Clown for Change - Cartoonist Marty Two Bulls as a Modern Heyoka

Sonja John[1]

Abstract

Most Native American societies have trickster stories and roles which are used as an instrument for negotiating moral behavior. In Lakota country, the heyoka *fulfills the clownish role to address taboos and sensitive issues. The late Severt Young Bear, Sr. noted that the* heyoka *no longer exists. Against this position, this article argues that the role and function of the traditional* heyoka *lives on in different art forms through highlighting the work of the renowned Oglala Lakota cartoonist Marty Two Bulls. By addressing sensitive issues like alcohol consumption in a humorous way, Two Bulls offers a space for new interpretations and renegotiation. In the past, due to the close link between representation and identity, Native cultural self-understanding has been adversely affected by stereotypes, most prominently the stereotype of the drunk Native. As a matter of cultural revitalization, Two Bulls uses this same interconnection as an opportunity for initiating change and encouraging Lakota to reclaim control over their lives. Through the lens of Native humor as a methodological tool to analyze cartoons, this article presents an example of how cultural productions can serve as an interpretive instrument and as a tool for tribal self-presentation.*

Keywords: Native Humor, Lakota, Indigeneity, *heyoka*, Marty Two Bulls, Whiteclay

[1] Dr. Sonja John, Assistant Professor, Political Science and International Studies, Bahir Dar University, Ethiopia. Contact: sonja.z.john@gmail.com

Communicating through Humor

Everybody familiar with Indian Country is also familiar with common daily joking and teasing.[2] Since time immemorial, Native American communities have been using humor for social cohesion, as a survival tool and as a means to facilitate self-awareness and shape identity (Johansen, 2005, p. 1). Amusing stories and anecdotes are a means of reinforcing and reminding in-group members of the cultural values and unspoken rules by which they live. Among the Lakota, the trickster appears in stories as a coyote or *Iktomi* (spider) (Stars et al., 1978), whereas the clownish figure of the institutionalized role of the public teaser is performed by the *heyoka*. The *heyoka* would use humor and ridicule in order to create a space to reflect on the fine lines between conventional conduct and unacceptable behavior.

Superintendents and missionaries, scared of the subversive and archaic nature of the *heyoka*, recognized how dangerous Native humor could be to their colonial interests. The Bureau of Indian Affairs soon banned Native clowns along with their ceremonies as part of its Religious Crimes Codes of 1883. This Code gave agency superintendents the authority to use force or imprisonment to stop practices they felt were immoral, subversive, or counter to government assimilation policies. As a result, the Oglala Lakota cultural expert and practitioner Severt Young Bear remarks: "That humor is no longer there; the *heyoka* is missing. ... That funny middleman isn't there to use humor to keep that respect and honor in balance. The fun side of it all is gone" (Young Bear & Theisz, 1994, pp. 171f.). However, as I argue here, humor as a social corrective and educational function has not disappeared but is today visible in diverse art forms. The *heyoka* is not absent; she—or he—has shifted shape and uses different media to perform her functions. Today, she appears as a comedian, writer, musician or—what will be the focus of this text—a cartoonist.

Contemporary publicly displayed Native humor gains attention in novels, film and in the performances of Native stand-up comedians. The wide availability of the internet in Indian Country has given rise to Native YouTube stars and the circulation of memes. Most Native humor, however, is shared in media of a much smaller scale in the form of jokes, cartoons or funny anecdotes at social gatherings and in Native journals and newspapers. Since 2002, the Lakota cartoonist Marty Two Bulls has been producing weekly cartoons for *Indian Country Today* with reprints appearing in other Native American publications and shares in social media. His drawings address a wide range of themes covered in the news. However, one topic that has been reappearing over the past years is the highly controversial subject of alcohol consumption on the—officially—dry Pine Ridge Reservation; in his cartoons Two Bulls jokingly questions the blaming of the border town Whiteclay for profiting immensely from liquor sales to Lakota customers.

[2] This chapter is based on a paper presented at the Native American and Indigenous Studies Conference, Austin, TX, in 2014.

The chapter "Indian Humor" in Vine Deloria's book *Custer Died for Your Sins* contains the first reading of contemporary Native humor that exceeds a narrowly anthropological approach although it is rather of anecdotal character. In this chapter on political humor, Deloria notes that "the more desperate the problem is, the more humor is directed to describe it" (Deloria, 1969, p. 147). Likewise, when reservation residents repeatedly motioned to shut down the liquor stores in the border town of Whiteclay or when the Oglala Sioux Tribe attempted to sue beer companies for the harmful effects of alcohol consumption and addiction, Two Bulls critically commented on these events through his drawings. When I saw his cartoons and, more stunningly, the effects they have on his audience, they reminded me of Severt Young Bear's description of the *heyoka.* Like the *heyoka*, Two Bulls enables people to laugh about themselves as a group, and, as a result, he enables dialogue of uncomfortable issues.

This analysis explores the ways in which a Native cartoonist weighs in in the debate around the highly political and sensitive subject of alcohol consumption through the use of humor. Selected relevant cartoons undergo textual analysis and a two-fold contextualization within existent literature on Native humor on the one hand and in regards to political decision-making on the other. Readers reception and responses were captured through semi-structured interviews and field notes. The lens of Native humor is applied as a methodological tool to analyze the cartoons to highlight how cultural productions can serve as an interpretive instrument and as a tool for tribal self-presentation. I propose that humorous responses to controversial issues can be understood in terms of traditional Lakota ethics around communication. Two Bulls uses cartoons to explore alternative perspectives to look at present-day troubles and to open up a venue for dialogue by means of indirect and humorous communication. This dialogue also includes criticism of Two Bull's work. Depicting drinking Natives and urging them to "just stop drinking!" was condemned as inherently "colonialist" (Eaton, 2013, 6). This article explores how Two Bulls' call to personal responsibility is linked to an insistence on tribal self-determination and, hence, responsibility on a collective level. This connection, I argue, could be used to pose a counter-argument to the critique of Two Bulls as being "colonialist."

This article is organized into four parts. In the first part, I will outline some key elements of Native American humor, defined by literary scholar Eva Gruber as "humor created by Native people that reflects and shapes aspects of Native as well as Euro-American life and culture" (2009, p. 40). Here, I will also delineate the characteristics of the *heyoka*'s role in order to determine how far the Oglala Lakota cartoonist Marty Two Bulls applies humor as a traditional communicative strategy in a contemporary setting. In the second part, I will briefly summarize the history of the alcohol prohibition on the Pine Ridge Reservation and how the border town of Whiteclay is connected to this matter. These analyses serve to complicate the multiple meanings and impacts of Two Bulls' drawings on this subject. In the third part, I will apply these insights in order to analyze Two Bulls' alcohol cartoons with the language that Indigenous literary critics, postcolonial and feminist theorists offer. By the end of this article, it should be clear that the cartoonist acts out the role of a modern *heyoka*, mirroring behavior and reminding individuals as well as collectivities of how they are responsible for their actions.

Functions of Humor and Roles of the *Heyoka*

One main aim of humorous action is, of course, to entertain and amuse the audience. At its core, however, lie certain common social functions: pedagogical, therapeutic and critical components. In the following sections, I will outline these functions of humor in general and of Native humor more specifically. This elaboration serves to identify the humorous elements of the Lakota *heyoka* to later determine to what extent these aspects are reflected within the work of Marty Two Bulls.

Pedagogical

Internally directed humor aims at promoting or prohibiting particular behaviors. Approval or disapproval of certain characteristics and actions are expressed in a funny way in order to mark them as appropriate or inappropriate within a certain context. As such, humor acts as a device for social control. For the renegotiation of Nativeness within Indigenous communities, humor is enlisted not only as a device for social control, but also to express approval or disapproval of certain characteristics and actions in order to mark them as proper or unacceptable within a particular conceptualization of Nativeness. In effect, such humor serves to foster or prohibit a particular behavior: When someone is laughed at disapprovingly for doing or saying something, the embarrassment created by that situation will most likely keep them from repeating the action.

Just as in Vine Deloria's younger years, teasing as a means of intra-group control is still omnipresent in Native America: "Rather than embarrass members of the tribe publicly, people used to tease individuals they considered out of step with the consensus of tribal opinion. In this way, egos were preserved and disputes of a personal nature within the tribe were held to a minimum" (Deloria, 1969, p. 147). A camouflaged code of conduct, teasing discretely holds up a mirror to transgressors.

Part of the pedagogical function of humor includes shaping both the image and the self-image of the group, which, in turn ultimately influences the negotiation of group identity. In intra-group conversations about group identity, humor serves as a "social lubricant" (Lewis, 1989, p. 36). Native identity, however, has been shaped by sociohistorical conditions of subalternity to a substantial degree. Through the close links between representation and identity, Native cultural self-understanding has, in the past, been adversely affected by stereotypes. Native people, in the vein of DuBoisian "double consciousness," are aware of the "Indian" stereotypes held by mainstream society. Hence, Indigenous people not only constantly imagine themselves, they also literally reimagine themselves. One of the most important activities in the process of reimagining tribal identity and Nativeness is the use of humor. Eva Gruber (2009) has persuasively examined how contemporary Native American literary writers interfere with the one-dimensional representations of "the Indian" and Native-white history on various levels. Gruber illuminates how Indigenous authors like Gerald Vizenor, Drew Hayden Taylor or Sherman Alexie (amongst others) reclaim representational sovereignty by directly defying the stereotype of the stoic, humorless Native through texts about characters that are not only multidimensional but also deeply humorous. These amusing texts can facilitate a process of reimagining Native identity by de-familiarizing one's expectations of more

stereotypical figures. The Anishinaabe writer and critic Gerald Vizenor calls this process of reformulating Nativeness "narrative recreation" (1994, p. 6). Thanks to the inherent power of language and images Indigenous writers reclaim their representational sovereignty through media such as literary texts, comedies or cartoons. It is often the case that humor not only figures as an agent in forming identity in an intra-group conversation but also aims at overcoming misrepresentations through reimagining tribal identity and creating "alterNative" (Drew Heyden Taylor, 2000) cultural representations. In this way humor surely embodies therapeutic aspects of societal dialogue.

Therapeutical

A lot of Indigenous humor functions as a catharsis in the face of oppression; whether it be contemporary or historical. In general, the sociohistorical condition of subalternity shapes Native humor to a substantial degree. Paula Gunn Allen (1992, p. 193) was one of the first Native American writers to problematize Native identity formation in the light of continuous misrepresentation: "The colonizers' previsions of our lives, values and histories have devastated us at the most critical level of all—that of our minds, our sense of who we are." Hence, she argues, Indigenous people must reclaim their power over image casting and image control, "for on that control rests our sense of self, our claim to a past and to a future that we define and we build" (p. 192). As the feminist and postcolonial writer bell hooks has pointed out, the colonized mind starts its liberating process with visualizing itself in a liberated reality: "To image, then, was a way to begin the process of transforming reality" (hooks, 1991, pp. 54f.). The act of "talking back" is more than speaking, to hooks it is defying the object position and claiming the subject position. "Moving from silence into speech is for the oppressed, the colonized, the exploited, and those who stand and struggle side by side, a gesture of defiance that heals, that makes new life, and new growth possible" (hooks, 1990, p. 340). As such, critical reflection serves as "cultivating strategies that would ensure survival in the face of abuse" (hooks, 1991, p. 54). In Native America, joking and teasing are often the first steps in this process.

Survival and survivance humor connote activity and resistance. They preserve one's culture in the face of threatening external domination and they actively strengthen group solidarity. In *Custer Died for Your Sins*, Vine Deloria notes: "Humor, all Indians will agree, is the cement by which the coming Indian movement is held together. When a people can laugh at themselves and laugh at others and hold all aspects of life together without letting anybody drive them to extremes, then it seems to me that that people can survive" (Deloria, 1969, p. 168). Taking the problems that arise from being rather powerless with a grain of trickster salt can enable Indigenous people to transform traumatic experiences into subjects of communal laughter. Eva Gruber has acknowledged the empowering and transformative power of humor: "Without ever downplaying the tragic consequences of colonization, humor imaginatively encourages intercultural communication in a minefield of mutual historical and contemporary infringements. It is disruptive, shaking loose fixed meanings and interpretations" (Gruber, 2009, p. 130). Hence, Native humor has the capacity to act as a coping strategy and to promote healing from different kinds of trauma, including the destructive effects of alcoholism.

Yet, Native humor cannot merely be considered a responding survival mechanism to a dominant society because the method of humor is older than white settlement in the Americas. Viewing Native humor only as a paradigm of "writing back" means reducing Native humor to a response to the Euro-American presence in the Americas. In pre-contact times, however, humor has already fulfilled its diverse institutional roles, among them the role to address critical, controversial and sensitive issues.

Critical

Humor is the instrument of choice in addressing essentially dreadful situations within Native communities. Hence, poverty is a constant topic in the countless jokes on commodities such as food, rez (reservation) cars, substandard housing and the Indian Health Service. Themes around alcoholism are comically dealt with in numerous novels and short stories by Native American authors. These include *Reservation Blues* by Sherman Alexie's (1996), *Body Indian* by Hanay Geiogamah (1980, pp. 3-44) or Drew Hayden Taylor's comedy *The Bootlegger Blues* (1993).

Oftentimes, works on critical issues are written as satire. Satire not only exposes the images or ideas themselves to liberating and literally "unsettling" laughter; it also discloses their underlying (hypocritical and biased) assumptions. Satire works towards reassessment, humorously provoking a reevaluation of previously held opinions and ideas. Satire attacks not only degrading images or ideas as such but also the ontology and epistemologies on which they are based. Gruber finds satire's secret lie in the mélange of two central aspects: "By being entertaining, it holds the readers' attention despite addressing controversial issues; it allows for criticism by making it more palatable" (Gruber, 2009, p. 60).

In Lakota society, a strong cultural prohibition against making direct or angry accusations prevails. There simultaneously exists a need to tell and a sense that one should not tell. Storytelling and humor offer responses to this dilemma by giving the means to show pain, anger, and criticism in a non-confrontational way. Traditionally, the *heyoka* fulfilled the role of the public teaser who could address controversial and sensitive issues.

Although humorous interaction and institutionalized figures of jokers and teasers are found across cultural boundaries, specific cultural meanings and styles of communication can influence the way in which their social roles are manifested. In defining the functions of the *heyoka*, I follow descriptions that exceed narrowly ethnographic accounts and instead focus on sacred and ceremonial aspects. I am aware that some anthropologists might reject the broad perception of a *heyoka* adopted here. This could be especially true if one sticks to exotic ethnographic accounts of spiritual and mythical events linked to the dreaming of thunder (Lame Deer & Erdoes, 1972, pp. 236f.) or if someone comprehends traditional stories on *heyoka*—like *Heyoka Kagapi Kin*—only in their literal sense (Stars et al., 1978, pp. 246f.). In these instances, nobody who does not prepare puppy soup or has dreamt of thunder and lightning can qualify for the role of *heyoka*.

Severt Young Bear, conversely, offers a broader observation of the *heyoka*'s deeds, functions, and roles. In his book *Standing in the Light—A Lakota Way of Seeing*, co-written with Ronnie Theisz, the Oglala Lakota Young Bear describes the *heyoka* as a joking middleman performing his social role in public to maintain a balance of respect and honor while addressing controversial issues. Young Bear explains that men are given certain powers when they dream of *wakinyan,* of thunder, which turns them into medicine men who then behave in a deviant way (Young Bear & Theisz, 1994, p. 20). At social dances (powwows), for instance, they would imitate and caricature people; they would dance backwards, fall down or dance awkwardly. They would wear clownish costumes with big noses and big bellies or rear ends. Young Bear notes: "We use humor in general because it brings people together and reminds them that they are still only human beings" (p. 174).

When I saw Marty Two Bulls' cartoons in the newspaper *Indian Country Today,* they reminded me of Severt Young Bear's description of the *heyoka.* Like the *heyoka*, Two Bulls enables people to laugh about themselves as a group, and, as a result, he enables dialogue. The Oglala Lakota journalist and editor Charles Trimble also assumes Two Bulls as fulfilling the role of the *heyoka*. In the chapter about the role of editorial cartoonists entitled *Heyokas in the World of Indian Journalism*, Trimble writes: "An editorial cartoonist must have the mind and soul of a Heyoka, and the trickster spirit of Iktomi, or coyote, or raven or any of those wonderful critters that Indian cultures have used throughout the centuries to puncture egos and bigotry with humor. He must also have the courage of Crazy Horse to stand up to the bigots and bullies he has vanquished with humor and ridicule" (Trimble, 2013, 4). Such a talent, he notes, is possessed by Marty Two Bulls.

By analyzing his caricatures which comment on the controversial debate around the topic of alcohol legalization on the Pine Ridge Reservation, I intend to point out the pedagogical, therapeutic and critical aspects of his cartoons. Prior to this, a brief summary of the alcohol ban on the Pine Ridge Reservation will help to contextualize the cartoons.

Whiteclay—Beer, Blaming and Bullying

Since its creation in 1889, alcohol has been legally banned from the Pine Ridge Reservation with only a short interruption of the ban during the 1970s. The debate on whether to legalize alcohol on Pine Ridge has never ceased. After all, it is not a secret that the ban was never actually in place since the reservation has never been dry. The only ones benefitting from the prohibition, it seems, are bootleggers and the liquor stores in the border town of Whiteclay, Nebraska, just south of the Pine Ridge reservation. The four liquor stores in the unincorporated town of eight residents sell an estimate of 3.5 million cans of beer a year to Pine Ridge residents (Rooks, 2017, 20). Surprisingly suddenly, after decades of protests, the liquor stores were effectively closed on April 22, 2017, when the Nebraska State Liquor Commission unanimously decided to deny the renewal of licenses to the Whiteclay businesses (1).

The 50-square mile area within the state of Nebraska, formerly known as the Whiteclay Extension, is actually the source of an interesting piece of the history of the Pine Ridge Reservation. In 1982, at the urging of Indian agents and Lakota elders, U.S. President Chester A. Arthur first decreed that the area shield the reservation residents in Dakota Territory from illegal whiskey traders operating in the area. Obviously, alcohol consumption was creating undue problems among the Lakota. Consequently, in 1989, when the U.S. Congress unilaterally broke up the Dakota Territory into smaller reservations, creating the Pine Ridge Reservation, among others, it legislatively incorporated the Whiteclay Extension, formerly part of the state of Nebraska, into the described area. It was to serve as a "buffer zone" to help prevent the sale of alcohol to reservation residents and was to remain part of the reservation until its protective function was no longer needed. The Act of May 2, 1889, 25 Stat., spelled out:"Provided, that said tract of land in the State of Nebraska shall be reserved, by Executive Order, only so long as it may be needed for the use and protection of the Indians receiving rations and annuities at the Pine Ridge Agency" (Kappler, 1904, p. 888). Ironically, this exact small zone that was supposed to prevent alcohol sales to Lakota people, accounts for the facilitation of the enormous transactions today.

Until 1904, this piece of reservation land existed undisturbed for fifteen years, when U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt signed an executive order removing 49 of the 50 square miles from the reservation. As so often since the unilateral decision to stop treaty-making in 1871, the Indigenous leadership was never consulted or asked to consent. White traders then opened a post within the remaining square mile and sold alcohol; most of their customers came from the Pine Ridge Reservation. This settlement has since developed into four liquor businesses, a post office, two grocery stores, and two restaurants; all within an unincorporated settlement. Hence, disputes over Whiteclay have previously focused on two issues: first, that of tribal sovereignty over the Whiteclay Extension as rooted in treaty rights, and, second, the selling of alcohol that should be either stopped or taken advantage of by opening liquor stores on the Pine Ridge Reservation.

Though alcohol had been banned on all reservations by federal decree, the new tribal councils, established through the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934, had the opportunity to formulate their own alcohol policies. Consequently, in 1946, the Oglala Sioux Tribe Council voted for the first time to repeal the ban, calling it "a discrimination against the Indian citizens of the United States" (OST, 1946). The resolution was a case of the Oglala Sioux Tribe asserting its sovereignty but also of trying to get some control over the serious problems caused by alcohol on the reservation, even with the ban in place.

Discussions around the legalization of alcohol on Pine Ridge and the reclaiming of the territory have never ceased. A 1999 protest against beer sales at Whiteclay resulted in nine members of the new Oglala Sioux Tribe being arrested by the state of Nebraska. They challenged Nebraska officials on the grounds that according to the 1868 Fort Laramie Treaty and succeeding federal laws, the Lakota never gave up authority over the territory. They contended that their arrests were illegal since the land on which Whiteclay is established is still under the jurisdiction of the Pine Ridge Reservation and on treaty land. The Oglala Sioux Tribal Court ruled in favor of the defendants. However, in 2000, the Sheridan County

Nebraska court ruled that the defendants could be charged under local law, since Whiteclay and its border territory are part of the state of Nebraska. A final ruling can only be made by the federal court. Ultimately, it is the U.S. Congress that has the ultimate authority to establish reservation boundaries, not the states. The issue is further complicated by the fact that the U.S. Congress does not honor international treaties signed with the Lakota although the treaties should be the supreme law of the land, according to article VI, clause 2 of the U.S. constitution.

No matter how complicated the case and no matter how comparably higher or lower the actual amount of alcohol consumption is in comparison to off-reservation communities, Pine Ridge has become synonymous with alcoholism. Yet, where do these familiar and dominant representations of the drunk and helpless Native come from? Around the theme of alcohol consumption in Native communities, cultural anthropologist Gilbert Quintera has explained how "colonial knowledge functions to keep the colonized in a subjugated position relative to the colonizer" (Quintera, 2001, p. 57). He criticizes the "firewater" trope in social sciences and biomedical research that uncritically reinforces and reproduces stereotypical perceptions of Native Americans as notorious and pathological alcoholics. Quintero maps out how alcohol has been a key component in the colonial project of settling the Native North American continent. Traders and government agents used alcohol as an important key to invade and conquer physical, social, cultural and intellectual spaces inhabited by Indigenous peoples. The repetition of these patronizing stereotypes of the pathological, irresponsible, incapable and child-like Native perpetuate the notion that Native Americans are in need of government regulation or the 'white savior.' In many of his sketches, the Native American cartoonist Robert Freeman (1980) has visualized how settlers used alcohol to manipulate the Indigenous inhabitants. Interestingly, Marty Two Bulls does not appeal to victim notions within his cartoons but, on the contrary, focuses on the responsibilities of the within Lakota society itself.

Another explanation for the broad perception of Native Americans as pathological drunkards may be found in a process analogous to what Edward Said describes as Orientalism; that the mass media have contributed to the dissemination of a vast body of popular distorted knowledge about Native Americans. Such clichéd images—perpetuated through misrepresentation in novels and Hollywood films—of either the noble, stoic savage or the helpless victim—block out the immense diversity of Native cultures and deny Native people a contemporary existence. Clichéd and one-dimensional images of Natives are deeply engrained in the collective imagination. Native people, in the vein of DuBoisian "double consciousness," are aware of the stereotypes held by mainstream society.

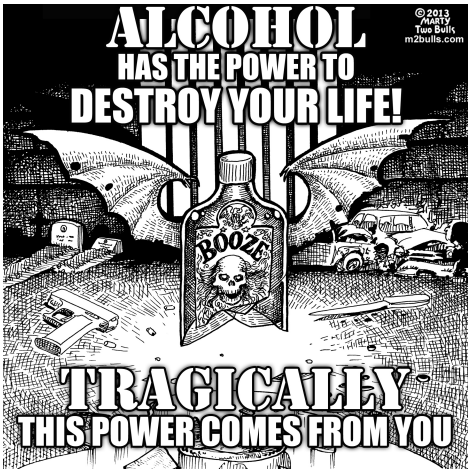
In the past years, efforts to legally lift the alcohol ban in Pine Ridge reemerged with a public referendum held in 2013 and another scheduled for 2016. However, no legal changes have been decided upon or applied. In his cartoons, Marty Two Bulls frequently satirizes alcoholism and the Whiteclay issue. In the years 2012 and 2013, two events inspired Two Bulls to address Whiteclay in his cartoons—a tribal lawsuit against the stores and major beer companies and a referendum to legalize alcohol on the reservation. In 2012, the Oglala Sioux Tribe filed a lawsuit against large beer companies and the four beer stores in the border town.

The Tribe demanded 500 million dollars in damages for the cost of health care, social services and child rehabilitation caused by chronic alcoholism on the reservation. In this debate, Marty Two Bulls takes up a rather unpopular position. The popular position in Indian Country and among allies and sympathizers reads as follows: white people destroyed the economic foundation of Lakota life, white people cause the drinking, white people profit from the business; hence, white people should pay reparations. Two Bulls, however, does not join the Native-white dichotomy of good and bad, of victim and offender. What makes his cartoons on this subject—like on other topics he addresses as well—so remarkable, unsettling, and irritating is his honest and very direct message that he unapologetically throws in the faces of his audience, as if to say: don't blame others, look at yourselves! It is no coincidence that humor is his instrument of choice because making direct accusations is not common in Lakota communities. Just as with the *heyoka* of latter days, the cartoonist takes up a clownish role when holding up the mirror to let people reflect upon their own behavior.

Reimagining Agency through Humorous Cartoons

The following cartoons were published in 2012 and 2013 in *Indian Country Today,* when the debates around legalizing alcohol in Pine Ridge and the lawsuit against beer companies and stores in Whiteclay were at their peak. Here, they serve the purpose of illustrating the pedagogical, therapeutic and critical aspects of the cartoonist's work as a modern *heyoka*.

Pedagogical



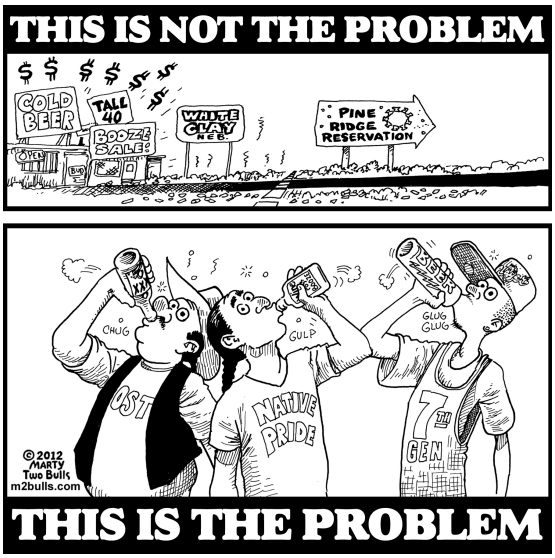
[Figures 1 and 2: A different view of who is to blame for the alcohol related tragedies. Source: Copyright by Marty Two Bulls]

These two cartoons demonstrate two central aspects of *heyoka* humor—that of internal discourse and of agency. Many of Two Bulls' drawings—not only the ones about Whiteclay and alcoholism—for the nationwide paper *Indian Country Today* tend to focus on Pine Ridge issues. The cap the man in the cartoon is wearing reveals the setting to be placed within the Oglala Sioux Tribe (OST). Two Bulls explains: "That's kind of why I started—for my people. When topics come up that affect them, I like to really do it with them in mind" (cited in Eaton, 2013). This statement reveals a community-focus, which is also specific to Indigenous humor (Weaver, 1997, p. 43). The man wearing the hat can also be interpreted as representing the whole tribe, not just individual members of it. The responsibility, in turn, also rests on a more collective rather than individual level.

Two Bulls reminds his audience that alcohol is not an actant, despite the common speech acts of "because of alcohol" or "alcohol does that." Elements from oral narration signal continuance of Native traditions in the cartoons. Instead of blaming people for their behavior, oftentimes the anonymous alcohol is blamed. Two Bulls, conversely, questions the frequent mantras. In the cartoon on the left, the drinking tribal member is having a quarrel with a humanized bottle. It seems as if they are having relationship problems. Of course, a bottle does not possess agency. But by portraying the huge bottle standing by itself, the link to wider structural forces or the usual suspects—the BIA, missionaries, boarding schools, anthropologists, or the economy—is missing. In form of the bottle, the adversary appears mythically abstract.

In the cartoon on the right Two Bulls includes dreadful situations, which, all too often, result from alcohol consumption in Pine Ridge: fatal violence and deadly traffic accidents. Hardly any family in Pine Ridge has not lost relatives in drunk driving incidents. According to Two Bulls it is not the alcohol killing people but the people themselves who are ultimately responsible for their own behavior and choices: "This power comes from you." Hence, in his function as a modern *heyoka,* he humorously attempts to apply pedagogies; he influences his audience to reconsider their choices and change their behavior accordingly. While doing so, he contributes to a decolonization of the mind with a view towards emancipating from externally imposed definitions and ideas. Drawing the cartoons in itself already constitutes an act of decolonization; since it reclaims the representational sovereignty from the colonizer. bell hooks notes: "asserting agency, even in small ways, is always the first step in self-determination. It is the place of hope" (hooks, 2013, p. 37). It is, therefore, all the more important for contemporary Native writing to contribute to a decolonization of the mind, that is, an emancipation from externally imposed definitions and ideas. Instead of accepting the role of the helpless Native as a passive victim of white imagination, Two Bulls now intervenes in the processes of image-making, creating new representations and thus ultimately "alterNative" (Taylor, 2000) perspectives.

Therapeutic



[Figures 3 and 4: Urging the Lakota to choose a healthier lifestyle.

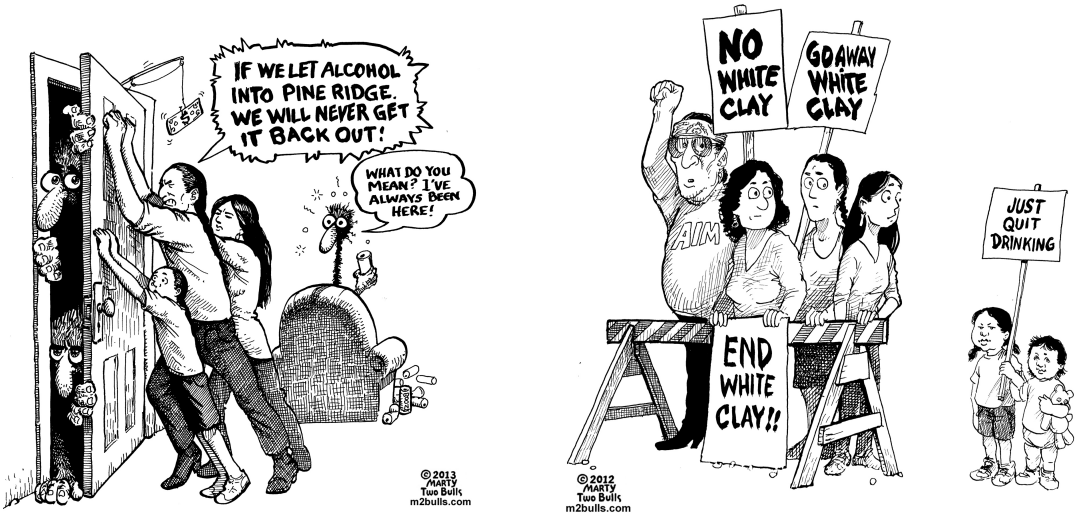
Source: Copyright by Marty Two Bulls]

Commenting on and influencing people's behaviors clearly encompass pedagogical facets and might also entail therapeutic components. Two Bulls reminds people of the responsibility they bear for their own actions. In these cartoons, he clearly spells out the root of the problem: that people are drinking. "But if we all could just quit drinking then all the Whiteclays of the world will disappear forever." He depicts a Lakota man holding two objects, a pipe symbolizing the "red road" and the bottle symbolizing the "drunken road." Which road he chooses lies literally in his own hands. Like everybody else involved in the Whiteclay issue, Two Bulls knows the history and the structural causes of alcoholism on Pine Ridge. Of course, "just quit drinking" is easier said than done. The pedagogical function, however, is not only to encourage people to sober up but also to quit blaming external forces and start to take responsibility for one's own actions. Two Bulls does not situate himself and his tribal members in a subaltern, victimized position. By holding up a mirror, Two Bulls twists the familiar depictions of the drunk and helpless Native and the frames of reference within which they are usually perceived, thus inviting readers to reconsider their initial assumptions. Hence, he disrupts familiar patterns of interpretation and turns seemingly self-evident representations on their heads. In order to overcome heteronomy, he does not only look back at the causes but he looks forward to solutions, envisioning Lakota drying out Whiteclay through pro-active behavior—through agency. Two Bulls achieves this through working with de-familiarization, denying the audience the option to see things, ideas, or actions through the lens of their accustomed and pre-conceived interpretations.

In a different art form, Marty Two Bulls wrote an article in which he put "red-road/drunken-road" dichotomy more explicitly: "Our world is a Sun Dance of hunger and thirst, so it should be fitting that we sacrifice as well. If we, as individual tribal members, made just one sacrifice for the good of our people, to quit drinking alcohol, then all the Whiteclays of our world would go away. We could then pick ourselves up and build something from these ruins, something our great-grandchildren could be proud of" (Two Bulls, 2013, 28). In the cartoon on the right, you see three people drinking. They effectively symbolize the whole reservation population: the OST establishment as well as sympathizers and members of the American Indian Movement in their "Native Pride" gear, as well as the younger generation (7th Generation) that accounts for the majority of reservation residents. Two Bulls points out the hypocrisy of everybody blaming the beer sellers while so many are buying from them and consuming the beverages. How right he was became evident after the businesses in Whiteclay were closed in April 2017. Since then, Pine Ridge residents witnessed an increase of bootleggers on the reservation and, consequently, an increase of alcohol accessibility (interviews and field notes, July 2017).

Critical

As Immanuel Kant (1976, p. 276) and Arthur Schopenhauer (1977, p. 183) have pointed out, humor relies on incongruity; offering a surprising shift of perspective enables the audience to transcend their accustomed ideas and culturally determined assumptions. Laughter, relying on shared assessment, unconsciously generates a bond of understanding and consensus across contested terrain. Through its differentiating qualities, humor allows the cartoonist to point to prevalent problems like alcoholism in a way that transcends the binary choice of either trivializing these issues or resorting to the "tragic mode" that Anishinaabe writer and critic Gerald Vizenor cautions against (Vizenor, 1989; 1994). In this manner, Two Bulls comically broaches anxieties and divisive subjects and looks beyond imposed stereotypes.



[Figures 5 and 6: Stating the obvious that many seem to overlook.
Source: Copyright by Marty Two Bulls]

The debate about the OST law suit against Whiteclay beer stores and beer companies again brought up the idea about legalizing alcohol on the reservation. Initiators and supporters of the campaign to lift the alcohol ban argued that de-criminalizing drinking will have positive effects on ("responsible") drinking behavior and that the tribe could successfully tap into the alcohol business; the revenues gained could be allocated to addressing local needs, including an alcohol treatment center (Simmons-Richie, 2014). The defenders of the ban argued that alcohol would be uncontrollable once legalized; it would increase the amount and intensity of chronic alcoholism in Pine Ridge. In the cartoon depicted here on the left, Two Bulls reminds readers that alcohol is already there, is already part of daily life and in people's homes. In an interview, Two Bulls indicated that he enjoys pointing out the obvious on some of the controversial issues (Eaton, 2013). In August 2013, a slight majority of Oglala Lakota tribal members voted "Yes" to the legalization of alcohol on the Pine Ridge Reservation. However, no resolution has been adopted by the Oglala Sioux Tribal Council and a new referendum has been scheduled and re-scheduled since, according to Ellen Fillspipe, member of the tribal council and of OST's Law and Order Committee (interview, 2016).

In the above right cartoon satirizing the Whiteclay issue, Two Bulls draws four adults huddled around a picket line with signs denouncing the town. Two young children stand nearby holding their own sign: "Just quit drinking," it says. To include two watching children has two direct effects. For once, it reminds people that they are role models and their behavior will be copied. Secondly, children speaking out the simple truth make it evident that the case is not so difficult and complicated as one could make it appear. It is a typical *heyoka* move. Two Bulls explains: "These illustrations show the sometimes hypocritical nature of tribal members. If everyone quit drinking, then Whiteclay would go away. It's simplistic. It's the way a child would look at the problem, but ... a lot of times the simplest answers are the hardest to face because of that person in the mirror" (cited in Eaton, 2013, p. 6). Inevitably, to apply these stereotypes to themselves in parody and mocking laughter not only exposes the distorting and erroneous outside views to ridicule; it also draws the group together.

How Two Bulls reimagines the topic of Native alcoholism depicts a mode of representation that neither ignores nor tries to exclude earlier representations. Instead of pointing to the shortcomings of previous depictions of "the drunken Indian" or trying to deconstruct them, the cartoons work with previous representations and familiar frames of reference in a transformative process. Within a context of oppressive structures, the imagination constitutes a space in which the affected groups themselves can formulate alternatives to their present situation. In the context at hand, the imagination is a way for Lakota people to conceive of themselves in terms different from the "drunken Indian" representations they had been restricted to in the past. Humor, thus, serves as a cohesive power in terms of identification, and it constitutes an instrument for revising or asserting group values, a function that ultimately helps communities adapt to social and cultural changes. When Two Bulls draws to bring about change, he aligns himself with a long-standing tradition of what Native Studies scholar Jace Weaver calls "communitist"—a neologism coined from "community" and "activist" in reference to Native writing that proactively commits to Native communities (Weaver, 1997, p. 43). Communitist approaches always aim at survivance. Survival and

survivance qualities of Native humor embody Native people's defiance against emotionally surrendering to colonization by giving in to self-pity. Instead, through self-determined and oftentimes self-directed laughter, Native people defy the colonially assigned role of the tragic victim. "It's that humor that helps Native people get through some of their troubles," Two Bulls said: "We're the poorest in the nation but we can still joke about it" (cited in Eaton, 2013, p.18).

While Marty Two Bulls does not completely replace the existent misrepresentations of all Natives as excessive drinkers, he works towards reassessing previously held opinions of the tragic, helpless Native. Thus, he interferes with the one-dimensional representations of the Native as his cartoons defy this stereotype through images that are deeply humorous—and consequently complex and multi-dimensional. However, Two Bulls has faced criticism for his approach and was himself caricatured as a colonizer (Eaton, 2013, p. 6). Similarly, Native texts by Sherman Alexie or Adrian Louis working with such a style of humor have also been accused of being self-destructive and self-deprecatory and perpetuating the image of the "doomed savage" (Owens, 1998, p. 76). While he is contributing to an internal discourse, Two Bulls uses a medium that is widely accessible. Hence, he has been criticized for perpetuating the stereotype of the drunk Native by depicting the issue in his cartoons. As for offending people, Two Bulls states that is just part of the profession: "If you don't get people mad, you're not doing your job" (cited in Eaton, 2013, p. 20). Authors, comedians and cartoonists acknowledge the complexity and very humanity of Native people through their humorous depictions of the strengths and weaknesses of Native characters and communities. Through (humorous) processes or re-contextualization or de-familiarization, the cartoons subsequently twist familiar depictions and the frames of reference within which they are usually perceived, thereby tricking viewers into a reconsideration of their initial assumptions. Two Bulls does not only offer a different view on alcoholism itself but also of the so called helpless victims. Thus, accustomed patterns of interpretation and identification are comically disrupted and seemingly self-evident representations turned on their heads.

Conclusion

Like the *heyoka* traditionally, Marty Two Bulls contributes to the negotiation of controversial topics in two essential ways. He puts taboos on the agenda, and he opens up new perspectives. His cartoons continue the tradition of teaching through humor, of making the audience stumble, laugh, and reconsider, to read between the lines and to reexamine their frames and references. The humor in Two Bulls' cartoons embodies Native people's defiance against emotionally surrendering to the colonially assigned role of the tragic victim. By offering diverse, complex and comically self-critical depictions of Lakota characters and communities, the cartoons provide Lakota people with opportunities to re-imagine themselves in a more wholesome way. As the cartoons under discussion make apparent, they do indeed humorously reimagine Nativeness in order to "return [it] to the real more fully," as is phrased by bell hooks (1991, p. 55). In this way, the cartoons take a part in helping Native people to simultaneously confront and cope with colonial realities and legacies. By humorously

addressing sensitive issues, Two Bulls' cartoons offer a space beyond the binary choices of resistance and reconciliation. This space accommodates various alternative versions, leaving room for new interpretations and renegotiation. Through humor, tradition itself may be presented as flexible and alive rather than as a rigid eth-nostalgic principle.

Therefore, I conclude, there is good reason to view the cartoonist Marty Two Bulls as fulfilling the role of a modern *heyoka*. These cartoons take part in a process that Gerald Vizenor calls "narrative recreation" (1994, p. 6). In a *heyoka*-like fashion Two Bulls shows tribal members how they are behaving. The cartoons under discussion do indeed humorously "re-imagine" (Weaver, 1997, p. 45) Lakota reality. Two Bulls shatters the existing acceptance of representations of helpless "drunken Indians," victims of the evil alcohol and offers "AlterNatives." These alternative Natives are Lakota who take control of their lives, which includes getting a more realistic understanding of the root causes of alcohol problems in Pine Ridge and Whiteclay. Two Bulls' call to personal responsibility is linked to an insistence on tribal self-determination. This connection, I argue, counters the critique of Two Bulls as being "colonialist." To the contrary, Two Bulls uses this same interconnection, as an opportunity for initiating change. He insists not only on individual agency but also on tribal self-determination and on taking responsibility on a collective level.

Heyoka humor is more than mere entertaining and amusing clowning. It is essentially a form of pedagogical, therapeutic and critical humor that exists in contemporary Native literature and culture, thus, continuing a long tradition of Native (ritual) clowning and humorous performances. The "funniness" in some teleological humor may be harder to appreciate, especially where it addresses tragic issues like the detrimental effects and social ills resulting from alcohol consumption; yet, this kind of humor clearly serves most effectively to reimagine depressing situations, deal with them and possibly change them. Four years after Marty Two Bulls has critically and comically commented on the demand to close the businesses in Whiteclay, the stores have lost their licenses. In his cartoons, he reminded people that alcohol related problems will not go away when Whiteclay is closed but only when people stop drinking. He envisions Lakota drying out Whiteclay through pro-active behavior—through agency. At the end, Whiteclay was closed through state action. With Whiteclay closed and more bootleggers on the reservation, the *heyoka* was proven right. He is still needed to hold up the mirror for people to reflect upon their actions and become able to see the comical side of it all.

While this institution of the subversive trickster remains, the arena has changed drastically. The public arena Two Bulls in which acts is online accessible to everybody, to readers who might understand his strategy of simplifying and moralizing but also to readers who might use these depictions for their own agenda—and verify their assumption of the tragic Native to intervene in Indigenous affairs. Hence, new questions emerge: if the *heyoka* corrects in-group social behavior, how does this function change within a medium that is accessible to a large number of non-group members via internet? What are the challenges for the modern *heyoka* in today's Lakota society—a society that is more open, more vulnerable and more interrelated than ever?

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