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From Wounded Knee to Sacred Circles: Oglala Lakota Ethos as “Haunt” and “Wound”

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Abstract: Oglala Lakota ethos manifests a pre-Socratic/Heideggerian variant of ethos: ethos as “haunt”. Within this alternative to the Aristotelian ethos-as-character, Oglala ethos marks out the “dwelling place” of the Oglala Lakota people. That is, the Oglala Lakota ground their cultural- and self-identity *in the land*: their ethology, in effect, expresses an ecology. Thus, an Oglala Lakota ethos cannot be understood apart from its nation’s understanding of the natural world—of its primacy and sacredness. A further aspect of the Oglala Lakota ethos rests in the nation’s history of conflict with EuroAmericans. Through military conflict, forced displacement, and material/economic exploitation of reservation lands, an Oglala Lakota ethos bears within itself a woundedness that continues to this day. Only through an understanding of ethos-as-haunt, of cultural trauma or woundedness, and of the ways of healing can Oglala Lakota ethos be fully appreciated.

Keywords: Oglala Lakota; ethos; haunt; wound; ecology; ecological; Wounded Knee; American Indian; cultural wound

For American Indians, their oral traditions, tribal values, and Native philosophy help to define their ethos. ~Donald L. Fixico (Fixico 2013, p. 30)

The truth of the matter is that all indigenous peoples have a very strong sense of identity and that identity includes a sense of belonging in a very specific space. ~V.F. Cordova (Cordova 2007, p. 194)

Native Americans have inherited several generations of unresolved trauma. ~Eduardo Duran and Bonnie Duran (Duran and Duran 1995, p. 44)

1. Introduction

Before Europeans came to North America, over 500 distinct cultures inhabited the continent, each with its language, practice, traditions, stories, and geographical region. Suggesting that these groups were culturally the same only reinforces the EuroAmerican view of American Indian peoples.¹ There are *some* similarities, but there are similarities connecting all humans. A more nuanced understanding of any American Indian nation begins with an acknowledgment that no American Indian nation is identical to another—an insight that the dominant EuroAmerican popular culture has yet to fully recognize or understand.² In this essay, I shall approach American Indian ethos³ through the lens of a

¹ The term American Indian can be interchanged with many terms, such as First Nations, Indigenous Peoples, First Peoples, Native American, and so on. In this essay, “American Indian” serves as the overall term. I note that Alaska Native can also be included: American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN).

² By using the term “EuroAmerican”, I refer to the colonizers of North America *and* their descendants, as well as the dominant, oppressive, racist ideology exemplified by that culture, its dominant religion, and other influences.

³ Seeing that ethos, pathos, and logos have entered common American English vocabulary, I use them in roman.

specific nation: the Oglala Lakota of South Dakota.⁴ In Lakota, culture or ethos can be translated as *Lakol Wicohan*.

In seeking to understand *Lakol Wicohan*, we must first recognize the misrepresentations throughout history. Oglala means “scattered” or “divided” (Hyde 1937, p. 8). The Oglala Lakota are one of the seven sub-bands of the Tituwan/People of the Plains. When one considers the fame of some members—Red Cloud, Crazy Horse, Black Elk, and Sitting Bull—and the nation’s conflicts with the United States Government and Military, the Lakota can be deemed one of the more important American Indian cultures in North American history. Elements of their culture are memorialized in *Black Elk Speaks* and *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*, among recent English language texts.⁵ The Battle of the Greasy Grass (the Lakotan name for “Custer’s Last Stand” or the Battle of Little Bighorn: 25–26 June 1876) and the Massacre of Wounded Knee (29 December 1890) remain, for both sides, the stuff of legends, but for one side in particular, a wound remains unhealed with the passage of time. The EuroAmerican colonizers’ versions of these battles attest to the Lakotas’ skill as warriors. Unfortunately, other aspects of the EuroAmerican narrative are rife with misinformation.

Contributing to this cultural trauma is the EuroAmerican’s general ignorance of what the Oglala and other American Indians endured during the conquest of North America, including breaking of treaties, intentional genocide, forced relocation, and cultural erasure.⁶ Further, EuroAmerican popular culture fails to recognize American Indian cultures as having their own histories—histories that predate European colonizer settlements. These histories include mytho-historical narratives as well as oral histories and an indigenous wisdom that, until recently, has not been seen as “scientific” enough to engender serious research.⁷

EuroAmerican cultures continue to impose two general stereotypes on American Indians. The first is of the frontier hunter-gatherer that routinely outwitted or fought the cowboy. In their westward expansion, EuroAmerican settlers called them (and treated them as) “savages”. The twin image of savage and hunter-gatherer presents a number of historical inaccuracies, but also points to the misunderstanding of American Indians as a whole. The second and more recent stereotype sees the Indian nations as helpless, hopeless, depressed people that self-medicate with alcohol or illegal substances. Such stereotypes make it difficult to accurately represent American Indian ethos.

⁴ The Oglala Lakota are often mistakenly referred to as Sioux, even among their own people. Joseph M. Marshall III writes, “The Ojibway called us *naddewasioux*, which means ‘little snakes’ or ‘little enemies.’ The French, probably their voyageurs, shortened the word to Sioux. The word has a significant place in the contemporary names by which we are known: Rosebud Sioux, Cheyenne River Sioux, Standing Rock Sioux, and so on” (Marshall 2001, p. 207). For some Oglala Lakota, using “Sioux” is an insult. John Wesley Powell explains further: “Owing to the fact that ‘Sioux’ is a word of reproach and means snake or enemy, the term has been discarded by many later writers as a family designation” (Powell 1885, p. 300).

⁵ Vine Deloria, Jr., American Indian author, historian, and activist, writes, “Present debates center on the question of Neihardt’s literary intrusions in to Black Elk’s system of beliefs and some scholars have said that the book reflects more of Neihardt than it does of Black Elk. It is admittedly, difficult to discover if we are talking with Black Elk or John Neihardt, whether the vision is to be interpreted differently, and whether or not the positive emphasis which the book projects is not the optimism of two poets lost in the modern world and transforming drabness into an idealized world. Can it matter? The very nature of great religious teachings is that they encompass everyone who understands them and personalities become indistinguishable from the transcendent truth that is expressed. So let it be with *Black Elk Speaks*. [...] It is good. It is enough” (Deloria 1979, p. xiv).

⁶ Examples such as *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity* (Alexander et al. 2004) only further this ignorance, because it offers extensive discussions of slavery and the Holocaust but only a few entries of American Indians and all of them in passing.

⁷ A EuroAmerican view discounts American Indian medical, ecological, and scientific understanding. According to Cochran et al., “Multiple examples exist in which indigenous knowledge and the use of indigenous ways of knowing within a specific context have produced more extensive understanding than might be obtained through Western knowledge and scientific methods” (Cochran et al. 2008, p. 273). Further, Frank G. Speck writes, “when we realize how the Indians have taken pains to observe and systematize facts of science in the realm of lower animal life, we may perhaps be pardoned a little surprise” (Speck 1923, p. 273). For more discussion of this issue, see *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants* by Wall Kimmerer (2013), *The Savage Mind* by Levi-Strauss (1966), and *Sacred Ecology*, now in its 4th edition, by Berkes (2018).

2. Interlude I: My Challenge

For some time—eight years, in fact—I have been researching and writing and rewriting this work. I have had serious concerns about me—a white EuroAmerican—writing about the Oglala. I have routinely asked myself, “Who am *I* to write about *them*?” However, at an October 2018 Digital Humanities conference, two colleagues—an African American and an American Indian—urged me to continue. This work was important, they said, because, as a descendant of a EuroAmerican (colonizer), I was not being complicit in the ignorance and oppression. They explained that my *not* being silent would help make a difference. In “The Problem of Speaking for Others,” Linda Alcoff works through some of the concerns I have mentioned. Alcoff provides some caution on how one’s positionality can be interpreted or perceived; I note this particularly because I am not Oglala, but I am writing about (not *for*) them. Though, I am left with one of her considerations: She explains that by not engaging this type of discussion, we would have “lost an opportunity to discuss and explore it” (Alcoff 1991, p. 27).

Moreover, some of the drive to complete a project about a community of which I am not a part of is what Paulo Freire, Brazilian educator and philosopher, calls “a new ‘culture of silence’” that has come about partly because of technology and partly because we are being subversively conditioned to act and think in certain ways that can be against our own interests or against what most rationale and realistic persons would think and believe (Shaul 2007, p. 33). I write because I empathize with the Oglala. I have learned that wisdom can come from many places if I am able to be quiet long enough to listen, empathize, and understand. In addition, Freire cautioned us about education working either to condition people to “the logic of the present system and bring about conformity to it, *or* it becomes ‘the practice of freedom’, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality to discover how to participate in the transformation of their world” (Shaul 2007, p. 34).

Thus, I take the wisdom of Freire to guide me: “[t]he radical, committed to human liberation,” “is not afraid to meet the people or to enter into a dialogue with them. This person does not consider himself or herself the proprietor of history or of all people, or the liberator of the oppressed; but he or she does commit himself or herself, within history, to fight at their side” (Freire 2007, p. 39). I have struggled as a white person to write this understanding of Oglala ethos, tried to respect the culture, the people, the land, and, of course, their wound.

3. A Litany of Misunderstandings

Sadly, EuroAmerican popular culture views American Indians through fictions and faulty narratives. On the one hand, American Indians are idealized as noble, honorable warriors, an idealization that American sports teams—Cleveland Indians, Atlanta Braves, Washington Redskins—exploit in their naming. On the other hand, American Indians are demonized as killers of innocent white settlers who crossed the plains of what is now the United States. Worst of all, perhaps, is the pop-culture assumption that few American Indians survive. For many Americans today, they are gone—all gone, absorbed by mainstream society or slaughtered in the past. All that remains of their legacy are school names, sports mascots, and tall tales.

Consider the misrepresentation of what older history books refer to as “The Battle of Wounded Knee,” one of the last major conflicts between the U.S. Military and the American Indian.⁸ To better grasp the events at Wounded Knee, we must look beyond the statistics of the people who died, the possible miscommunications that led up to the slaughter, and even the U.S. accounts of what happened. From an Oglala perspective, it was and remains not “The Battle” but “The Massacre at Wounded Knee”. While the U.S. military pinned twenty medals on its soldiers’ chests, it took 100 years for the U.S. government to offer a mostly symbolic statement of “deep regret” for the slaughter (Congress Adjourns; Century Afterward, Apology for Wounded Knee 1990).

⁸ Here and in the previous paragraph, too, I point to the erroneous EuroAmerican view that puts all American Indian nations into one homogenized group.

To understand Oglala Lakota ethos today, one must understand the importance of the *experience* of this massacre, which extends to the visuals, the emotions, the memories of the scene—that is, to the entire experience (Fixico 2003, p. 22). *It is the mythos of the massacre* that we must seek to understand. For the EuroAmerican bystander, it is easy to dismiss the Wounded Knee Massacre as having happened over 100 years ago to some group at some place; it is markedly different if one's cultural identity rests in a continual retelling—in effect, a reliving—of the Massacre. As Donald L. Fixico writes, “When retold, the experience comes alive again, recreating the experience by evoking the emotions of listeners, transcending past-present-future. Time does not imprison the story” (Fixico 2003, p. 22). The telling of these stories forms an integral part of Oglala ethos, both *as-haunt* and *as-wound*.

To better understand the genesis of this trauma, some review is necessary. The singular modern event impacting Oglala Lakota ethos is the Wounded Knee Massacre. Ethnographer James Mooney details the event:

At the first volley the Hotchkiss guns trained on the camp opened fire and sent a storm of shells and bullets among the women and children [. . .] The guns poured in 2-pound explosive shells at the rate of nearly fifty per minute, mowing down everything alive. The terrible effect may be judged from the fact that one woman survivor, Blue Whirlwind, with whom the author conversed, received fourteen wounds, while each of her two little boys was also wounded by her side. In a few minutes 200 Indian men, women, and children, with 60 soldiers, were lying dead and wounded on the ground, the teepees had been torn down by the shells and some of them were burning above the helpless wounded, and the surviving handful of Indians were flying in wild panic to the shelter of the ravine, pursued by hundreds of maddened soldiers and followed up by a raking fire from the Hotchkiss guns, which had been moved into position to sweep the ravine.

There can be no question that the pursuit was simply a massacre, where fleeing women, with infants in their arms, were shot down after resistance had ceased and when almost every warrior was stretched dead or dying on the ground. The wholesale slaughter of women and children was unnecessary and inexcusable. (Mooney 1972, p. 118)

Jeffery Ostler gives further detail: “In all, the Seventh Cavalry killed between 270 and 300 of the 400 people in Big Foot's band. Of these, 170 to 200 were women and children” (Ostler 2010, p. 123).⁹ Describing the aftermath, Herbert Welsh (a political reformer and advocate for American Indian rights) writes, “From the fact that so many women and children were killed, and that their bodies were found far from the scene of the action, and as though they were shot down while fleeing, it would look as though blind rage had been at work” (Welsh 1891, p. 452).¹⁰ To these, we can add Robert M. Utley's account, which provides vivid detail of the massacre soon after it occurred:

Shortly after noon the cavalcade [of about 75 Oglala, Dr. Charles Eastman, Paddy Starr, who led contracted white workers to bury the slaughtered (at \$2 a body), and more soldiers to maintain

⁹ To show contrast to the number of Lakota, Robert M. Utley reports, “In all, [Col. James W.] Forsyth had a little more than 500 effectives” (Utley 1963, p. 201). This, of course, neglects reference to the weaponry the U.S. Army brought to bear on the mostly unarmed Oglala, most notably the Hotchkiss cannons.

¹⁰ Welsh, however, writes highly of the U.S. Army forces: “Evidence from various reliable sources shows very clearly that Colonel Forsythe, the veteran officer in charge, did all that could be done by care, consideration, and firmness to prevent a conflict” (Welsh 1891, p. 451). Welsh finds the “Indians” fired first and they “were wholly responsible in bringing on the fight” (Welsh 1891, p. 452). A paragraph later, Welsh places blame to yet another source: “But responsibility of the massacre of Wounded Knee, as for many another sad and similar event, rests more upon the shoulders of the citizens of the United States who permit condition of savage ignorance, incompetent control, or Congressional indifference and inaction, than upon those of the maddened soldiers, who having seen their comrades shot at their side are tempted to kill and destroy all belonging to the enemy within their reach. That the uprising ended with so little bloodshed the country may thank the patience and ability of General Miles” (Welsh 1891, p. 452). Even this “advocate” for American Indian rights considers the Lakota U.S. enemies as he defends the slaughter of innocents. (Note: Gen. Nelson A. Miles was Col. Forsythe's commanding officer).

order] drew up at the Wounded Knee battlefield. In silence the people stared at the scene. The crescent of more than 100 tepees that had housed Chief Big Foot's followers had been all but flattened. Strips of shredded canvas and piles of splintered lodgepoles littered the campsite, together with wrecked wagons and twisted pots, kettles, and domestic utensils. Here and there the skeleton of a tepee rose starkly from the wreckage, bits of charred canvas clinging to the poles. Snow covered mounds cluttered the ground from one end of the camp to the other [. . .] Each mound hid a human form, torn by shrapnel and carbine bullets, caked with blood, frozen hard in the contortions of violent death. They were all ages and both sexes. The storm of shot and shell had spared none. Paddy Starr found three pregnant women shot to pieces, another woman with her abdomen blown away, a ten-year-old boy with an arm, shoulder, and breast mangled by an artillery shell. Others made similar discoveries. (Utley 1963, pp. 2–3)

Both the place and the events of the massacre haunt the Lakotan cultural memory, which rests in the collective experience of trauma and the place—the physical haunt—of its occurrence.

As such, an Oglala Lakota ethos derives from haunt and wound. Ethos-as-haunt demonstrates how location constitutes a people, its culture, traditions, stories, and history. From that haunt, the events that occurred on that haunt add to their ethos. Simply put, the events that occur on a parcel of land lends it character to the people on that land. EuroAmerican culture is only beginning to understand its own ethos-as-haunt in North America; American Indians, having longer tenure in North America, understand this more fully. With this summary of the Wounded Knee Massacre as a starting point, I turn now to review the Western model of ethos and its potential as haunt. From this understanding of location, and of *mythos* and storytelling, I suggest a bridge between haunt and wound as it relates to an Oglala Lakota ethos and the hopeful healing that can take place through an acknowledgement of that woundedness. The conclusion offers insight into Oglala wisdom for the Westernized humanities and the possibility of healing the wound from two different perspectives: EuroAmerican and Oglala.

4. Revisiting Ethos (Aristotelian and Otherwise)

While ethos is untranslatable in English, its classical-Aristotelian meanings detour through numerous terms, including character, credibility, trustworthiness, and reputation. However it is used or expressed, the term embraces three components: the speaker or person to whom ethos and its qualities are assigned; the audience who perceives or projects these qualities onto the speaker; and the “rhetorical scene,” where the speaker (and, occasionally, audience) is situated in time and space.

As an analytic method, the classical-Aristotelian model seeks to pin these components and categories down, as if ethos were reducible to the contents of a text. An advantage of this approach is that it allows scholars to get a handle on ethos, to examine it, study it, and then articulate what is understood. Yet ethos, as I am learning, continues to shapeshift, morph, grow, retreat, and extend itself, becoming more. In other words, our study (and experience) of ethos continues to evolve beyond Aristotle. The model that I wish to unfold in this essay affirms an authentic, core self that abides beyond culture and its influences, though *it wears culture* as a mask of sorts. Through the shutters of such masks, we see and are seen: they provide filters through which we comprehend the cultures we interact with and our respective roles therein. These masks—our personas—are means by which we present ourselves in the places where we situate ourselves; to the extent that face and mask coalesce, we can declare ourselves, at least in part, the products of environment.¹¹

“For Aristotle”, writes Craig R. Smith, “*ethos* was about building the credibility of a speaker before an audience, not about the speaker’s inherent worth” (Smith 2004, p. 5).¹² Such has been the

¹¹ I am not the first to further this understanding of an evolving ethos. Contributors to *The Ethos of Rhetoric* (ed. Michael J. Hyde), among other scholars, have done much of this heavy lifting; to them I owe a debt of gratitude.

¹² Aristotle (1991) crucial discussion of ethos follows (1.2.2):

general understanding of ethos in the modern era. Further, Aristotle's rational, textually-constructed, logocentric (indeed, logos-centric) model undergirds the EuroAmerican mindset that negates any natural/supernatural explanations falling outside of its rationalist paradigm. As James S. Baumlin and Craig A. Meyer note, "There's an elegant symmetry in the *Rhetoric*, which outlines three *pisteis* or modes," which, as we know, are ethos, logos, and pathos (Baumlin and Meyer 2018). In this symmetry or system, there is convenience. This convenience provides order and structure. This order and structure have become the basis of the Western model. Through and because of that model, we should recognize the oppression of other ideas or possibilities that fall outside the elegance and simplicity of Aristotle's modes and their (mostly) agreed upon meaning.

The problem with most Western rhetorical scholarship is that it takes Aristotle's logocentric system as a recipe book complete in itself, neglecting the fact that his *Rhetoric* must itself be contextualized and historicized—that is, *situated within its own time and place*. In compiling his lecture notes into the text as we've received it, Aristotle could assume that his audience *already knew* that ethos was, at least in part, derived from place and filtered through the daily life of the *polis*—which includes the Athenian citizens' haunts or "dwelling places," their experiences of/within/on these haunts, and the meanings (personal and traditional) attached to those experiences. Aristotle's textually-constructed model of ethos needs to be restored to its own living cultural context and seen as part of a larger cultural praxis.

Though elegant and convenient as an analytic model, the still-reigning version of Aristotle operates largely in ignorance of cultural context—in effect, of his text's own haunt. Once we recognize where the modes of *pisteis* reside, we understand ethos a bit better. Pathos is elicited from the audience and is expressive of their hopes, fears, sentiments, and so on. Logos derives from the rhetor and is based on the rationality of his arguments. But if pathos is with the audience and logos is with the rhetor, then where is ethos? It is with both and neither. As Karen Burke LaFevre notes, "Ethos, we might say, appears in that socially created space, in the 'between', the point of intersection between speaker or writer and listener or reader" (LeFevre 1987, p. 46). Such a socially created space is understood through the *history* of that space, a history that is passed down through stories, experiences, and traditions. Here, in the "in-between" of ethotic practice, is where Oglala ethos unfolds. Ethos-as-character and ethos-as-haunt both contribute to our understanding.

An Oglala Lakota ethos is rooted in the land and the events and experiences taking place on that land. As part of that representation, the events and conflicts on that land leave cultural memories—wounds that can be articulated and understood. In some cases, the wounds need attention in order to heal. Such healing can only occur by attending to the circumstances that created the wounds on the land and, thus, to the people, as well as to the continuing effects of those wounds. This aspect of ethos deserves further exploration. As already noted, ethos has been approached through classical-Aristotelian notions of credibility, expertise, and moral character; however, an earlier, Homeric usage makes a better "fit" with Oglala Lakota cultural practice:

Firstly, then, I will tell you my name that you too may know it, [. . .] I am Odysseus son of Laertes [. . .]. I live in Ithaca, where there is a high mountain called Neritum, covered with forests; and not far from it there is a group of islands very near to one another—Dulichium, Same, and the wooded island of Zacynthus. It lies squat on the horizon, all highest up in the sea towards the sunset, while the others lie away from it towards dawn. It is a rugged

[There is persuasion] through character whenever the speech is spoken in such a way as to make the speaker worthy of credence; for we believe fair-minded people to a greater extent and more quickly [than we do others] on all subjects in general and completely so in cases where there is not exact knowledge but room for doubt. *And this should result from the speech*, not from a previous opinion that the speaker is a certain kind of person; for it is not the case, as some of the technical writers propose in their treatment of the art, that fair-mindedness on the part of the speaker makes no contribution to persuasiveness; rather, character is almost, so to speak, the controlling factor in persuading. (*Rhetoric* 1356a; emphasis added)

island, but it breeds brave men, and my eyes know none that they better love to look upon. The goddess Calypso kept me with her in her cave, and wanted me to marry her, as did also the cunning Aeaean goddess Circe; but they could neither of them persuade me, for there is nothing dearer to a man than his own country and his parents, and however splendid a home he may have in a foreign country, if it be far from father or mother, he does not care about it. (Homer 1900, pp. 9, 16–38)

In this passage, Odysseus describes his homeland, its beauty and ruggedness. In so doing, he provides insight into the people who live there; more importantly, he declares his intention to return—no goddess could seduce or persuade him to abandon this task. His identity—his ethos—is invested in his name, his lineage, and his homeland. In the *Odyssey*, ethos designates “one who is found in a certain place” and, perhaps more importantly, one’s “belonging in” a particular place (Chamberlain 1984, p. 97).¹³

Analyzing its presence in the *Iliad*, Todd S. Frobish notes that “the word *ethos* does not refer to some quality of character but to a haunt or an accustomed place of activity” (Frobish 2003, p. 19). Further, “*Ethos* means abode, dwelling place,” writes Heidegger in his “Letter on Humanism” (Heidegger 1977, p. 256). The word, he adds, “names the open region in which man dwells” (Heidegger 1977, p. 256). As Charles Chamberlain notes, “*ethos* refers to the range or arena where someone is most truly at home” (Chamberlain 1984, p. 99). Discussing etymology, Arthur B. Miller sees the Homeric ethos as referring generally to “*the abodes of men*” (Miller 1974, p. 310). This goes beyond Aristotle but allows us to understand what Aristotle meant (and how his contemporary audience would have understood him). Smith provides more context:

[A]t no place does Aristotle see ethos as a dwelling in the sense that Heraclitus used the term. . . . The first place that Aristotle acknowledges in the *Rhetoric* is the Areopagus, the high court, where, of course, ethos was enormously important. . . . For Aristotle, it is a given: everyone has ethos whether it be noble or ignoble. Before one even speaks, that ethos has an ontological dimension because it emerges from the way one makes decisions, the way one lives on a day-to-day basis, the way one dwells. Those decisions are informed by one’s values, one’s practical wisdom, and one’s goodwill, all of which are addressed in detail by Aristotle. Thus Aristotle assumes the knowledge of the Athenian fore-structure of ethos as a dwelling place and then reformulates the notion of dwelling place to present a rhetorical understanding of ethos. (Smith 2004, p. 2)

Certainly, Aristotle seems to have incorporated haunt into his understanding of ethos.

This idea of ethos-as-haunt is especially relevant to American Indian cultures, since it points to the land itself as a defining element of cultural practice and identity. Before EuroAmericans came, the Oglala Lakota lived with the land in accordance with their ecological ethos. However, an Oglala Lakota ethos can be now represented and understood through the conflicts with EuroAmericans on that land, conflicts that have left cultural wounds on the Oglala.

5. Interlude II: Riding in Pine Ridge

“Why don’t they *use* this land?” asked an elderly man, EuroAmerican and White, his booming voice snapping me out of my reverie. It was back in the summer of 2011, and I was riding on an old school bus around Pine Ridge, South Dakota, working with Re-Member. Re-Member offers Lakota cultural experiences for volunteers and practical assistance to the Oglala such as building bunk beds, outhouses, wheelchair ramps, and other functional construction for homes. Before he spoke, I was thinking back to my childhood—growing up in Michigan in the mid-1980s, riding to school, and bouncing around a similar bus: the plastic-like vinyl smell of the benches, each just small enough to be

¹³ Chamberlain refers to *Od.* 14.411; *Il.* 6.511, 15.268.

uncomfortable, windows partly open (often stuck at an angle), the pull of the powerful engine, with school kids joking and laughing—and that is when he spoke.

Speaking to nobody in particular, he leveled his challenge at all of us—all volunteers who had committed at least one week of service to this rural and poor community of Oglala Lakota. Pulled from their own thoughts and hushed discussions, many of the twenty or so bus riders turned to look at him. Exhaling audibly, he continued, “I don’t know, build a casino or put cattle on all these rolling hills”. My eyebrows furrowed.

After another pause, he spoke again: “They could be making a lot of money and get out of here or fix their own homes”. After another pause, I said, “They *are* using the land”. He looked at me as if I had spoken nonsense. After a moment, others spoke up; I decided to stay silent as a vigorous discussion broke out about tradition versus modernity. But, perhaps more accurately, the discussion centered on the different perspectives of two cultures and, if by implication only, on the failure of one to respect the other. He argued that the Oglala should be “using” the land: raising animals for slaughter, mining, growing crops, or casino gambling. By his understanding, this “use” would allow them to make money and not live, by his impression or standards, in poverty. Implicit in his words, he was suggesting they should be pulling themselves up by their proverbial bootstraps, not depending on “us” to help them; they should do it themselves. Perhaps, too, he was suggesting that they do not know how to take care of themselves or their community and that they need “our” White, EuroAmerican, Westernized help to become more “modern,” in effect, more “civilized”.

Indeed, one might ask: *Why don’t* the Oglala “use the land” more exploitatively, in the EuroAmerican way?

6. Some Other Haunts

Before I respond to that question, let me consider the area near Wounded Knee. About one hundred miles away from Pine Ridge, one of EuroAmerica’s national treasures has been blasted and carved out of the granite of the Black Hills: Mount Rushmore. “This is what it means to be an American!” declared Lincoln Borglum, son of the artist of Mount Rushmore, who finished it for his father (qtd. in [Blair and Michel 2004](#), p. 159). Indeed, Mount Rushmore highlights the colonizing nature of “American” conquest in North America: as Carole Blair and Neil Michel explain, “[Mount Rushmore] was a planned monument honoring ‘continental expansion’, sited in a territory that, by treaty, still belonged to the Lakota, and that the local Native people considered consecrated ground” ([Blair and Michel 2004](#), p. 169). As Jim Pomeroy writes,

It’s important to invent alternative pasts for a culture that finds it hard to accept the real one. It’s paradoxical that a Shrine of Democracy is placed at the center of land acquired through well documented rape—the most blatant example from 500 hundred years of genocide and hemispheric conquest. Rushmore implies that the European has always been here. It obscures a shameful memory and eases racial guilt much the same way an individual represses thoughts reminding him of a painful experience. ([Pomeroy 1992](#), p. 53)

Cogently, one can argue that Mount Rushmore stands as an insult to the Lakota, and such an argument highlights the narrative of the EuroAmerican way of conquering and colonizing. This narrative has sought to negate and overwrite other narratives that suggest any other version or understanding of truth, or perspectives of ethos. During the planning stages of the monument, there was discussion about including a woman, Susan B. Anthony, and an American Indian, Red Cloud ([Ostler 2010](#), pp. 45, 46); both were dropped because the designer, Gutzon Borglum, supposedly concluded it should be “an unambiguous symbol of male manifest destiny” ([Ostler 2010](#), p. 147).¹⁴

¹⁴ Yet, one can also argue that the Crazy Horse Memorial (still under construction) is a counter to Mount Rushmore and highlights a Lakota hero. While perhaps true, it seems probable that such a monument only repeats the problems of Mount Rushmore.

To return to the question about using the land, the remoteness of Pine Ridge dissuades the likelihood of industry or large-scale agriculture moving in. In the late 1800s and early 1900s, the Oglala did survive by ranching and farming (and some still do), but, because of small parcels of land, drought, and various government incursions and influences, many of these “farms” no longer exist (Robertson 2002, pp. 50–51). The Great Depression hit especially hard too. Due to low crop prices among other factors related to the Depression, “Lakotas were forced to sell the few assets they had accumulated. Farm machinery, cattle, even dishes, were converted to cash” (Ostler 2010, p. 142). The U.S. Government, crippled by nation-wide distress, provided only temporary relief and no meaningful long-term support. As such, the Lakota were left with little foundation upon which to (re-)build, since most of their resources had been wiped away surviving the Depression. While some farming, ranching, and similar commerce did creep back, it would never return to the level of the early 1900s. After 1973 and the second Wounded Knee incident, Pine Ridge did manage to attract “two small plants, one assembling fish lures and one making moccasins” (Kehoe 2006, p. 89); while these helped for a while, both later closed, due partly to international competition and lower wages outside the U.S.¹⁵ Given the aftereffects of the Wounded Knee Massacre and the 1973–1974 Wounded Knee conflict, Pine Ridge Reservation “was (and is) one of the poorest districts in the entire United States” (Kehoe 2006, p. 80). Alice Beck Kehoe explains:

Its prairie is too dry for any large-scale agriculture other than ranching, which could not support the growing population on the reservation. Remote from cities, railroads, and major highways, the district cannot attract industry or build service employment. Without jobs, some Oglala hung around bars in the small towns on the periphery of the reservation in Nebraska and South Dakota. Prejudice against Indians ran rampant in many of these towns, themselves economically straitened. (Kehoe 2006, p. 80)

The combined effects of conquest and colonization, the Dust Bowl and Great Depression, and prejudice deepened the wound caused at Wounded Knee. In other words, we have come back to the land and its history.

We, as scholars, must ask why. Eduardo Duran and Bonnie Duran explain the difference between EuroAmericans and American Indian perceptions of history:

Western thought conceptualizes history in linear temporal sequence, whereas Native American thinking conceptualizes history in a spatial fashion. Temporal thinking means that time is thought of as having a beginning and end; spatial thinking views events as a function of space or where the event actually took place. (Duran and Duran 1995, p. 14)

EuroAmericans are more consumed by when something happened. Western history, thus, retreats into logic, into the abstractions of causality, whereas American Indian history is more attune to location and importance and seeks understanding through ceremony and commemoration. Thus, the Oglala cannot simply *get over* genocide of their people on the lands the genocide happened on.

American Indians have a stronger sense of the sacredness of their ancestral lands—the Great Plains, in the case of the Oglala—than the colonizers of the Americas. (Then, again, the EuroAmericans are emigrants by definition, having left the lands of their ancestors for a “new world”.) The Oglala have been part of the Black Hills for generations. Some historians suggest they migrated from the Great Lakes region, but what historians believe matters little when we look closer at the meaning of the Black Hills to the Oglala.¹⁶ Vine Deloria Jr., American Indian author, historian, and activist, writes,

¹⁵ As for one other means of commerce, the Lakota nation does operate two casinos (Prairie Wind Casino and Hotel (opened in 1994) and East Wind Casino (opened in 2012)), but they can by no means be considered well-known or destination attractions—at best, they are local gameplay establishments.

¹⁶ Regardless if the Oglala did migrate from the Great Lakes (or other region) to the Black Hills, there is ample evidence of them visiting or living in the Black Hills long before the 1700s.

Every society needs these kinds of sacred places because they help to instill a sense of social cohesion in the people and remind them of the passage of generations that have brought them to the present. A society that cannot remember and honor its past is in peril of losing its soul. Indians, because of our considerably longer tenure on this continent, have many more sacred places than do non-Indians. (Deloria 1999, p. 328)

Deloria explains that American Indian sacred places would be understood as sacred because of an important event, such as where the buffalo would come from each season in Buffalo Gap. For the Oglala, Wounded Knee *names a place and an event conjoined*: to speak of the land is to speak of the massacre (and *vice versa*), whose sacred character is marked (rather, marred) by an as-yet-unhealed wound to the land, its memory, and its people.

We come to realize the potential of the term *ethos* by building on Michael J. Hyde, who writes,

one can understand the phrase ‘the ethos of rhetoric’ to refer to the way discourse is used to transform space and time into ‘dwelling places’ (*ethos*; pl. *ethea*) where people can deliberate about and ‘know together’ (*con-scientia*) some matter of interest. Such dwelling places define grounds, the abodes or habitats, where a person’s ethics and moral character take form and develop. (Hyde 2004, p. xiii)

Hyde points out how location influences—in fact, makes us—who we are, and how our ethics grow from our environment. He also reasons that narrative acts to enhance dwelling places and community cohesion. To understand Lakota *ethos*, then, we need to recover the *mythos* of Wounded Knee: for it is in myth that place, people, and action become one.

7. *Mythos* and/as *Ethos*

Our [American Indian] philosophies come of being from a place and a community, of knowing a place and respecting its boundaries.

In part, this is why we Native peoples persist in our identities. There is cultural mooring and values having to do with the environment, the place, and the stories of that place. ~Hogan (2007, p. ix)

As Baumlin and Meyer (2018) suggest in the “Introduction” to this collection, narrative *ethos*—that is, *mythos*—functions rhetorically as a fourth Aristotelian proof or “mode of persuasion,” providing for expression of *ethos-as-haunt* and *as-wound*. Stories, traditionally, provide explanations for aspects of a culture, such as its creation. And variants in culture make for variants in the telling: as Cordova asserts, “There are numerous ‘creators’, one for each of the groups. No one argues over the truth or validity of one group’s story over another. It is understood that the story being told is a localized creation” (Cordova 2007, p. 104). When we can accept that wisdom, then we can acknowledge that a group’s story is created “not only in time and space but in a specific place. Each group views itself as being created for one specific place” (Cordova 2007, p. 104). This realization demonstrates how and why the wound of the Oglala cuts so deep—they were created for and from that place. We recognize that one single event in an historical narrative “can come to dominate the narrative” (Baumlin and Meyer 2018). The Wounded Knee Massacre left a mark on the Oglala. At present, it still dominates the narrative, because it has not been healed. More precisely, it has not fully been heard by the audience that needs to hear it. Such a wound deserves, in fact requires, healing, justice, and, perhaps, transcendence; and *mythos* can act as a means of healing.

Stories bind and connect the community. James S. Baumlin and Tita French Baumlin write, “The mythic seeks instead to unite, to synthesize, to assert wholeness in multiple or contrasting choices and interpretations. *Mythos* thus offers a synthetic and analogical, as opposed to analytic, mode of proof, one that discovers—indeed, celebrates—the diversity of truth” (Baumlin and Baumlin 1994, p. 106). *Mythos* functions as the appeal that unites and synthesizes meaning among truths. By recognizing Oglala *mythos*, we open ourselves to truth from other perspectives beyond the myth of “Manifest Destiny” that EuroAmericans brought with them to North America. In opening ourselves, we are

releasing centuries of pain in hopes of healing, one of the more caring aspects of ethos. Oglala identity and recognition of their ethos has been hindered by the failure—perhaps an unwillingness or hesitation, even an impatience—on the part of EuroAmerican culture to pause and hear the Oglala story, which includes their history, haunt, and being *from their perspective*.

From the first firing of arms of the U.S. Army on the Oglala Lakota, (at least) two narratives have been embattled against each other. Jim W. Corder reminds us:

Let there be no mistake: a contending narrative, that is, an argument of genuine consequence because it confronts one life with another, is a threat, whether it is another's narrative becoming argument impinging upon or thundering into ours, or our own, impinging upon the other's. (Corder 1985, p. 19)

The reality of the Oglala narrative has proven to be a threat to the competing and dominant narrative of the EuroAmerican culture, because it calls into question the truthfulness of that narrative or neglects the gravity of the Oglala narrative and experience. The dominance and consumption of the Oglala narrative caused the wound on the haunt of the Oglala. The overwhelmingly obvious problem is that the Oglala narrative has been taken up by the EuroAmerican narrative, which then retells *their* story to them. The trauma is reified by not being the Oglala ethos, character, or story, but the *caricature* of the dominant narrative's retelling of their trauma, which can, then, be easily dismissed and left neglected based on EuroAmerican linear temporal thinking.

Dominant narratives may bear witness to another's narrative, but more often than not, they overtake, consume, and restate that narrative into what the dominant narrative wants to accept or proliferate. This ingestion of Oglala ethos and *mythos* fails at the ultimate aim of ethotic discourse, which is to heal, to share story, to listen, and to learn from another's narratives. This directs us to recognize the ultimate goal, then, of discourse, which is "to recognize, accommodate, and heal" (Baumlin and Meyer 2018). As the Oglala have struggled to have their narrative heard, the dominant EuroAmerican narrative has failed to listen and bear witness, much less to atone for its failings.

As Paulo Freire explains, it is simple to see an oppressed people as an "abstract category" instead of "persons who have been unjustly dealt with" (Freire 2007, p. 50). We can recognize this in regard to the Oglala, because, as I have noted, they can be understood as some Indians on some reservation off on the backroads of South Dakota, a state with a present population of less than a million people.¹⁷ This distancing from mainstream EuroAmerica and media highlights how easily groups like the Oglala can be forgotten and dismissed, which adds to the level of oppression they feel. They can be labeled foreigners, Indians, "those" people, or other, but not part of the U.S. citizenry, because they are not part of the EuroAmerican colonizing culture and narrative—they are seen as remnants of what *was* here, not what *is* here.

8. Interlude III: Visiting Wounded Knee

When you visit Wounded Knee, you will sense its solemnness. Standing in the valley where the Lakota were gunned down, you can look up the hillside and imagine how it felt to see the Hotchkiss cannons pointed at you. You look about you and realize some of the futility at attempting escape: save for a slice of creek nearby (where many did attempt to find some safety), the valley is a veritable killing field. There would be little to no chance of escape.

Beyond the terrain and solemnness of the place today, a cemetery sits atop a small hill saddled between some larger, rolling hills. Fenced by chain link, the graves of several fallen rest there. A rainbow of cloth swatches and ribbons decorate the fence. Most are faded by time, sun, and weather. Well-worn paths encircle the fence and grave markers. Every few minutes a car rumbles by, and every

¹⁷ For context, the city of Columbus, Ohio, U.S. has more people and is the 14th largest city in the U.S.

few of those a car horn blows or a yell comes from an occupant. I can only assume what the meaning is—perhaps a kind of respect of the memorial.

On my first visit in mid-2010, I did not have the heart to enter the small fenced area; I walked around it and gazed in. Others in our volunteer group were more bold. Some took pictures. I did not have the heart for that either; only my memory would keep me rooted in this moment—the openness, the loss, the pain. The feel of that place commands your respect: it is, palpably, an ethos-as-haunt.

Wounded Knee has no marker to speak of, save for a double-sided small billboard that offers one generalized report of the massacre. An unknowing person could drive by and miss it, assuming the billboard is simply another advertisement.

9. The Wound of Wounded Knee

[The Wounded Knee] massacre has reverberated through the hearts and minds of Lakota survivors and descendants. ~Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart. (Brave Heart 2000, p. 246)

Lakota historical trauma is defined as cumulative and collective emotional and psychological injury both over the life span and across generations, resulting from a cataclysmic history of genocide. ~Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart. (Brave Heart 1999, p. 2)

Various U.S. Governmental and legal actions have deepened what Duran and Duran call a “soul wound”.¹⁸ Duran and Duran provide further context for understanding this concept:

Beginning in the 1800s, the U.S. government implemented policies whose effect was the systemic destruction of the Native American family system under the guise of educating Native Americans in order to assimilate them as painlessly as possible into Western society, while at the same time inflicting a wound to the soul of Native American people that is felt in agonizing proportions to this day. (Duran and Duran 1995, p. 27)

Further examples of this systemic destruction include children being forcibly removed from their family, rituals such as the Ghost Dance and Sun Dance being outlawed by the U.S. Government, and cultural markers such as hairstyle, clothing, and food being actively controlled by the EuroAmerican culture through both legal and societal/cultural pressures. With the U.S. government outlawing their ceremonies, the wound could only deepen.

While treaties were agreed upon (some might say forced upon) American Indians, the EuroAmerican culture seemed ignorant or uncaring of them. Treaty-protected lands were routinely violated and various means of “civilization” crept in, such as mining, railroads, and so-called settlers. In fact, the lands promised through these treaties remain contested and point, again, to ethos-as-haunt: for the land unites the people, not only as a living community, but also as the sacred burial grounds of ancestors. For the living and dead alike, the land provides an ethos. The ignorance and neglect of these treaties maintains the Lakotan woundedness through legal means by the dominant culture.

After being forcibly contained on the Pine Ridge Reservation, the Lakota maintain part of their haunt, but endure the pain of what happened on it, with no release of the pain. Celane Not Help Him, a Lakota and granddaughter of Iron Hail (who survived Wounded knee), explains her feelings: “when I pass by Wounded Knee, I always go by crying, and then leave crying because what happened here’s

¹⁸ While there are too many to recount here, a brief review may be helpful: The Fort Laramie Treaty in 1851 established land claims to American Indians in exchange for safe passage on the “Oregon Trail”. The second Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868 solidified Oglala ownership of the Black Hills, which the U.S. broke in 1877. As a result, the court awarded the Lakota 15.5 million in 1980 for the Black Hills (see *United States v. Sioux Nation of Indians*); at present, this money (now well over 100 million dollars) has been refused by the Lakota who demand the land instead. (This abstract settlement reinforces the ignorance of Western and EuroAmerican understanding of Oglala ethos-as-haunt.) The Dawes Act of 1887 allowed the President of the United States to survey and allot segments of land to individual American Indians. Finally, the Indian Re-Organization Act (1934) was supposedly designed to reverse the assimilation process of American Indian and reestablish their respective traditions.

not easy. It's over a hundred years ago but still it looks like it happened yesterday. Lot of people say it's the Battle of Wounded Knee. It's not a battle, it's a massacre" (qtd. in (Penman 2000, p. 15)). The haunt of the massacre, alone, continues to plague the Lakota. The inability to actively heal it has cycled back upon itself to reinforce the wound. William K. Powers provides more explanation:

The Oglalas at Pine Ridge never quite recuperated from the grim horror of Wounded Knee. It has been only within the past decade that most of the survivors have died, and their children still live to retell their families' involvement in the massacre. It is not surprising that members of the American Indian Movement, when appealed to by the traditional faction of Oglala Sioux Tribal Council to intervene in local political matters, selected Wounded Knee as the site for the seventy-one-day protest in 1973–1974. A year earlier, approximately two hundred young adults destroyed the Wounded Knee museum adjacent to the battlefield. Indian photographs were torn, artifacts destroyed or stolen, and the interior of the museum vandalized. It was as if the young Indians were destroying that what was symbolic of their oppression and despair; the only Indians that white people knew were the Indians in books, photographs, and museums. (Powers 1977, p. 122)

Even today, too many people take as-given television westerns or characterizations of American Indians that regarded them as savages, violent, inhuman, even animals. Paulo Freire explains,

For the oppressors, [. . .] it is always the oppressed (whom they obviously never call 'the oppressed' but—depending on whether they are fellow countrymen or not—'those people' or 'the blind and envious masses' or 'savages' or 'natives' or 'subversives') who are disaffected, who are 'violent', 'barbaric', 'wicked', or 'ferocious' when they react to the violence of the oppressors. (Freire 2007, p. 56)

Freire reasons that oppression maintains its grip partly because the group fears further oppression by the oppressors (Freire 2007, p. 47). We see this in Oglala history: when they fought back, more severe punishments were leveled against them and massacres such as Wounded Knee occurred or were more likely to occur because the U.S. government became more trigger happy in responding to indications of fighting back, failure to concede to demands (or treaties being broken), or not acting quickly enough when ordered.

After the Wounded Knee Massacre, the Oglala never died out; they never went away. Some 50,000 live on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. Over the last few decades, the Oglala have been re-energizing their ethos. They face challenges. It remains one of the poorest places in the United States.¹⁹ Housing is inadequate and in gravely short supply. Some roads remain unpaved. Some homes lack plumbing or even electricity; many lack adequate insulation and are compromised by mold, asbestos, and other environmental toxins. Medical care can be difficult to obtain. Some children's education does not exceed the 8th grade. Addiction to alcohol or drugs is not uncommon. The unemployment rate hovers around 75%. The suicide rate among the young people is at least four times the national average. The tribal government has proved corrupt on more than one occasion, providing handouts to family members and neglecting the people. And the U.S. Government has never fulfilled treaties that the Lakota signed in good faith.

A problem with stereotypes is that they reach into the "real world" for proof. Drug and alcohol addiction are, indeed, a crisis-level problem. We must, however, question how much of this crisis rests in the Lakota nation's historical trauma or "haunting". We must ask the same of the suicide rate. Are not these crises fueled by an ongoing oppression of the Oglala and their culture? Keith Janis, a

¹⁹ According to the U.S. Department of the Interior's 2014 *Draft Report for Purpose of Tribal Consultation* (U.S. Government Printing Office 2014), "the per-capita income is less than \$8000 a year". As of 2016, City-data.com, an online compiler of publicly available data, reports that over 50% of Pine Ridge residents are below the national poverty level (City-data.com 2018).

vocal Lakota activist, recounts a recent visit to a hotel in Rapid City, SD, where a woman called him and his family “filthy Indians”. “My beautiful Lakota granddaughter,” says Janis, “she had to hear that. Our kids today just want to die because they’re sick of all this oppression” (qtd. in (Boseman 2015)). Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart et al. explain more: “Another part of the process of alleviating the emotional suffering of Indigenous Peoples is validating the existence of not only the traumatic history but the continuing oppression. The Lakota, for instance, share the challenges of mourning mass graves, of the lack of proper burials, of massive collective traumatic losses, and of ongoing oppression and discrimination” (Brave Heart et al. 2011, p. 287). Duran and Duran, too, point out,

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 genuine power—the 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 self-hatred can be either internalized or externalized. (Duran and Duran 1995, p. 29)

Freire supports what Duran and Duran have illustrated: an oppressed people can be brought to internalize the narrative imposed upon them. The narrative “that they are sick, lazy, and unproductive” becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy: “in the end they become convinced of their own unfitnes” (Freire 2007, p. 63). As the first American Indian woman to receive a PhD in Philosophy, V. F. Cordova speaks with considerable authority. In describing the imposition of EuroAmerican culture, she clarifies the internalization more: “We have come to take Euroman for granted as a part of our landscape—we don’t bother to raise questions and his ‘reality’ or ‘validity.’ Instead, *we question ourselves*” (Cordova 2007, p. 52; emphasis added).

Duran and Duran continue to explain how suicide, alcoholism, domestic violence are manifestations of oppression, since any resistance against the EuroAmerican (e.g., protests against the Keystone pipeline, mascots, etc.) was, and continues to be, immediately put down with violent, even military or police-state responses or threats of violence (Duran and Duran 1995, p. 29). So when Oglala like Keith Janis discuss the ongoing oppression, EuroAmericans need to realize the oppression, and the depth of the soul wound.

We can see once this wound is inflicted, the culture can reflect such a wound in manifestations such as those we see in the Oglala: higher than average suicides, alcoholism, domestic abuse, and so on. These can be seen as an attempt to manage such a wound, to feel powerful, or in control. Perhaps part of the ongoing trauma is “For American Indians the United States is the perpetrator of our holocaust” (Brave Heart and DeBruyn 1998, p. 65). They continue,

We assert the historical view of American Indians as being stoic and savage contributed to a dominant societal belief that American Indian people were incapable of having feelings. This conviction intimates that American Indians had no capacity to mourn and, subsequently, no need or right to grieve. Thus, American Indians experienced disenfranchised grief.

Disenfranchised grief results in an intensification of normative emotional reactions such as anger, guilt, sadness, and helplessness. (Brave Heart and DeBruyn 1998, p. 67)

Les B. Whitbeck et al. write, “the ‘holocaust’ is not over for many American Indian people. It continues to affect their perceptions on a daily basis and impinges on their psychological and physical health. There has been no ‘safe place’ to begin again” (Whitbeck et al. 2004, p. 128). While the Oglala may be partly on their ancestral home, they are not safe because of having to fight for clean water, against mining companies seeking minerals, oil, and gold, and the influence of EuroAmerican culture that suggests they no longer exist. Whitbeck et al. continue, “There has been a continual, persistent, and progressive process of loss that began with military defeat and continues to today with the loss of

culture. As one elder poignantly put it: ‘I feel bad about it. Tears come down. That is how I feel. I feel weak. I feel weak about how we are losing our grandchildren. The losses are not over. They are continuing day by day’” (Whitbeck et al. 2004, p. 128).

We see these results in the Oglala Lakota today. Can we find reasons for this continuing loss? Our explorations of ethos-as-place and as-wound suggest that the land, and the people, need to complete their grieving. The sacred character of Wounded Knee demands a ceremonial healing that contains traditional ways of storytelling. For the wound to heal, it needs to be given back its capacity to speak; however, the mere telling is not enough. Rather, the Oglala Lakota must have their stories heard. From the sacred place of wounding, the Lakota call out to EuroAmericans to bear witness to that wounding and to join, by serving as witness, in bringing healing to place and people conjoined. Do the Lakotan ways of grieving differ from EuroAmericans? Yes: as Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart and Lemyra M. DeBruyn argue, “European American culture legitimizes grief only for immediate nuclear family in the current generation” (Brave Heart and DeBruyn 1998, p. 67). For the typical EuroAmerican, this would negate any understanding of the Oglala who continue to suffer the wounds from Wounded Knee and other legal and cultural abuses (which, again refers to EuroAmerican linear-temporal thinking).

In her own healing work, Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart records the grieving stories of participants. As one Oglala says,

I think losing the land was the most traumatic . . . I remember my aunts and uncles and my dad talked about . . . how they were treated, some were shot, they were telling me about that my grandmother was shot . . . They were starved You know, the big lie, that the people were forced to believe in history books, stand and salute the flag that wiped out a generation, forced into slavery, forced into their church system . . . So this happened in my great grandparents’ generation when they lost the buffalo. My grandparents’ generation lost the land and their livelihood . . . That’s from generation to generation. There are a lot of answers that I don’t have and a lot of questions that I do have and there is a lot of hurt inside me . . . Some of these things happening over the years are still happening today, like my grandparents, my great grandparents had their children moved to schools . . . I was moved, my brothers and sisters moved, my kids . . . I couldn’t watch them grow up because we were all moved. It’s the same problem happening over and over again . . . There’s a big hole in my heart. We see it happening to our grandchildren already . . . where does it stop? (qtd. in (Brave Heart 2000, p. 256))

Yet, the wound inflicted by over a hundred years of genocide, murder, and forced assimilation is undergoing a slow healing process. Refusing to assimilate and give up their heritage, the elders are teaching the youngest generations Oglala history, language, and culture while maintaining the traditional pow wows, dancing, and music—despite the ongoing misunderstandings and misrepresentations of them and their culture. The ongoing challenge for the people is to heal, to the extent that healing is possible with the ongoing oppression, the wounded memories, injustices, and pains of the past. To be more precise, the Lakotan challenge is to find ways to manage the “haunting” of genocide while being present in “the haunt” of their ecologically-sensitive culture.

To further the healing-work of the Oglala, we can look to Freire:

As the oppressors dehumanize others and violate their rights, they themselves become dehumanized. As the oppressed, fighting to be human, take away the oppressors’ power to dominate and suppress, they restore to the oppressors the humanity they had lost in the exercise of oppression.

It is only the oppressed who, by freeing themselves, can free their oppressors. (Freire 2007, p. 56)

This action of taking away the oppressors’ power can, according to Freire, be considered an act of love and humanizing, and this also acts as a form of healing.

10. Lessons in Healing

For lessons in healing, we turn to that sad chapter in European history, the Holocaust. Whereas the Jewish people and their experiences have been recognized globally, the American Indian experience remains largely ignored. This ignorance and “denial” serve as a continuation of the oppression and, yet again, deepens the wound (Duran and Duran 1995, p. 30). Whereas the Jewish people received some reparation and support from around the world, American Indians continue to be oppressed and ignored. It is little wonder why the wound cannot heal, especially when they are forced to drive by one of the greatest examples of their oppression.

Those who lived through the European Holocaust or have understanding of it recognize that trauma has a cultural as well as a psychological component. In similar fashion to the primarily Jewish victims of the Holocaust, the Lakotan victims of Wounded Knee deserve acknowledgment and an opportunity to heal, but note, too, that those victims include descendants. Moreover, part of the distinction of the WWII Holocaust is the locations of the concentration camps. Many of them are memorial sites and museums that highlight the atrocities of the Nazi regime. They, too, often support educational programs or cultural programs. For American Indians, few such sites exist and certainly no global network or educational programs are utilized. The Oglala, however, continue dwelling on the area of their greatest holocaust, with only a billboard and an oppressive culture offering as witness.

As Lacanian analyst Jean-Luc Nancy explains, “the return to the familiar abode is still the return to ethos” (Nancy 2003, p. 136). The problem for Celane Not Help Him and other Lakota, though, is that Wounded Knee offers a return, not to a place of nostalgia, peace, and domesticity, but to a burial ground. Moreover, it is this “proximity of that with which we are obsessed but that is lost to us, the proximity of that whose loss haunts us” (Nancy 2003, p. 136): in the context of Wounded Knee, the Lakotan “loss” exceeds the personal: it is not an individual, but a collective, trauma that obsesses—literally, besieges—the Oglala Lakota today. The place and the massacre at Wounded Knee become both the haunt *and* the haunting for the Oglala. Beginning in 1881, the U.S. Government prohibited the Oglala from performing its ceremonies. This prohibition continued until 1978, with the passage of the American Indian Religious Freedom Act. Thus, after the Wounded Knee Massacre, the Lakota could not, by EuroAmerican law, perform grieving ceremonies on the haunt of that slaughter. To the EuroAmerican mind, the passing of a friend or family member demands a “proper burial” with traditional rites in sacred church grounds; to be denied any of this would be declared an outrage. But again, for close to a century, the Oglala were prohibited by U.S. law (and by U.S. military might) from performing or completing their ritual mourning, not just of a friend or family member, but a large part of their community especially those massacred at Wounded Knee.

Among the first to study the cultural trauma caused by Wounded Knee was Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart, a Lakota herself. In her doctoral dissertation and subsequent work, Brave Heart has explored, and explained, how this trauma reaches across generations and is “related to a series of psychological outcomes for individuals, including unresolved grief, complicated/prolonged grief, post-traumatic stress syndrome (PTSD), and depression” (Brave Heart et al. 2011, “Historical Trauma,” p. 284). The discussion of Oglala Lakota historical trauma is necessary to better understand ethos. Through this understanding, non-Oglala can potentially learn about the damage European colonizers and their descendants (who I have called EuroAmericans) have done to indigenous peoples around the globe and find ways to support their healing of the wounds they inflicted.

There have been different ways of generating healing among American Indian populations. One example is Brave Heart’s “Historical Trauma & Unresolved Grief Tribal Best Practice” model that provides the Oglala with a means of healing. The model is composed of four areas: confronting historical trauma and embracing tribal history; understanding trauma; releasing pain; transcending the trauma. In concert, these four areas work in a circular fashion to promote healing and return the Oglala to the Sacred Path. Brave Heart believes, “the Lakota must shift from identifying with the victimization and massacre of deceased ancestors and begin to develop a constructive collective memory and a healthy collective ego, which includes traditional Lakota values and language” (Brave

Heart 2010, p. 302). To do so, she argues for two focal points: “(a) education about historical trauma would lead to increased awareness of associated affects, and (b) sharing these affects in a traditional context would provide cathartic relief” (Brave Heart 2010, p. 249). In other words, recognizing the trauma and using ceremony to heal it are avenues in managing the impact of the collective trauma.

Another method of healing, the “Honoring Children, Mending the Circle” model is a cultural adaptation of trauma-focused cognitive behavioral therapy, which was partly developed by Dolores Subia Bigfoot, a Northern Cheyenne, child psychologist, and Associate Professor at the University of Oklahoma. This is one in a series of four related models developed in coordination with the Indian Country Child Trauma Center as part of a drive to establish local programs promoting well-being among American Indian populations.²⁰

As we see, there are outlets for healing, but these are seemingly focused on one population: American Indians. It seems logical that efforts to heal only American Indians will have limited results because the *cause* of the oppression remains in effect. That cause is the dominant EuroAmerican culture and its failures to respect the *mythos*, experience, and testimony of the Oglala.

11. Conclusions: Listening and Loving

The complexity of ethos offers several concluding remarks for this essay. The recognition of ethos-as-haunt has provided insight to Oglala ethos. Oglala narrative, via *mythos*, functions as a means of carrying their ethos across time allowing it to unfold in time and space. Too often, for American Indians, such expression has been of wounds. That element of ethos was forced upon them by the actions of EuroAmericans through multiple forms of assimilation, warfare, and oppression. The ethos-as-haunt and the *mythos* of that haunt demonstrates ethos-as-wound, because it derives from events such as the Wounded Knee Massacre. Through this expression, we gain understanding of ethotic discourse, which has a primary aim of healing.

Because of this complex relationship, ethos can be seen as a process that allows a speaker or a culture or a group to emerge and gain power from that emergence. Part of this includes power over their self-image, which liberates them from oppression and promotes healing and understanding. Thus, we come to recognize a humane element of ethos as well. This humaneness aspect highlights qualities of identity and diversity within the human relationship—a respect for each of our human value. In order to exercise this functionality, however, we must be open to the expression of love and listening, which creates a sacred circle, of sorts. And for this, I turn to Paulo Freire and Jim W. Corder, but also to the Oglala Lakota and a well-known phrase among them: *Mitákuye Oyás’i*], “we are all related”.

The Lakota ethos is unified through an ecological understanding that manifests itself in their *mythos* and also, alas, in their wounds. The healing of those collective wounds is enabled by telling their stories that, again, cycle back to ecology, the land itself. The land—a specific hill, a particular gravesite, a stone tower—becomes the vessel that holds the culture, the traditions, the practices. One can argue that Lakota ethos has been in suspended animation as it struggles to heal the haunt. Part of this healing comes through ethos-as-haunt and as wound, but also through the *mythos* that Brave Heart and Bigfoot have noted—the telling of their story and the subsequent healing in its being heard.

As such, Wounded Knee can act as a metaphor for the Sacred Circle. The circle is haunt, wound, healing, and a return to haunt, which is an expression of ethos. The sacred circle is our peoples coming together and becoming part of each other, listening to each other, and learning from each other. The U.S. forced the Oglala to become part of them and this action wounded the Oglala, a wound which remains to this day. To come full circle, EuroAmericans must listen to the Oglala, hear their history, because it is true.

²⁰ Other programs are certainly growing in popularity and availability, such as the American Indian Life Skills program, which is another possibility that offers AI/AN ways of managing the effects of EuroAmerican culture, which points to traditional cultural healing, coping skills, and ways for youth to help each other.

Certainly, the models by Brave Heart and Bigfoot are useful and necessary. However, as Bigfoot notes, “The barriers to treatment include fragmented service system, limited funding, unavailable services and racism coupled with mistrust and fear of mental health treatment. [. . .] The need for appropriate and accessible mental health services in Indian country is high” (Bigfoot 2007, p. 3). Until such services and support are readily available, other action must be taken. Perhaps the most obvious might be the introduction of cultural listening by EuroAmericans. Further still, one segue may be educational settings. One starting place would be the Humanities, which can eventually filter to other disciplines such as the sciences where, as I noted earlier, EuroAmerican culture continues to neglect American Indian ecological wisdom and experience.²¹ In order to address the EuroAmerican culture’s failure to fully acknowledge nations like the Oglala, more direct educational opportunities should be explored. To be more specific, while we should support the ongoing local programs promoting well-being of American Indian nations, we fail to address the ongoing EuroAmerican misunderstanding and ignorance of them, which makes headway on an ethico scale impossible, because the oppression will only continue since it itself is not being fully or appropriately addressed within the EuroAmerican culture.

EuroAmericans must help heal the wound of the Oglala that the Westernized world caused; we must own the causation of the wound; we must help heal the wound; we must not be silent any longer. We have seen how ethos can be wounded, but now we must see how it can be healed. To do so, the recognition of ethos as healing becomes an important additional element. Robert Wade Kenny suggests:

ethos is understood as the quality of personhood that calls humanity to care for its self, its world, and its others in such a manner that the dwelling Heidegger regards as fundamental to our Being is made possible. It is not, however, a quality that is simply *in* us, like our liver or a bone; rather, it is behind us and ahead of us, and it only enters us to the extent we take it upon ourselves in the things we do. And, therefore, it is possible to distinguish a disposition toward being that is genuine from one that is not. The genuine disposition toward life is the caretaking disposition, and this is the meaning of *ethos*. It is not part of what we are, but rather *how* we are in the world. (Kenny 2004, p. 36)

As I have moved away from the static, Aristotelian model of ethos I have considered ethos-as-haunt, *mythos*, ethos-as-wound, and ethos as a means of healing. And only by listening to the Oglala work through their wound can we find a way to heal themselves, because in wounding one, oneself is wounded too.

Corder writes, “What can free us from the apparent hopelessness of steadfast arguments opposing each other? I have to start with a simple answer and hope that I can gradually give it the texture and capacity it needs: we have *to see* each other, *to know* each other, *to be present* to each other, *to embrace* each other” (Corder 1985, p. 23). Yet, Corder reveals more for us that we can filter through the conflicts between the U.S. government and EuroAmerican’s treatment of the Oglala; he writes,

²¹ The humanities are meant to explore the human condition; and yet, as Mikhail Epstein argues, the humanities “stopped being human studies and became textual studies”. He continues:

No one now seems to expect anything from the humanities except readings and re-readings, and, first and foremost, criticism rather than creativity and suspicion rather than imagination. As a result, the humanities are no longer focusing on human self-reflection and self-transformation. (Epstein 2012, p. 2)

Further, as Baumlin and Meyer note, “it’s been a long time since the humanities *mattered* socially or politically” (Baumlin and Meyer 2018). Now is the time to bring other voices into the EuroAmerican educational collective conversations about what it means to *be* human, so we (all) can be *more human* because we (all) are missing too much of our collective story; it has been drowned out by one overwhelming narrative, that of EuroAmerican colonization, (so-called) advancement, and civilization. The wounds of the Oglala are one set of wounds on one group of people, but they provide insight into the failure of colonization.

[I]n our most grievous and disturbing conflicts, we need time to accept, to understand, to love the other. At crises points in adversarial relationships, we do not, however, have time; we are already in opposition and confrontation. Since we don't have time, we must rescue time by putting it into our discourses and holding it there, learning to speak and write not argumentative displays and presentations, but arguments full of anecdotal, personal, and cultural reflections that will make plain to all others, thoughtful histories and narratives that reveal us as we're reaching for the others. The world, of course, doesn't want time in its discourses. [. . .] We must teach the world to want otherwise, to want time to care. (Corder 1985, p. 31)

Freire, too, writes of love:

Dialogue cannot exist, however, in the absence of a profound love for the world and for people. The naming of the world, which is an act of creation and re-creation, is not possible if it is not infused with love. Love is at the same time the foundation of dialogue and dialogue itself. [. . .] Because love is an act of courage, not of fear, love is commitment to others. No matter where the oppressed are found, the act of love is commitment to their cause—the cause of liberation. And this commitment, because it is loving, is dialogical. As an act of bravery, love cannot be sentimental; as an act of freedom, it must not serve as a pretext for manipulation. It must generate other acts of freedom; otherwise, it is not love. Only by abolishing the situation of oppression is it possible to restore the love which that situation made impossible. If I do not love the world—if I do not love life—if I do not love people—I cannot enter into dialogue. (Freire 2007, pp. 89–90)

Corder and Freire offer us a means to reach out to each other and listen, truly listen, to each other. EuroAmericans rushed to judge and judged harshly the Oglala, and now they must stop and listen to the damage and the pain and the trauma and the wounds they so eagerly caused as they rushed forward in the name of progress and civilization. What have we gotten from that rush forward? What do we know now that we did not know then? Or, better, *who* do we know better? Are we better? What stories have we told? What falsehoods have we perpetuated? More importantly, what stories have we listened to?

When the answers may not be forthcoming for EuroAmerican colonizers, it is time to listen. Listen to the Oglala elders and youngsters and hear their stories, their narratives, to come to care for them—to build relationships with each other. And so, I conclude with words from Russell Means, an Oglala raised on Pine Ridge, because he offers insight into *Lakol Wicohan* and *Mitákuye Oyás'íŋ*:

I came to understand that life is not about race or culture or pigmentation or bone structure—it's about *feelings*. That's what makes us human beings. We all feel joy and happiness and laughter. We all feel sadness and ugliness and shame and hurt. [. . .] Nobody cares who has the best reason to suffer. If you're rich and hurting, you feel no different than someone who is poor and hurting. Then I realized that if the human family has all the same feelings, all any of us should worry about is how to deal with them. [. . .] Deal with feelings and relationships. The cultures of every indigenous society in the world are based on improving relationships—the individual's connection with the dolphin, a wolf, an eagle, a tree, a rock, a spider or a snake or lizard, with other human beings, with the clouds and with the wind. (Means 1995, p. 531)

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