no identity. The culture and the oral tradition of different groups of indigenous people were eradicated as the enforced language of the colonizer became the accepted norm.

White peoples' history of Canada is far from what really transpired among the Aboriginals. After many years of misery and agony at the hands of the imperialists, some natives were determined to rewrite history and took up writing as a weapon. In order to seek recognition and create an independent identity, writers like Rudy

* Ph.D Scholar, School of Social Sciences & Languages, VIT University, Chennai

** Assistant Professor, School of Social Sciences & Languages, VIT University, Chennai

Weibe and Dennis Lee gave voice to the problems encountered by the native people but were denied an outlet. One of the poems in the tenth volume of a journal named *Canadian Woman Studies* is "I Lost My Talk" written by a poet Rita Joe. The poem points out the loss of language, culture and identity to the white people, whose disturbance created a appalling disturbance to all the indigenous cultures in Canada:

I Lost My Talk
 I lost my talk
 The talk you took away.
 When I was a little girl
 At Shubenacadie school.
 You snatched it away:
 I speak like you
 I think like you
 I create like you
 The scrambled ballad, about my word.
 Two ways I talk
 Both ways I say,
 Your way is more powerful.
 So gently I offer my hand and ask,
 Let me find my talk
 So I can teach you about me. (28)

Indigenous literature not only holds beliefs, philosophies and views of the indigenous people, but also holds a history. Native writers like Armand Ruffo, Tomson Highway, Paula Gunn Allen, Drew Hayden Taylor and Shirley Cheechoo, though from diverse cultures, share a strong connection with their homeland and possess a will to survive and pass on the treasures of their cultures to future generations. Their plays are in the nature of protest; they are more like an angry and emotional outburst accompanied by accusation. Theatre provides enough space to voice out their collective resentment against oppression and humiliation; it is used as a vehicle to throw light on the various issues and policies that shook the nation of Canada.

The focus of this paper lies on the policy termed "Scoop of the Sixties" which gave the imperialists a right to take away the aboriginal children from their parents in the name of civilization. While many writers have focussed on the plight of the Aboriginal children who were taken away from their mothers, very few writers took up the task of bringing out the quandary of an Aboriginal mother who is brutally separated from her children. Drew Hayden Taylor is one such writer who has attempted to figure out the Aboriginal mother who lost her child to the white

authorities. The paper aims to trace the mother-daughter relationship between Anne Wabung and Janice Wirth in Taylor's trilogy that contains three plays namely *Someday*, *Only Drunks* and *Children Tell the Truth and 400 Kilometres*.

The Scoop started in 1951 and went on till the 1980s; the term Sixties Scoop was coined by Patrick Johnson, author of the 1983 report *Native Children and the Child Welfare System*. During this period, the Aboriginal children were forcibly removed from their families at a very young age. This despicable activity was carried out to assimilate the native children and to destroy the Aboriginality in them. This act of brutality discontinued in the mid-80s after Ontario chiefs passed resolutions and a Manitoba judicial inquiry harshly condemned it. But the end of the 'Sixties Scoop' did not mean that the native children, who were farmed out of their family, suddenly found themselves with a clear cut identity and a secure place in the society. The children, forcefully taken away from their parents, were either sent to Residential schools or sent to foster homes or adopted by white families.

Residential school system was one of the schemes set up to assimilate and Christianise the native children. The system consisted of a number of schools for the Aboriginal children which operated during the 19th and 20th century by different churches. The first Residential school was set up in the 1840s and the children were treated in an atrocious manner. The children were made to follow the European norms and values and were forbidden from following the native culture. Many critics believed that this system was formulated “to kill the Indian in the child” (*Conversations*, Mark Abley). The term 'Indian' was given to the indigenous people when Columbus, who during his voyage across Canada, believed that he had reached Indian Ocean. No contact was allowed between the children and their families neither were their whereabouts revealed to the parents. Severe punishment was meted out to those who failed to follow the Christian beliefs, which in turn resulted in a psychological depression of the kids, whose lives ended up in drugs, prostitution, nervous break-downs and in most cases, suicide. The last residential school, White Calf Collegiate, was shut down in 1998, when the government of Canada declared a *Statement of Reconciliation* and apologized to the children who were affected by this system. Ironically, the impact of this system was too severe to be forgotten or forgiven:

Residential schools systematically undermined Aboriginal culture across Canada and disrupted families for generations, severing the ties through which Aboriginal culture is taught and sustained, and contributing to a general loss of language and culture. Because they were removed from their families, many students grew up without experiencing a nurturing family life and without the knowledge and skills to raise their own families. The devastating effects of the residential schools are far-reaching and continue to have significant impact on Aboriginal communities. (*The Residential School System*, Hanson)

Foster care was yet another scheme followed to incorporate the imperialist's values in the native children. The Canadian government provided money to the foster parents to take care of the native children until they turn eighteen. It is believed that the foster parents used the children for the money and domesticated them behind the curtains and were subjected to abuse on all dimensions.

In addition to these two appalling policies, some children were adopted by white families. The children adopted showed both positive and negative responses towards being brought up in a white family. The children were kept in dark regarding their birth families by the adopted parents, which is far worse because they are unable to figure out the reason as to why they don't fit in. Tom Lyous in his article, "The Stolen Nation" comments, "Donna Marchand spent sixteen years trying to find her birth mother. Now she is suing the government to open birth records for others." Donna recalls her experience in the article in a rather disappointing tone:

When I was about three and a half, it started coming to my attention that I was adopted. My cousins told me. I was three years old, but I was aware that I was different. I just didn't fit in. I was getting called a bastard. I've lived my whole life as a native because I was called a squaw... I got tied to my fair share of trees and got my hair hacked off.

Donna's brutal experience is shared by almost all children who were removed from their families. These experiences left a permanent scar in the minds of the children and drove them to find their roots which proved to be even worse because their lives became a psychological tug-of-war between their two identities.

The sole intention of these horrendous schemes is to wipe out the nativity in them and promote their own culture and language. Sir John. A. Macdonald, Canada's first Prime minister declared, "The great aim of our legislation has been to do away with the tribal system and assimilate the Indian people in all respects with the other inhabitants of the Dominion as speedily as they are fit to change." (*Milloy*, 6)

When a child is stolen, whether it is an Aboriginal mother or a white mother or an Indian mother, she grieves for the loss and would move heaven and earth to reconcile with her lost child. Having lost their children to the white authorities, the mothers await the arrival of the stolen children someday. The agony of a mother who loses her child to some strangers and not knowing the whereabouts of the child is unbearable and unexplainable. Anne Wabung is one such mother who loses her child to the white authorities and gets a chance to meet her daughter after thirty-five years. Will the child accept the mother? Can they start from where they left off? Or is it easier said than done? Taylor has attempted to answer these questions in his trilogy.

Similarly, when the children, taken away from the birth parents and adopted by another family, learn of their true identity, they are trapped between twin identities and are forcefully made to choose either one of them. The native children, when

adopted by white parents, do not fail to realize that they don't belong in the white community, neither are the white parents aware of the cultural conflicts and identity crisis the children have to go through when the truth of their birth is thrown at them. Janice Wirth is one such daughter who meets her birth mother after thirty-five years and all hell breaks loose.

Janice Wirth, the protagonist of the trilogy, is a child stolen by the white authorities when she was still a toddler and adopted by a white family, who provides all materialistic needs for her and loves her like their own child. Yet, even as a child, Janice realizes that she didn't belong in the white community and that something was different about her. Once she grows up to become a successful entertainment lawyer, she uses the power to trace her roots back to the Ojibway reserve. A child, taken away from the birth family and brought up as a completely different person, faces an entirely different sort of shock when she comes to know about her true identity. Janice feels the same when she learns of her birth parents and decides to pay them a visit. Her perfectly planned life is thrown into chaos when she sees a gentle woman who has been waiting for her from the day she was taken away instead of the stereotypical drunkard native. The paper is an attempt to throw light on the mother-daughter bonding in the trilogy and also to trace the transition of Janice Wirth to Grace Wabung.

Drew Hayden Taylor, a Native Canadian playwright, is part Ojibwa (a large group of indigenous people in Canada) and part Caucasian (represents the white race). He is one of the most renowned Aboriginal writers in Canada who is known for his native concern. His plays, though humorous, carry serious political themes and effectively deconstruct the misrepresentations recorded in the white version of Canadian history. Being a part-native, he possesses first-hand information on the quandary of the native people. Amongst writers who present same themes in a gory and violent manner, Taylor's writing is considered a novelty. Taylor presents the grim prospect of the reconciliation of a stolen child with her birth mother after thirty-five years.

The trilogy starts during Christmas time - a season of joy. Anne, like every other person, hopes for a joyful year along with a wishful thinking of meeting her stolen daughter. Her positivity is not shared by Barb, her youngest daughter who constantly upbraids her mother for chasing such futile dreams. She says, "They took her away a long time ago, Mom. For all we know she could be dead" (*Someday*, 9). This matter-of-fact and sarcastic statement angers Anne, who turns around and slaps Barb and sharply reprimands her:

ANNE: Don't ever say that again. She's alive. I know she is. In here (*points to her heart*) and out there. I want my baby... You talk about her like she wasn't part of the family. She was a part of the family before you were even born. She's your older sister... We are going to have a happy Christmas to remember. And I won't hear you talk contrary. (*Someday*, 10)

Anne's hope for a memorable and a happy Christmas is used in an ironical manner because as it turns out, what starts as a joyful day ends tragically for her. Although, thirty-five years have gone by, she still nurtures the hope that someday her daughter would return. Though times have changed and fate has dealt with Anne's life, a certain kind of determination is seen in her when she is very sure that her daughter would return. Irrational as her longing may seem, it is fostered by faith and instinct.

Though Anne is filled with an eternal optimism and hope to see her daughter, a more pragmatic approach is seen in Barb, which is also the general attitude of most others. When her husband Frank tells her to forget about her daughter and "Let sleeping dogs lie" (*Someday*, 13), Anne gets upset and storms into the C.A.S. (Children's Aid Service) office, demanding to see her daughter's file. She calls them as "Cradle snatchers... nothing more than common kidnappers!" (*Someday*, 14).

When Anne is finally reconciled with her stolen daughter, Grace Wabung, who is now Janice Wirth, she looks into her eyes and does not find her lost child. Instead, she finds a fully assimilated, independent woman who prefers to be called Janice and not Grace. Anne doesn't expect to see a woman who would gladly embrace her birth mother at first sight. On the other hand, she doesn't expect a person who is completely transformed into a white person. Even though she is Grace's birth mother, she is a total stranger to her daughter and vice versa; Anne was completely unsuspecting the new pain evolving out of the strangeness.

Janice's shock at seeing her birth mother for the first time in thirty-five years is justified and understandable as she is a woman who is meeting a birth mother and a younger sister she didn't know that existed until a few months ago. Presently, the atmosphere is thick with tension and awkwardness between Anne and Janice. Janice has no idea on how to address Anne and she directly asks her without thinking twice, "This may sound.. . Oh, this is awkward, I'm afraid I'm not sure what I should call you. Mrs. Wabung? Anne?" (*Someday*, 48). This goes onto prove that Janice is not prepared to accept Anne as her mother, at least not yet. The 'white' in Janice constantly reveals itself through her attitude at looking at things and through her prejudice against the natives: "... It seems in the world of white middle class, Indians have a way of doing things half-assed" (*Someday*, 54). Like any other white woman during the time, Janice is also programmed to look down upon the natives. She fails to understand how the natives, especially women were rendered helpless when their children were taken away from their arms. She looks totally unshaken when she stands aloof and views the Indian lifestyle with critical disapproval:

JANICE: I am sick and tired of the "poor Indian" mentality. Somebody and something is always against them and I'm sick of it. I'm tired of motives and drives that frankly I don't understand. If we are such proud people, I find it hard to believe that every misfortune Indian people have suffered

can be traced back to some malevolent white man. I'm to understand that there's no such thing as a bad Indian. I'm sorry. But I don't understand. (*Someday*, 72)

Nothing of the native vestige seems to be left in her as she makes this statement. The 'Indian' in Janice seems to be totally white-washed. Hers is a voice of alien nurturing, of education that does not take cognizance of what was happening in the reserves. Often enough children, adopted by white families and given a good life, fail to get fully acquainted with the ground realities of life of the natives. Hence, when the truth of their nativity is thrown at them, they fail to understand the bitter realities of it.

Gradually, things ease a little and Janice comes to know about her brother, Paul and her father as well. Yet through all of this, Janice appears to be completely impersonal in her approach, even when she reveals the reason for her search which turns out to be mere curiosity:

I always knew I was Indian, but it never actually meant anything to me. Just a fact of life, like being five foot seven. Then Meech Lake happened with Elijah Harper. And Oka. Suddenly everybody was asking me my opinion on this or that situation. They wanted the "Native perspective." I started to wonder about my past, and the more questions I was asked, the more I had questions about myself. Finally I had to know. I went to London, found the court I was processed in, got my adoption papers, contacted the Department of Indian Affairs, and they eventually told me what reserve I was from. (*Someday*, 55)

Unlike native mothers like Anne who failed to extract any information about her stolen child, Janice, using her skills as a lawyer, manages to find her birth mother in a short period of time. Evidently, it is the 'white' in Janice that succeeds in collecting information.

Thirty-five years of questions are brought out into the open and things reach a pinnacle when Grace demands to know the reason for her being taken away. During this discourse, her true reason for the visit is revealed as the mere satisfaction of her curiosity. This affects Anne vehemently and she breaks the stony silence of thirty-five years of suffering by telling the truth of what really transpired:

ANNE: My home wasn't suitable. What do they know about what makes a home? I clothed you. I fed you. I loved you... When that investigator woman stood there in the kitchen and said I had been abandoned... that I was a woman whose husband walked right out on her, I wanted to yell in her face. "Yes, I have a man and he didn't run out on me. He is a fine man gone to join the army to keep peace in this world and he sends me and his baby money." That's what I wanted to say... But I couldn't. Frank made me promise on the Bible not to, no matter what... They took my little

Grace right out of my arms and I never saw her again after that terrible day. (*Someday*, 73)

Years of pent up emotions are let loose and a feel of catharsis is felt. Anne's agony increases several fold when Grace does not find this explanation sufficient enough:

JANICE: That's it?

Silence

JANICE: That's not even a reason. That wouldn't hold up in any court. And they call this a civilized country... All of this, my life, because of some stupid woman's misunderstanding and a promise you made.

The emotion is getting to Janice. She begins to break.

JANICE: I have to go. I've got to get out of here. (*Someday*, 74)

Shaken though Janice is, she decides to leave at once. One cannot really blame her for the decision because, having been raised in a white family, she believes that she does not fit into the native community. Also, she is unable to digest the fact that she had to endure years of separation from her mother because of a small misunderstanding and a promise.

Though Anne longs to be with her daughter a little longer, she does not resist Grace's decision to leave. It's too late for wishful thinking because the Native in Grace is painted white completely and thoroughly. Witnessing all this, Anne believes that her daughter has not got any nativity left in her; she conceals her pain and let goes of her daughter, again, unaware of the fact that it would be the last time she would see her.

In the second instalment of the trilogy, Anne is no longer alive, yet the story revolves around her character because Barb, Rodney and Tonto tries to get Janice to visit Anne's grave to pay her last respects. The play leans more towards the growth in Janice's character as she comes in terms with her new identity. Though Anne is not physically present as a character, she plays a fundamental role in Janice's journey towards accepting her new identity. Six months have passed since Anne lost Janice for the second time; her wait continues and she hopes that her daughter will come to her again. Her wait was a never-ending one. Ostensibly, she just couldn't hold on any longer and she spirals down to death.

Instead of the strong and independent woman portrayed in *Someday*, Janice is seen as a confused woman who is mentally trapped between her two identities. Her decision to search for her birth mother may have been triggered out of mere curiosity. However, she is unaware of the fact that there is no turning back on her true identity until the meeting with Anne turns her life upside down. When Barb, Rodney (Barb's boyfriend) and Tonto (Rodney's foster brother) visit Janice's home in Toronto to take her back to the reserve to say her final goodbyes to her mother, she is filled with fear and dread because of the outcome of her first visit, which is

still haunting her, “Go back. (*realizing*) Go back?! Barb I can't” (*Drunks*, 22). She flatly refuses to visit the reserve again:

JANICE: I'm sorry about Anne, I really am. And I'll do what I can if you need any help. But going back... I can't.

BARB: You have to go back. She's your Mother. Our Mother. I don't care if just drive up, put some flowers down, say good-bye, hop back in and drive away afterwards.

RODNEY: You really should, Grace.

TONTO: It's the proper thing to do.

JANICE: Sorry, but I'll determine what's proper for me to do. Anne was a lovely lady...

BARB: Your biological mother...

JANICE: I knew her for one hour, that was all. (*Drunks*, 22- 23)

This insensible comment echoes the Colonized mind and the Colonial mentality of Janice. Although her birth name is Grace Wabung, she prefers to be addressed as Janice Wirth, the name given by her adopted parents and she insists to Barb that she is rather uncomfortable in being called Grace. She never fails to remain Barb of the cultural differences between the two of them with comments like, “My people live in London” (*Drunks*, 23) and “I was raised Anglican.” (*Drunks*, 33)

However these comments fail to shake Barb who retaliates with comments like, “Blood is thicker than water” (*Drunks*, 33), “I wish we could be sisters.. . Sisters are blood” (*Drunks*, 38) and “Contrary to what you think, you are still family, whether you care or not” (*Drunks*, 44). Her biting comments are justified because she has been the pillar of support for Anne through all those years of waiting. She thoroughly understands the agony of a mother waiting for her child, despite living in her elder sister's shadow for nearly twenty-three years. When Janice left home six months ago, it was Barb who had to pick the broken pieces and be there for Anne. Underneath her pragmatic approach to the whole situation, she is a just a girl who wanted to be her mother's first priority, which didn't happen till the end, yet she proves to be a good daughter by defending Anne every step of the way:

... She loved you, you know. She did, even after you walked out on her on goddamned Christmas Eve. She still loved you. Thirty-five years of waiting and she was willing to wait some more.. . Even when she cried, she still loved you. I knew you wouldn't be back but I couldn't tell her that. Her whole life had been built on hope, even after you left she still hoped. And as her daughter, I had to help keep that hope alive. (*Drunks*, 35)

Barb's outburst seems to have had an impact on Janice, though she fails to recognize it. It is Tonto's words that act as an eye-opener for Janice. Tonto, Rodney's brother, plays a vital role in the transition of Janice Wirth into Grace Wabung. After

his mother's death, he is adopted by Rodney's parents. He is more like Rodney and though his comments are filled with wit and irony, they carry a deeper meaning. His gratitude towards Anne can be seen in the following words:

It's too bad you never knew your Mother better. From what I heard, she really kicked up a fuss after you were taken, once she stopped being afraid of the authorities. I guess taking your child away can really change that fear to anger. Well, whatever, it worked. She rattled some cages. . . the province decided to try a new program to foster Native kids in the Reserve. I was an experiment. (*Drunks*, 56)

Tonto's words are deliberately chosen to trigger Janice's conscience. His comments like, "A child would be afraid to go to Otter Lake. An Elder would interpret it as a necessary learning experience" (*Drunks*, 59) are a revelation to Janice and as a result Janice changes her mind about visiting Anne's grave. This soul-searching conversation between Janice and Tonto lays the foundation of their relationship which is explored in detail in the final installment of the trilogy.

Once back on the reserve, Barb employs a different strategy to get Janice to talk, to get to know her sister better - to get her drunk. Though Janice has complied Barb's request to visit Anne, Barb doesn't back down on the tiniest chance to remind Janice of her upbringing; when they discuss about their preferences in drink, Janice prefers "a white wine" (*Drunks*, 70), to which Barb criticizes her saying, "Figures you'd prefer white" (*Drunks*, 70). Being the clever entertainment lawyer that she is, Janice realizes that Barb is trying to get her drunk on purpose and when she confronts Barb about it, she says, "Mom had a saying, and I think it's true: only drunks and children tell the truth. I want the truth, and you're a little tall to be a child. So, drink up" (*Drunks*, 72); this statement justifies the title of the play "*Only Drunks and Children Tell the Truth*."

Barb's plan works and the two sisters begin to understand each other. Janice fully appreciates how Barb had always stood by their birth mother, in ways she herself never was. Janice reveals her past insecurities when Barb hands over the first ever birthday present from Anne:

BARB: . . . Your first birthday present from your birth mother and you say "in a minute?!"

JANICE: These are unfamiliar waters for me. I want to take it slow and calm. That's why I left last time. It was too much too soon. I crumbled. Thirty-five years stuffed into one hour." (*Drunks*, 78)

This statement echoes that underneath the strong woman she portrayed herself to be, she is still the stolen child, unsure of where she belongs. Every native child, taken away from their parents and brought up differently, is subjected to identity crisis when the truth of their birth is thrown at them. Janice is not different, despite the years that have passed by and the woman that she has become.

When Janice finds out that Amelia Earhart, an American aviation pioneer, stays on the reserve and that she is her Godmother, Janice is astonished. As she hears Amy's story about how she ended up on the reserve fifty years back, she starts contemplating about her own place on the reserve. She seems jealous about how Amelia, a white woman, could feel at home in the reserve while she herself is unable to do so, "Barb, think about it. I was born here but I don't feel at home here while Amelia Earhart does. She's family and I'm not because the Children's Aid Society took me away. Doesn't all this seem a little weird to you? (*Drunks*, 90).

The first step she consciously takes towards accepting her native identity is her attempt to learn Ojibway language from Barb. Though she finds it little difficult, she makes a sincere attempt to learn the language. Underneath the sisterly bonding, there still exists the tension between them, a tension that is waiting to explode. When Barb, unintentionally, provokes her by pointing out her denial to join the family, Janice's outburst echoes the plight of a stolen child:

Your honour, my client, one Janice Wirth was taken into custody by the Children's Aid Society in 1955 in the false belief that her mother, Anne Wabung was not maintaining a proper and adequate home environment for the infant. I appeared the father had abandoned the family when, in fact, the father had secretly enlisted in the army as a means of providing financial assistance for his family Flash forward thirty-five years. After many years of soul searching and trepidation, my client seeks out her birth family. .. Satisfied with what she learned, she returns to the world in which she was raised. However, finding herself under severe emotional stress due to her visit, my client is unable to resume work. . .She finally gets herself back together when she finds herself right back where she began. In the same kitchen, with the same people, with the same problems. That, your honour is our case. (*Drunks*, 97)

This emotional flare-up literally proves that Janice is victimized by the system, though she pretends otherwise, and the consequence of it is ever-lasting. And when Barb blames Janice for Anne's death saying, "When you left, you took her spirit, her will to live, with you" (*Drunks*, 100), that is the final thread for Janice because she "can't handle more guilt" (*Drunks*, 100). Hers is the voice that reflects the agony of a woman who wanted to get to know her birth mother, but has lost that chance to death.

Her final goodbye to her birth mother is one of the most emotional scenes in the trilogy because it shows Janice at her most vulnerable state. It shows a woman longing to have just one more chance with Anne, to feel her love and compassion that she missed for thirty-five years. She visits Anne's grave in a hung-over state:

JANICE: Hello Anne. Wherever you are, I hope you're feeling better than I am. The last time you saw me, I was a mess. Confused. In great emotional pain... I needed a reason, some excuse for what happened to me, what I

went through...all I wanted was evidence, proof to justify my anger. And there you were, so sweet and accepting... I'm tired of being angry. I'm tired of mistrusting you. I'm tired of everything. I just don't want to fight it anymore. I'm sorry. You deserve better.... (*Drunks*, 109)

At the end of the second play, Tonto quotes the example of a cowbird to explain to her where she belongs. Though a cowbird lays its eggs in another's bird's nest, "somewhere, deep inside, it knew it was a cowbird. No matter how it was raised what it was taught" (*Drunks*, 111). This statement is more like a revelation for Janice and it foreshadows the final stage in the transition of Janice Wirth into Grace Wabung.

The final instalment of the trilogy transits two years forward. Here, Taylor portrays a totally different Janice, who is in a relationship with Tonto and has just discovered that she is pregnant with his child. Unlike the previous play where Janice is helped by Barb, Rodney and Tonto, in this play, her transformation is fuelled by Anne, who appears constantly in Janice's dreams. In addition to Anne, Janice's adopted parents play an essential role in the play.

There is a famous saying that 'a woman knows that she is carrying a baby, even before the doctor tells her.' In contrary to this statement, in this play, probably Anne, though no longer alive, intuits that her daughter is carrying a child and extends her support through dreams. When Janice is perplexed about these dreams and their meaning, Tonto gives her the perfect answer:

... Dreams are good. They are put there to be helpful, to assist us in our path through life. Don't be afraid of them, embrace and cherish them... Most people whose mother has passed on might view this as a positive thing, a chance to see their mother one last time. Resolve some unfinished business or seek some form of guidance (*400 Kilometres*, 58, 60).

Like any daughter who reaches out to their parents during a hard time, Janice here reaches out to her parents, her adopted parents, when she finds herself pregnant and has no idea what to do about it. Lloyd and Theresa Wirth extend a helping hand in supporting Janice, even without probing the reason for her surprise visit. Their genuine concern for Janice is a novelty amidst adopted parents who treat the child like a property to lay a claim on.

Back at her parents' home, Janice feels at peace and has time to contemplate over her impending pregnancy. Apart from her adopted parents' support, the invisible force that extends unasked support to Janice is Anne, who uses dreams to reach out to Janice. She goes on to narrate the true story of hers from the day she was conceived to the day she was brutally taken away by the white authorities. This revelation makes Janice change her perspective towards Anne and makes her realize the pain that her mother had to go through to reunite with Janice, only to see her stolen daughter for an hour in thirty-five years.

Faced with the question of how she will go about the pregnancy and where will the child belong, Janice is subjected to a lot of emotional stress. Anne's dream at that time seems to be an answer to her questions:

You should have seen me while I was carrying you. I was just a bundle of energy... I wanted to get our little house ready 'cause I knew once you arrived, I'd be pretty busy looking after you... We didn't have much money back then, so we had to do everything ourselves... Being poor can teach you to be plenty resourceful... you found a way to reach way up and give me heartburn. And nothing would get rid of it... I gave a whole new respect for my mother. Twelve children and I wondered how she could have any heart left. I asked her about the heartburn and she said it wasn't a burn, it was a glow. My heart was glowing for you. (*400 Kilometres*, 42-43)

This disclosure of her birth gives her the courage to go through with the pregnancy and she realizes that her child will belong wherever she belongs. Her search for answers is also fuelled by her adopted parents and Tonto. When Janice is informed of her parents' decision to leave Ontario and move to England claiming that "it's time for us to go home" (*400 Kilometres*, 29), it hits Janice that irrespective of where she is brought up and how she is brought up, home is where she was born.

Her adopted parents' meeting with Tonto does not go as planned, despite them supporting her after they learn that she is pregnant. Lloyd Wirth calls himself "old-fashioned" (*400 Kilometres*, 35) because though he would never think twice in helping his daughter through her pregnancy, her "had hoped there would be that little tradition known as marriage involved" (*400 Kilometres*, 35). When Tonto comes to their home in search of Janice, they welcome him with disapproving warmth and when arguments ensue about how and where the child must be brought up, Tonto doesn't fail to give them his piece of mind on how Janice was brought up like a white woman, completely unaware of her native roots. Janice's parents end up throwing him out of the house; however, Janice doesn't take this news well, calling him "my man" (*400*, 98) and calling herself his "Kemosabe" (*400 Kilometres*, 92), an Ojibway word which means 'a person who secretly looks out for another person.'

In the end, she makes peace with her native identity for the first time through one of her outbursts, "...I've reached a stage in life where what I am and who I am are pretty close to the same thing. It's time for Janice Wirth to know who Grace Wabung is a little bit more" (*400 Kilometres*, 100). This changes the outlook of her adopted parents and makes them realize that their daughter is not just Janice Wirth, but also Grace Wabung.

When Tonto comes back holding a peace offering to Lloyd and Theresa Wirth, they embrace him with open arms. He takes back every single stereotypical comment on their upbringing and says:

... You took this beautiful little girl, and gave her a good home and a place to grow. I cannot find fault with that. Nor should I. My problem is I've seen a lot of Native children raised in homes that pale by comparison to yours. When you spend a lifetime hearing and healing horror stories, you tend to believe all stories have an undercoating of pain, regardless of how the environment may seem. I had no right to inflict my prejudices on you. (*400 Kilometres*, 112)

Contrary to having come in terms with her native identity, she is yet to do that with birth mother, Anne. More than her unexpected pregnancy, it is the dreams of Anne that had made her run away from Otter Lake in the first place. When she admits to Tonto that, "I took the pregnancy test just after the dreams started. Tonto, she knew before I did. That's what freaked me out" (*400 Kilometres*, 122), Tonto's replies saying, "There are things and beings in the world that know more than we ever will. But they give us signs, clues, all around us. We just have to find them" (*400 Kilometres*, 122) and his reply indicates Natives are more in touch with the spiritual world than the whites.

One of the most emotional scenes in the play is the final dream of Janice where Anne narrates the day she was taken away and this dream can be considered the defining moment proving Janice's love for her birth mother:

... I was outside hanging laundry, moving fast to stay warm. That's when I first noticed the car approaching... A white lady got out, in a grey dress... She introduced herself as being from the Children's Aid Society and demanded to see my daughter... this woman said that the Indian Agent told them that I'd been abandoned by my husband... She said my home wasn't suitable for a young child... She carried you out of our home... She grabbed you right out of my arms and took you out of our home. I can remember so clearly, you crying and crying, her not doing a thing to calm you... The sound of you crying was the last thing I heard... I waited thirty-five long years before I could get the chance to tell you how much I loved you. They took you out of my life, but never out of my heart. Baby, you're my baby Grace. (*400 Kilometres*, 126-12)

The startling truth of what really transpired the day she was taken and how it pained Anne to see her baby taken away finally dawns on Janice and moves her so much that she reaches out to her birth mother saying, "Oh Momma..." (*400 Kilometres*, 127). This is the final stage in the bonding between the stolen daughter and the birth mother.

References

Abley, Mark. "Conversations with a Dead Man: The Legacy of Duncan Campbell Scott". Douglas & McIntyre, 2013.

- Fee, Margery. "Deploying Identity in the Face of Racism." In *Search of April Raintree*. Winnipeg: Peguis Publishers Limited, 1999.
- Hanson, Erin. "Sixties Scoop". *University of British Columbia*. Retrieved 2014.
- Hanson, Erin. "The Residential School System". *University of British Columbia*. Retrieved 2014.
- Joe, Rita. "I Lost My Talk". *Canadian Woman Studies*. Vol. 10. 1989.
- Lyons, Tom. "Stolen Nation." Web. 26 Feb.2010. <<http://www.wrcfs.org/rep/stolennation.htm>>
- Maurice Jacqueline. "The Lost Children: A Nation's Shame". Linda's Printing Place. 2015.
- Milloy, John Sheridan. *A National Crime: The Canadian Government and the Residential School System 1879 to 1986*. Manitoba: UOFM Press. 1999.
- Taylor, Drew Hayden, "Someday", Canada: Fifth House Publishers, 1993.
- Taylor, Drew Hayden, "Only Drunks and Children Tell the Truth", British Columbia: Talonbooks, 1998.
- Taylor, Drew Hayden, "400 Kilometres", Vancouver: Talonbooks, 2005.

