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Araştırma Makalesi

**THE TRICKSTER FIGURE AND ENVIRONMENTAL IDENTITY IN THOMSON
HIGHWAY'S KISS OF THE FUR QUEEN**

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Abstract

This research examines the character of the Fur Queen as an archetypal trickster figure in Tomson Highway's Kiss of the Fur Queen from the perspectives of ecofeminism and postcolonialism. This study explains the concept of identity conflict by integrating the insights of Spivak's postcolonial theory with the conceptual framework of ecofeminism articulated by Shiva. In the novel, Highway creates the Fur Queen as a female trickster, symbolizing wisdom and healing, directly subverting the engrained suppressive norms set by the dominant colonial powers. In postcolonial societies, the trickster figure is widely lauded for her capacity to effect change and challenge the societal norms imposed by colonial forces. This research contributes to the recovery of ancient female symbols by describing the trickster figure as a symbol of environmental identity, which can transform social identity and play a more significant role in one's sense of self and worldview as a person in nature.

Keywords: Ecofeminism, environmental identity, postcolonialism, the trickster figure, wisdom.

**THOMSON HIGHWAY'İN KÜRK KRALIÇESİ'NİN ÖPÜCÜĞÜ
ROMANINDA DÜZENBAZ FİĞÜRÜ VE ÇEVRESEL KİMLİK**

Öz

Bu araştırma, Tomson Highway'ın Kürk Kraliçesi'nin Öpücüğü adlı eserindeki arketipsel hilekâr figür Kürk Kraliçesi karakterini ekofeminizm ve postkolonyal perspektiflerinden incelemektedir. Bu çalışma, Spivak'ın postkolonyal teorisinin içgörülerini Shiva tarafından ifade edilen ekofeminizmin kavramsal çerçevesiyle bütünleştirerek kimlik çatışması olgusuna ışık tutmaktadır. Hilekâr arketipi diğer kültürlerde ve hikâyelerde olduğu gibi Highway'ın romanında da, bilgeliği sembolize etmekte ve egemen güçler tarafından belirlenen normlara doğrudan meydan okumaktadır. Aynı zamanda, bu arketip, geleneksel tanımlarının ötesine geçerek, doğayı ve dişil gücü kişileştirmekte, yerleşik normlara meydan okumakta ve insanların ideolojilere dayalı olarak ayrıştırılmasını sürdüren sömürgeci inançları ortadan kaldırmayı hedeflemektedir. Toplumsal cinsiyet rollerinin ve kültürel unsurların ekofeminist değerlerle uyum içinde dinamik bir şekilde incelenmesini, birbirine bağlılığı ve kolektif mücadeleleri temsil ederek çok boyutlu tanımlar sunmaktadır. Bu araştırma, geleneksel ve erdem içeren bilginin önemini ve kadınların dönüştürücü rolünü vurgulayarak iyileşmeyi kolaylaştırmayı ve dekolonizasyon sürecini desteklemeyi amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Bilgelik, çevresel kimlik, ekofeminizm, hilekâr arketipi, sömürgecilik sonrası.

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Introduction

Despite Native American Indian literature being well-saturated with archetypal figures, the tribal trickster of Thomson Highway's novel is incredibly mysterious. In *Kiss of the Fur Queen* (2000), Thomson Highway vividly depicts this figure as she spreads "her fur cape in a huge shimmering arc becoming aurora borealis. As its galaxies of stars, suns, moons and planets hummed their way across the sky and back. This divine and enchanting being exudes a radiant natural light as a fetus emerges from the seven stars on her tiara" (Highway, 2000, p. 26). As this description suggests, she symbolizes the enduring life-giving power and presence of Indigenous culture, nature and spirituality despite attempts by Western culture to suppress or eradicate it. Through the portrayal of silenced narratives of the protagonists – representing Indigenous peoples of Canada – the trickster amplifies their voices to challenge prevailing discourse. However, what is peculiar is that Trickster is there to shatter all boundaries and frames, remove all restraints and expose to something new.

To achieve the assimilation of Indian people into Canadian society, from 1879 to 1986, the Canadian government transformed Indigenous children from their native environments and communities into residential schools run by religious institutions. Thomson Highway's *Kiss of the Fur Queen* (2000) unfolds as an autobiography that portrays Thomson Highway and his brother's struggles. Highway defined his own experience regarding Canadian residential schools as a weapon of attack on Indigenous cultures (Stoffman, 1998). Similarly, Sam Mckegney defines the result of this abusive movement;

Native children divorced from their traditional cultures while at the same time refused entry into prosperous white Canada through inferior educational practices and racism institutionalized to occupy a liminal space characterized by disillusion, identity crisis, and despair. The legacy of the residential school system ripples throughout Native Canada, its fingerprints on the domestic violence, poverty, alcoholism, drug abuse, and suicide rates that continue to cripple many Native communities. (Mckegney, 2005, p. 43)

The residential school experience of native Americans defines a childhood trauma. However, the story of Highway's novel goes beyond an autobiography, becoming a study of freedom from all restraints related to colonial identity. While the novel records the odyssey of two Cree brothers, Champion and Ooneemeto Okimasis, Highway emphasizes how they are torn from their homes as children of nomadic family life and placed in a Canadian assimilative residential school before adulthood in a changing world (Highway, 2000). In fact, Highway aims to indicate the power of Indigenous stories to heal; he includes a trickster figure astonished by her ability to achieve creative breakthroughs. The trickster is recognizable in all cultures by representing freedom from all restraints. They display an ambiguous identity and a dogged aim to challenge discursive categorizations by occupying liminal spaces. They are famous for rapid transfigurations and achieve what others are incapable of realizing, wit extreme wit. Jung traces back the origin of the trickster figure to the medieval rituals, picaresque tales, revels, carnivals arguing that "the phantom of the trickster haunts the mythology of all ages" (Jung, 1972, p. 165). In the same way, in Highway's novel, the Trickster figure serves as both a guide and a protective force, embodying the strength and resilience of Cree heritage. Thomson Highway presents this trickster figure as a female rather than male, opening up new associations and feminist perspectives. Like a phoenix rising from the ashes, she embodies an existence that can bring forth life. Throughout the novel,

she offers the brothers comfort, guidance and protection as they navigate a society that seeks to erase their identities. Thus, the novel goes beyond being an unconscious release of the childhood trauma of its author-narrator; it transforms into an exploration of the dynamic interplay between social and environmental identity through an ecofeminist lens. The trickster figure emphasizes the duality inherent within the concept of identity as it is shaped by society and nature. The novel argues that people need to connect with nature profoundly and personally, even to redefine themselves in a way that includes the natural world. Highway skillfully weaves together contrasting concepts such as post / colonialism and Western culture, patriarchal and feminist worldviews, institutional structures and the inherent natural world using ecofeminist approaches.

The female trickster of Highway's novel seems like an entity coming from what Kristeva (1974) calls chora, a realm that is neither definable nor containable. The chora is theorized as primordial, a rhythmic source of semiotic derives, whose operation in language precedes the formation of the subject. In other words, the trickster of the novel represents the semiotic realm of hidden, fleeting and rhythmic pre-spatial and pre-temporal impulses. It is a precondition and motivation for subjectivity. This semiotic realm of chora tends to disrupt the symbolic realm of social and cultural constraints in society. In Highway's novel, the trickster figure challenges the colonial structures and signifies the most resistance to labelling and regulating oppressive powers the boarding school and its masters represent. Highway draws the trickster figure as connected with the semiotic chora because it relates to native origins, the maternal space in which life is conceived. The ordering system of colonial powers is analogous to social and historical structures that always existed, which order semiotic drives and impulses. Thus, Highway's trickster presents hope and opportunity for freedom from colonial restraint. She shows that the subject is unpredictable since it is in process and brings about change.

Previously, scholars have approached Highway's novel through postmodern theories. According to Diana Brydon (2001), the novel *Kiss of the Fur Queen* (2000) utilizes the trickster figure to challenge ideologies and promote healing from assimilation practices in Canadian boarding schools. Similarly, in her study, Coral Ann Howells (2008) refers to Homi Bhabha's concept of hybridity and explains how colonial education and Western symbolic figures actively participate in Highway's resistance discourse. However, while a postcolonial approach is valuable for analyzing *Kiss of the Fur Queen* (2000), it is essential to consider its intersection with ecofeminist perspectives. There has yet to be research explicitly delving into the integration of ecofeminist perspectives into the postcolonial ideology of the novel. By examining the trickster narrative, this study seeks to offer more insight into the importance of the ecofeminist perspective in examining postcolonial identities.

Apart from the incarnations as a stage play and TV movie, our examination of Highway's *Kiss of the Fur Queen* (2000) particularly emphasizes the unique trickster figure, which consistently disrupts order, becoming a recurring narrative archetype. This figure is celebrated for challenging norms and breaking down oppositions by rebelling against colonial systems (Radin, 1956). Additionally, our exploration delves into how societal classifications like race and class are interdependent and how social understanding of who we are is about our interaction with society and nature. By intertwining ecofeminist principles with the presence of the trickster figure, our exploration offers a nuanced understanding of identity, resistance and environmental awareness within the literature. From this perspective, the Indigenous narrative of Highway

presents perspectives for ecofeminist theory through the trickster figure, and ecofeminism offers insights into postcolonial studies. This study uses two critical theoretical frameworks in response to unilateral and postcolonialism centralized perspectives. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's critique (1992) and Vandana Shiva's (2014) ecofeminist philosophy are combined and worked out in great detail. Combining Spivak's concept of "the subaltern" and Shiva's ecofeminist viewpoint, this research provides a nuanced and comprehensive understanding of identity, power dynamics and resistance (1992, p. 32). Thus, this analysis combines these theories and offers nuanced insights into how the trickster figure revitalizes Indigenous connections to land and nature while challenging exploitative colonial narratives. Besides, exploring the trickster narrative represents a healing orientation that holds that humans need to discover their ties to the natural world to practice total mental health. This article explores how the novel occupies a position between postcolonial critique and ecofeminist philosophy by leveraging the triumph of the trickster figure.

1. The Trickster figure in Indigenous Narratives

The trickster figure, the engine of the novel's postcolonial ecofeminist theology, is, in its origin, an ancient mythological being who occurs in most classic legends worldwide. Although tricksters are a crucial part of African and Indian mythology, they are not African or Indian; they have no proprietors and are global. Therefore, In *Four Archetypes*, Jung (1972) sees the trickster as one of four specific archetypal patterns of the mother, rebirth, and the spirit. In Jungian theory, the trickster archetype often represents the aspects of our personality that are naughty, disruptive, or unconventional. The trickster challenges the status quo and can cause or provoke change, though sometimes deceit or breaking norms. This trickster archetype in Jungian psychology, which symbolizes a more primitive level of intellect, is not forgotten because it connects our present awareness to our primal past (Jung, 1972). Highway enhances the quality and value of his narrative with the unique touch of this mythopoeic figure who is simultaneously mysterious and ambiguous. Even if the trickster myth is not fully understood, its inherent sense of something more incredible still influences us. As anthropologist Paul Radin (1956) asserts, people have mixed feelings towards this archetype as it reminds them of their primitive past, which they want to progress from but not entirely forget. However, it is essential to emphasize that this primitive past does not have negative connotations as it refers to all-good, all-powerful maternal knowledge.

The Trickster folklore is extensively explored in Greek mythology and Native American tradition, and the figure is defined as a symbolic animal and humanoid creature. Lewis Hyde highlights the fundamental characteristics of the archetype as "an unchanging, indestructible core that not only antedates all the stories told about him, but has survived despite them" (1998, p. 6). As such, it plays a crucial role in some Indigenous cultures and much of the world's mythology. However, in the crucible of American racial slavery and Native Indian assimilation, the trickster tradition of America has drawn more attention. The impact of colonialism morphed and adjusted it under the influence of colonial power, reflecting the enduring resilience and adaptation of native cultures. In African-American folklore, tricksters were typically portrayed as animals, such as "Br'er Fox, Br'er Deer, Br'er Gator, and Br'er Rabbit" (Morgan, 2013, p. 34). Regarding this first known version, Winifred Morgan summarizes that the Trickster figure is a lazy thief who encapsulates many trickster qualities with a talent for evading even cunning traps. Even from the beginning, tricksters are known as neither good nor evil, yet they are responsible for both. In other words, deceitfully, they can create breakthroughs; eventual renewal is the usual consequence of

this offensiveness. They also embody what Carl Jung (1972) would call the shadow side in human nature, engaging in what most humans consider unacceptable behavior. Jung and others in psychology were fascinated by this archetype because it challenges conventional understandings of strength, power, and success. They achieve their goals through unconventional or unexpected means. Tricksters often appear weak or unlikely to succeed, yet they outwit and overcome more powerful adversaries. This reversal of expectations is a core element of the tricksters' appeal. They represent the idea that cleverness, cunning, and the ability to think outside the box can be more effective than traditional forms of strength or power. Despite seeming disadvantaged or weaker compared to their rivals, tricksters often triumph. This aspect of trickster tales can be inspiring and thought-provoking, as it turns conventional narratives of power and success on their head.

Despite some typical characteristics all trickster figures share, such as hope and freedom from restraint, each tradition has differed from the other on points they emphasize. With the advent of colonial rule, the figure of the trickster signifies a shift from indigenous to colonial and post-colonial identities. Highway's novel traces a combination of an American Indian and an African-American trickster. Following Indian American tradition, the novel explores the sense of separation from the land and the degradation of the land together with. However, tracing African-American trickster tradition, Highway's novel addresses lingering power imbalances and becomes a means to challenge irrational authority. It offers a fresh look at foundational stories and truth that build American collective identity and national ideals. An African-American version of the trickster, Joel Chandler Harris's *Uncle Remus: His Songs and His Sayings* (1881), is a noteworthy text to understand the dynamics behind Highway's trickster narrative. Harris (1881) crafts a world populated by animals, where larger species are metaphors for the white colonial class, and Brer Rabbit embodies the African-American population. Unlike most trickster traditions, African and African-American trickster tales are characterized as what Laura Makarius calls "the necessary Breaker of Taboos" (1993, p.73). The trickster rule breaker disregards all discipline and defies the laws of both mortals and immortals. In their tales, enslaved people identify with heroes who trick or heroes identify with the tricksters who could alter the way things are. This narrative, therefore, can be interpreted as a subtle challenge to colonial supremacy and racial disparities, with the trickster figure of Brer Rabbit persistently contesting and disrupting the prevalent colonial discourse.

The trickster figure in *Kiss of the Fur Queen* is identified with the Cree trickster Weesageechak and plays a pivotal role in defying and subverting colonial narratives. In the initial chapters of the novel, the author Highway vividly foregrounds the unique characteristics of the Weesageechak, articulating this concept with the following words:

... as pivotal and vital a figure in our world as Christ is in Christian mythology. "Weesageechak" in Cree, "Nanabush" in Ojibway, "Raven" in others, and "Coyote" in still others; this Trickster goes by many names and many guises. He can assume any guise he chooses. Essentially a comic, clownish character, his role is to teach us about nature and the meaning of existence on the planet Earth; he straddles the consciousness of man and that of God, the Great Spirit. (Highway, 2000, p. 8)

As a trickster, this figure serves a multifaceted purpose: it is both a teacher and a playful, comic entity. As the combination of American Indian and African-American trickster traditions, the trickster often seems to be a transforming and comic character reflecting the nature of god or divine intent. It has proven remarkably strong and resilient by challenging the authority and

narratives imposed by colonial powers. By incorporating the trickster figure into the narrative, Tomson Highway rejects the dominant and grand colonial narrative more intent on itself rather than the rest of the world or reality. Through its resilience and power, the Trickster figure highlights the ability and possibility of imagining something else, a different narrative, an alternative discourse. By supporting and guiding the protagonists Champion and Ooneemeetoo throughout their lives, she maintains their connection to their Indigenous culture and identity at a deeper and more emotional level. Despite the dauntingly oppressive forces the brothers face daily in the environment of the boarding school, the connection the protagonists keep with the trickster figure disrupts the attempt to erase the Indigenous identity. In an innately unfair and dangerous atmosphere, they assume that the only way to survive is to turn their faces to the Trickster Figure. Hence, the trickster becomes a symbol of cultural resilience and endurance.

Despite the harsh circumstances she navigates, Highway's trickster uses humor to play with the authority of school and colonial society's most sensitive discontents. Highway uses the trickster as Shakespeare uses comic touches in his tragedies to relieve the terrible tension of living through destruction and degradation. The trickster offers a kind of release to the pain and discomfort inherent within complex social interactions. Historically, humor has often marked and shaped political, social and religious power shifts. This can be seen in how the Fur Queen provides a new perspective to the protagonists. They turn into characters with a new perspective and a better chance of being able to alter an untenable external situation. As the audience of the trickster, the brothers of the novel move beyond victimhood: trickster humor makes them resistant to the dominant ideology of colonial society.

2. Ecofeminism in Tomson Highway's Narrative

Kiss of the Fur Queen (2000) vividly portrays the Northern Canadian landscape and its Indigenous people, indicating the anthropocentric dualism of humanity and nature and the androcentric dualism of man versus woman. Therefore, the novel can be defined as an example of an ecofeminist perspective, which involves the recognition that these two arguments share a common "logic of domination" (Warren, 1994, p. 129). The concept of ecofeminism was first used by French writer Françoise d'Eaubonne in 1974 and was designed as a call for women to lead an ecological revolution to save the planet (Merchant, 1996, p. 5). From this perspective, ecofeminism is a theoretical and analytical movement that pays particular attention to the mutual connection between the oppression of women and the exploitation of nature. More specifically, it attacks patriarchy, colonialism and capitalism, which leads to the oppression of women and the destruction of nature. It is a powerful call for women to take the lead in this ecological revolution. Referring to the historical context of ecofeminism, Heather Eaton asserts that;

It (ecofeminism) represents a large range of analyses and actions including historical associations between women and nature, studies of and resistance to domination as a mode of inter-human and human-earth relations, in depth understanding of patriarchal social structures and worldviews, and, social movements that see the oppression of women and the domination of the natural world as interconnected (Eaton, 2005, p. 3).

As it seems, ecofeminism is a movement that aims to bring about socio-economic and environmental justice and underscores the urgent need for change in the interaction between human beings and other natural elements. It is a powerful reminder of the importance of our relationship with nature and the need to reevaluate and change our current practices.

The strong connection between the Cree characters and their homeland that the novel foregrounds emphasizes a similar sense of harmony and respect for the land. This solid ethic of egalitarian understanding of the interaction between humans and nature contended with the colonizing forces' more exploitative and disrespectful attitudes towards nature. The detailed description of the legacy of the Birch Lake residential school system and its harassing influence on the relationship between Indigenous people and their environment indicates the attitudes of colonizers. The novel relates the story of two Cree brothers, Jeremiah (Champion) and Gabriel (Ooneemeto) Okimasis, as they are removed from the loving comfort of their traditional family life in northern Manitoba by the obligatory and assimilative residential school system. They are renamed Jeremiah and Gabriel in the urban center, hundreds of miles away from their home, and they are developing strategies to overcome alienation and exploitation. This harsh assimilation in white Canadian society through the residential school system is a profound exploration of cultural and environmental dichotomies. The brothers embody the essence of nature, materiality, emotion, and particularity, thus starkly contrasting the schoolmaster and others who represent culture, nonmaterial aspects, rationality, and abstraction. This contrast is vividly illustrated in the novel through the description of their playground, encased by a steel mesh fence, separating the children from the natural world of pine, spruce, birch, poplar, and willow trees and the distant view of Birch Lake.

A cold wind swept over the vast field of gravel that was the boys' playground, a six-foot steel-mesh fence holding the surrounding forest of pine, spruce, birch, poplar, and willow at bay. If you stood on the monkey bars or flew high enough on the swings, you could see Birch Lake in the distance, down the hill behind the school building, transparent emerald, unlike the opaque blue of Mistik Lake (Highway, 2000, p. 58).

This setting underscores the dominant attitude toward nature: the devaluation of environmental heritage within the residential school. Birch Lake Indian Residential School is a symbol of a colonial mindset that views land as a commodity to be controlled and utilized rather than a living, respected entity. While the nomadic life of the Cree brothers in their homeland promoted the reproduction of nature, their life in the boarding school symbolizes the exploitation of resources. The question about the attitude to nature and its objects is closely connected with indigenous outlook which sees the nature as provider of subjects of life. Due to its dual nature by crossing lines and confusing the distinctions, the trickster figure is the most suitable symbol for the exploration of the contradiction between different attitudes to nature. Gerald Vizenor (1990), an author who has written extensively on American Indian tricksters, advocates that tricksters are an attempt to bridge the gap between contemporary life scenes and the traditional American Indian world and the internal psychological divisions between people of these two different settings.

Vandana Shiva (2013), an Indian ecofeminist and activist, explains why balancing people and nature and protecting ecosystems and Indigenous knowledge is essential. Her ideas align with the tricksterism in the novel as healing comes about through the efforts of a female trickster. Tricksters in almost all African-American tales are male. However, Highway challenges traditional representations of the archetype. Shiva states that protecting species and culture and sustainable farming are very important for the health of our planet. According to the ecofeminist theory, Shiva's theory holds that women in societies have a relationship with the environment. Such a relationship is usually not given much attention or is sometimes rejected in patriarchal

societies (2014, p. 82). She also establishes that women's social learning of cultural myths is crucial in establishing and sustaining roots. In the Highway's novel, there is an evident opposition between the colonizers' civilization and the primal forces of nature represented by the trickster figure. The female trickster becomes a figure of resistance against different structures and for the sustainable management of the environment. The figure of the trickster inverts the hierarchy and subverts culture, reason, mind, civilization, emotion, or non-human body. Tomson Highway presents a female trickster as "Ecology consciousness is traditional woman consciousness" (Plant, 1989, p. 41). This female trickster of the novel is a personification of nature as well as the strength of the Indigenous people against colonial and patriarchal rule. Her character is a potent reminder of the close relationship between the land and the people, a crucial notion in ecofeminism.

As Shiva (2014) has pointed out that the knowledge women from indigenous cultures have is an example of the diversity that can be used to counteract the monoculture and the hegemony of corporations. In traditions like the Cree heritage presented in Tomson Highway's novel, the Trickster represents change, rebellion, and unpredictability. Shiva's theory of diversity embodies the cycle of destruction and rebirth. This duality can be seen in the Trickster, whose agenda is to cause anarchy and chaos only to bring change and new beginnings. In the novel, the two Cree brothers go through a number of challenges, including resistance to intellectual and spiritual assimilation at a residential school in Canada. The book itself personifies the Weesageechak from the Cree mythology as a narrative device and an embodiment of a particular idea of rebellion, change and rebirth (McKegney, 2005). In the story, the trickster element portrays himself as a naughty character and a destroyer of norms and order as she crosses the set boundaries. As Hyde describes the dialectics of the Trickster, "boundary creation and crossing are related to one another, and the best way to describe trickster is to say simply that the boundary is where he will found, sometimes drawing the line, sometimes crossing it, sometimes erasing or moving it" (1998, p. 7). Thus, the character is not just a destroyer; she also has the qualities of creativity, knowledge, and the ability to create change and transformation.

The story revolves around two significant events in the brother's lives that completely alter the course of their lives. The first one is the father's victory in the 1951 Millington Cup World Championship Dog Derby, which was a significant event in the family's cultural history. Abraham Okimasis, a Cree hunter, wins the derby and gets a kiss from the White Beauty Pageant Fur Queen. This kiss, symbolizing a moment of triumph and recognition, is immortalized in the family's narrative and represents the roots of their cultural identity. However, the second turning point is quite different from the first one. The brothers' lives are no longer the same when they are taken from their comforting home in northern Manitoba to attend the Birch Lake Indian Residential School in the south. The mother of the brothers, Mariesis, gives them a photograph of the Fur Queen's kiss when the children are going to school, and she believes that it will help the children deal with difficult situations (Highway, 2000, p. 74). In their societal life, the Trickster's actions always positively impact the protagonists' journey. It represents the link between the spiritual world, everyday life, the Cree heritage, and societal experiences. It serves as a vessel for preservation while metaphorically representing survival and navigating identities. The task of processing change, evolution, and adaptation helps the trickster to make apparent those previously separate from each other. Shiva's theory helps to break through the binaries and classifications while highlighting how the Trickster goes beyond the norms, rules, and expectations.

The Fur Queen explores the borderlands between what was and what is, between the imposed white world of individualism and the traditional Indigenous world that values the community. She symbolizes the resistance against the forces of colonialism and the struggle against not only the domination of nature but also the imposition of patriarchal and individualistic values on Indigenous communities. The concept of ecofeminism highlights the link between the mistreatment of the environment and the suppression of women as an outcome of a culture that values power and independence over unity and shared living spaces. As the symbol of resilience and Indigenous traditions, the Fur Queen embodies efforts to reshape identities and reconnect with the land. The novel explores the boundaries between colonial Indigenous communities and an imposed Western culture while touching upon significant ecofeminist concepts. Because she is on the boundaries, the Trickster stands at the threshold of both sides to confuse the distinction. The focus is on the importance of values that respect and harmonize with nature instead of the values that degrade nature embraced by colonizers. The comparison goes beyond surface differences, speaking to more significant ecofeminist concerns about how patriarchal and colonial frameworks disturb not only natural environments but also societal constructs. In this light, the Fur Queen emerges as a guardian of these borderlands, pushing back against efforts to erase the wisdom and customs of Indigenous tradition while battling the marginalization endured by women and the environment.

Shiva (2014) suggests that women's unique abilities and insights are often overlooked or underestimated because of gender norms imposed by society's dominance. However, these differences should not be viewed as weaknesses; instead, they can serve as a basis for enhancing productivity. In Highway's novel, this "diversity as women's aspect" can be understood as encompassing women's experiences, identities, and roles (Shiva, 2014, p. 143). This notion emphasizes the significance of women's viewpoints and contributions to society and the natural world. Diversity is vital for an ecosystem to thrive, and the diverse range of women's perspectives and insights is fundamental for a balanced and welcoming society. In the novel, we see a coming together of societal life experiences with a focus on safeguarding and honoring nature, which resonates with Shiva's belief in the importance of diversity. The Fur Queen symbolizes femininity and the natural world in a manner that questions male-dominated beliefs by giving qualities similar to both aspects.

3. The Trickster figure as Postcolonial Critique

Apart from ecofeminism, in the novel, the presence of the Trickster figure serves as a portrayal of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's concept of the "subaltern", which refers to those who exist outside socio-political and geographical power structures (Spivak, 1992, p. 66). This concept, which holds significance in postcolonial studies, is about marginalized or oppressed groups whose voices and stories often go unnoticed due to societal narratives. Spivak (1992) emphasizes recognizing that power dynamics influence the subaltern, marginalized or oppressed. The Western perspective often overlooks the relationships between those in power and those marginalized. There are two approaches to engaging with marginalized communities, as pointed out by J. Maggio (2007). One approach is to speak on their behalf, representing their perspectives or experiences in dialogue, literature and policies without obtaining their direct input or consent. However, this method could distort or simplify their stories and carry on with stereotypes or inaccuracies; another way is to let them share their thoughts freely without any intervention

(Maggio, 2007, p. 421). It might come off as respectful because it allows these groups to share their stories and viewpoints openly. However, we risk excluding them if we do not confront the power dynamics and prejudices that silence and belittle these voices. When the voice of those who are socially marginalized or oppressed is either substituted with the voice of someone from a group or allowed to be heard within a system that aims to marginalize them, it is as if their voices have been silenced. The conversation does not authentically represent their genuine experiences, perspectives and identities. Marginalized individuals often become objects of discussion rather than active participants in conversations – this perpetuates a pattern of being silenced and left out of discussions altogether.

The insights from Spivak's theory highlight how these muted voices are exemplified by characters like the Fur Queen either by remaining unnoticed or being misinterpreted within settings. This perspective allows us to grasp the role of the Fur Queen as a trickster figure who questions prevailing stories and promotes a resurgence of Indigenous wisdom and understanding. In the novel, Highway does not speak on behalf of the marginalized but quietly supports and foregrounds their voices. He actively foregrounds discussions about their experiences as individuals who have experienced similar marginalization. Thus, he highlights the voices of those from marginalized communities and shares their views and stories in broader conversations. By taking this approach, Highway breaks the pattern of silencing and offers a platform for people on the margins to speak up and share their thoughts openly.

The novel delves into the theme of marginalization and the silencing of voices by shedding light on the assimilative grasp of the Canadian residential school system. These institutions were instruments of colonization that functioned as an attack on Indigenous cultures, forcing children to speak non-native languages and adopt Euro-Canadian ways. The narrative vividly illustrates how these schools systematically suppressed and marginalized experiences and narratives. Furthermore, Highway integrates Cree mythology and the Trickster figure into the story to respond to this marginalization. He keeps elements of culture and spirituality in his work to highlight their importance in contemporary literature. This act of preservation and resistance gives a voice to historically overlooked Indigenous perspectives. In the story, the protagonists Champion and Ooneemeetoo personify the theme of marginalization through the central crisis of the narrative, which is the cruel and violent mistreatment of Gabriel at the hands of the headteacher, Father Lafleur. The principal of the school sexually assaults Gabriel while Jeremiah witnesses the incident as well; their encounters within the educational system starkly portray their marginalization as it endeavors to erase their Indigenous heritage and stifle their cultural viewpoints. Cree brothers, vulnerable and have less influence and power within the hierarchy, often become targets of abuse. Through their actions of abuse, the perpetrators exploit their marginalized status and perpetuate the belief that these victims are undeserving of respect and protection. However, the trickster figure, depicted as the Fur Queen, frequently embodies these suppressed voices in the novel. She appears "In the semi-darkness, the moon, playing her usual tricks on glassy surfaces, made the Fur Queen wink" (Highway, 2000, p. 67). The wink is the symbol of protection of the trickster who embodies both resistance and perseverance against colonial structures. By exploring the interactions between Indigenous identity and a colonized society, the trickster questions colonial stories and brings to light our main characters' hidden viewpoints and experiences in a rebellious way that resonates with Spivak's idea of recognizing and uplifting marginalized voices.

Highway creates a binary between the trickster as the Fur Queen and priest Father Lafleur as the Weetigo to criticize the destructive colonial forces. In Cree mythology, Weetigo is one of the most terrifying creatures that exploits human beings in body and soul. It also refers to the colonizer Euro-Canadian culture, which brings destruction and suffering. Thus, it becomes an image of colonial exploitation. From an Indigenous perspective, the Weetigo is the ultimate personification of the beast of colonialism which is coming for them. While the Trickster transforms into a saint-like figure who protects their body and soul from occupation, the priest changes into an Indigenous evil figure who feasts on human flesh and symbolizes a cannibal spirit. Jeremiah describes Father Lafleur as “the whites of the beast’s eyes grew large, blinked once” (Highway, 2000, p. 79) by connecting the church to the violence of colonialism brought by white Americans. By making this binary so visible and clear, Highway holds up a mirror to the hegemony of the colonial powers. Both brothers are consumed by Western civilization and culture and start denying their Cree identity and act as if they were white until Gabriel dies in the novel. He dies and escapes the fate of misidentification by outwitting the villain Weetigo, and his death reminds Jeremiah of his spiritual roots. While Gabriel death signifies a new beginning free from restraints, Jeremiah participates in the healing process provided by the trickster.

Apart from discussing doubleness in terms of the binary contradiction between colonizing and colonized, Highway emphasizes the concept of doubleness from the perspective of occupying a liminal space. The most prominent role of Highway’s trickster in the novel is making sense as a transformer and cultural hero, a liminal figure who appeals to those brothers who feel marginalized. In the novel, brothers have two names, speak two languages and live in two worlds. For the Cree brothers, trickster restores inequality in a world of imbalance. It has an identity as a border dweller to balance national, linguistic, and cultural divides and shed light on the Indigenous and civilized sides of these divides. It is an ambiguous entity that has recovered Cree tradition and restructured it in a new way. Fur Queen is well suited to this function since the brothers experience daily doubleness and ambiguity. Thus, Highway forces his readers to stretch beyond their comfort limits and explore what might otherwise be unthinkable. The reader understands the disruption inherent between two different existences and the consequences of being caught between entities. The novel is a threshold experience, symbolizing the contradictory doubleness of thought, speech and action pervading the narrative. As a liminal figure, the trickster herself appeals to those who feel marginalized and excluded from society because of their dual identity. Their dualism does not concern a self that rejects the other but embraces its disparate aspects by blending two identities. Thus, the novel challenges the binary oppositions of colonizer and colonized while emphasizing a liminal existence between separate identities.

4. Fur Queen’s Environmental Identity

In *Kiss of the Fur Queen*, Tomson Highway explores Indigenous identity, demonstrating how much Indigenous cultures appreciate and respect the earth. This connection is depicted in a very subtle manner yet very effectively throughout the novel, and it becomes a theme that is very strong and significant to the novel’s overall message. At the heart of the tale lies the portrayal of how the character’s Indigenous heritage intertwines with nature on a deeper level. Champion and Oneemeetoo’s connection to the land goes beyond utility; it stems from a tie inseparable from their individual and shared sense of self. Despite their initial determination, they never entirely break from their cultural moorings. Land is not seen as a commodity that can be exploited for

ends but rather as a sentient entity deserving of reverence and appreciation. This perspective embodies the mindset where land is seen as belonging to people rather than just being a piece of property — a portrayal reinforced by the scene depicting the brother's return to their homeland. This moment is crucial as it represents them as seeking their identity and culture:

Take a pair of sparkling eyes, hidden ever and anon ...” Gabriel and Jeremiah sang as they leaned, one on each side, over the bow of their father's blue canoe. Like lightning, their reflections flashed under them — the lake a perfect mirror — as the vessel sliced dark liquid (Highway, 2000, p. 153).

The depicted moment captures the essence of nature awakening with a resonance that underscores the significance of the land in their society's beliefs and traditions. The lake mirrors the attributes of their ancestral territory and symbolizes the more profound spiritual and cultural bond that Champion and Ooneemetoos share with their surroundings. The reflective surface represents how the land reflects them, their history and their self-identity as people. The lake's reflective surface refers to the pre-symbolic realm where the child is united with the mother and practicing their pre-linguistic self. This idealized unity symbolizes the constitutive relationship before entering into the symbolic realm of prohibitions and restrictions society places on them. The stillness of the lake enhances the calm and the depth of their country, Eemanapiteepitat. It depicts the brothers' quest for their roots. The desire to return to the pre-symbolic unity with their motherland is repeated throughout the novel, suggesting that this desire and the restrictions that Canadian social life places on them constitute the central dynamic force of the text. The reflection in the lake, in essence, shows how their homeland mirrors their souls, allowing them to understand and value their ties to the culture, beliefs and the environment. This gives the impression that the environment is not simply the physical environment. However, it is a living being, and it is connected to the identity and spirituality of Indigenous people. This stresses that tending to the land is the same as caring for one's culture and heritage. Therefore, as an entity, the lake becomes a metaphor for the vital link between the land and the Indigenous people in the novel.

The trickster figure represents the importance of environmental identity. Susan Clayton defines environmental identity as “a sense of connection to some part of the non-human natural environment, based on history, emotional attachment, and similarity, that affects how we perceive and act toward the world” (2003, p. 56). In other words, environmental identity is a feeling of connection to the natural environment. In Highway's novel, the natural environment is integral to who the trickster and Cree brothers are. Despite assimilating into the Canadian culture, the Cree brothers include nature in their cognitive representation of themselves. In that sense, it seems fair to assert that the trickster figure represents the Cree brothers' belief in the power of nature. This belief serves as a hidden source for the maintenance of environmental identity. Highway describes nature as distinct from social living and social conflicts of Canadian culture and civilization. However, environmental identities inevitably contain a social component and environmental care as they should contribute to social meaning. Cree brothers experience an internal struggle throughout the novel until they accept and acknowledge that their environmental identity resides in their soul as the most innate part of their identity. At the end of the novel, Highway shows how they understand themselves as infused with a shared, culturally influenced understanding of what nature is and how much they are part of that nature.

The novel's characters' interactions with nature and cultural backgrounds are contradictory and resolved. The plotline revolves around the connection between Indigenous

societies and their surroundings and customs. The primary characters, Champion and Ooneemeto, share a bond with nature that is intertwined with their Cree heritage. This attachment is apparent during their time in Manitoba, where they adopted the rhythms and integrated them into their routines and cultural practices. Nature is not a backdrop but a dynamic presence that receives reverence within their society. The respect shown here comes from a viewpoint that sees the environment as holy and essential for nourishment and deserving of attention. When forced to leave their home and attend school, Champion and Ooneemeto experience a detachment from both the land they love and their cultural roots. The primary objective of the Birch Lake Indian Residential School is to assimilate children into Canadian culture by systematically erasing their Indigenous identity, including spiritual beliefs tied to the land. The brothers feel a sense of desperation due to their separation from their heritage indulgence into a world that does not recognize their roots tied to the land — a struggle experienced by Indigenous peoples following the enforcement of colonial policies. Highway uses elements of nature to illustrate the brother's quest to reconnect with their origins throughout the book. Their emotional states and internal battles are often reflected in the world through animals and landscapes. The natural world, including animals and landscapes, often mirrors their states and inner conflicts.

The recurring depiction of the Fur Queen acts as a beacon for individuals to reconnect with their roots and regain a sense of selfhood in a manner through nature's representation in the story. He highlighted the deep connection between characters and the land, essential for nurturing personal identity and preserving cultural heritage. Jeremiah and Gabriel concentrate on artistic expression to cope with their past trauma; Jeremiah becomes a pianist and writer, and Gabriel is a dancer. However, the Cree brothers can only acknowledge their cultural heritage fully once they incorporate their Cree spirituality into their artistic performances. When Champion, a pianist, experiences a dream during his piano performance where the Fur Queen suddenly appears, this dream sequence portrays the Fur Queen with charm and playfulness as she unexpectedly interrupts his concert. The scene is significant for resolving the identity conflict, representing the clash between Champion's ambitions influenced by cultural education and his Indigenous background. The trickster's intervention in the dream reminds him of his origins and the cultural dualism he faces. While becoming a dancer, Ooneemeto encounters the Fur Queen, who presents him with situations that prompt him to ponder his heritage and its place in society. Her presence as a trickster figure in the novel is highlighted through dreams and visions, where she sparks introspection and self-discovery in characters by urging them to harmonize their identities with Indigenous influences. Highways' interactions highlight trickster figures' significant role in helping individuals comprehend and preserve their ties to culture and environment.

5. Conclusion

The present study of Tomson Highway's *Kiss of the Fur Queen* (2000) combines postcolonial perspectives with ecofeminist ideals by portraying the archetypal Trickster Figure. It unveils that a rich tapestry of literary insights unravels when postcolonial discourse harmonizes with ecofeminist viewpoints, primarily through the lens of the Trickster archetype. The Fur Queen symbolizes resilience against challenges and a deep connection to ancestral lands and nature. The dynamic changes this character brings about in Cree brothers embrace social and environmental aspects of identity.

After examining all the evidence, it is clear that the Trickster figure embodies the characteristics of Gayatri Spivak's subaltern subjectivity, combining it with ecofeminist overtones. Trickster operates from the margins, often challenging established norms and helping the brothers to honestly know and find themselves and cultivate an authentic sense of identity. The trickster becomes a societal mirror reflecting their experiences, struggles, and stories. Highway's novel portrays the journey of the Fur Queen as she transforms the Cree brothers from being a product of society to individuals with liminal identities as an amalgam of nature and society. The shift offers a storyline to male-dominated and colonial narratives. The female Trickster challenges mainstream culture by reshaping it in her own way. This profound process of involvement and change underscores the flexibility and strength needed to sustain and thrive in wisdom and heritage. As a unique female Trickster figure in Highway's narrative, the Fur Queen embodies critical ecofeminist concepts of resistance, transformation, the restorative power of female wisdom, and the deep connection between cultural preservation and the environment.

This research highlights the significance of considering ecofeminist and postcolonial viewpoints in literary analysis. Ecofeminism contributes insights by underlining the interconnection between women's subjugation and environmental decline. This standpoint illuminates how colonialism and patriarchal structures have disrupted our relationships with nature that were once based on reverence exchange and long-term viability. Conversely, postcolonial theory equips us with a framework to grasp the enduring effects of colonialism on communities. It aids in analyzing themes such as marginalization, cultural erasure and resistance throughout the novel. Postcolonial perspectives also illuminate the complexities of identity and belonging experienced by characters in a world shaped by colonization. By merging ecofeminist and postcolonial perspectives, this study highlights how Indigenous literature emphasizes environmental identities inherent within Indigenous communities and how they navigate and define suppressive systems. The life of the Cree brothers and the trickster figure shed light on the ability to maintain and celebrate environmental ties through a dynamic interplay between the social and environmental.

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Geniş Özet

Bu araştırma, Tomson Highway'ın *Kürk Kraliçesinin Öpücüğü* adlı eserinde arketipik bir hilekâr figür olarak Kürk Kraliçesi karakterini ekofeminizm ve post-kolonyalizm perspektiflerinden incelemektedir. Böylelikle, kimlik çatışması kavramını, Spivak'ın postkolonyal içgörülerini Shiva tarafından ifade edilen ekofeminizmin kavramsal çerçevesiyle bütünleştirerek açıklamaktadır. Highway, romanda Kürk Kraliçes'i ni bilgeligi ve şifayı simgeleyen, egemen sömürgeci güçler tarafından belirlenen kökleşmiş baskıcı normları doğrudan altüst eden dişi bir hilekâr olarak betimlemektedir. Erkek egemen post-kolonyal toplumda medeniyet-doğa ve erkek-kadın ikilemi nedeniyle kadınların ve doğanın önemsiz görülmesine rağmen, Highway, medeniyetin yozlaşmasına ve doğanın sömürülmesine dikkat çekmek için kadın bir hilebaz figür kullanır. Post-kolonyal toplumlarda, hilebaz figürü, değişimi etkileme ve kolonyal güçler tarafından dayatılan toplumsal normlara meydan okuma kapasitesi nedeniyle yaygın olarak kullanılır. Highway'ın romanında, bu kadın hilebaz figürü, doğayı ve dişil gücü kişileştirerek yerleşik normlara meydan okumakta ve insanların farklı ideolojilere dayalı olarak ayrıştırılmasını sürdüren sömürgeci inançları ortadan kaldırmaktadır. Bu çalışma, toplumsal cinsiyet rollerinin ve kültürel unsurların, ekofeminist değerlerle uyum içinde, kolektif mücadeleyi amaç edinerek dinamik bir şekilde incelenmesini vurgulamaktadır. Sosyal kimliği dönüştürebilen ve kişinin benlik duygusunun dönüşümünde ve dünya görüşünün gelişmesinde önemli bir rol oynayan, doğayı temsil eden hilebaz figürünü çevresel kimliğin bir sembolü olarak tanımlanarak geleneksek olarak çevre duyarlılığını temsil eden dişi sembollerin geri kazanılmasına katkıda bulunmaktadır. Ayrıca, hilebaz anlatısını keşfetmek, insanların dengeli ruh sağlığı için doğal dünyayla olan bağlarını keşfetmeleri gerektiğini savunan iyileştirici bir yönelimi temsil etmektedir. Bu makale, Kürk Kraliçesi figürünün zaferinden yararlanarak romanın post-kolonyal eleştiri ile ekofeminist felsefe arasında nasıl bir konum işgal ettiğini araştırmaktadır.

Highway'ın hilebaz figürünün romandaki en belirgin rolü, bir dönüştürücü ve kültürel kahraman, kendilerini ötekileştirilmiş hisseden kardeşlere hitap eden liminal bir figür olarak anlam kazanmasıdır. Romanda kardeşlerin iki kişiliği, iki dili vardır ve iki farklı dünyada yaşamaktadırlar. Cree kardeşler için bu güçlü ve özgün hilebaz figürü, dengesizliğin ve eşitsizliğin hüküm sürdüğü bir dünyada eşitliği yeniden tesis etmektedir. Ulusal, dilsel ve kültürel ayrımları dengeleyen ve bu ayrımların yerli ve medeni taraflarına ışık tutan bir sınır sakini kimliğine sahip olarak tasvir edilmektedir. Cree geleneğini kurtaran ve onu yeniden yapılandıran gizemli Kürk Kraliçesi bu işlev için çok uygun bir figür olarak ortaya çıkarak, kardeşlerin her gün ikilik ve belirsizlik içindeki yaşamlarına dahil olarak onlara bütünleşmenin önemini

hatırlatmaktadır. Böylece Highway, okurlarını konfor sınırlarının ötesine geçmeye ve başka türlü düşünülmemeyecek şeyleri keşfetmeye zorlamaktadır. Okur, iki farklı varoluş arasındaki bölünmeyi ve varlıklar arasında kalmanın sonuçlarını anlamaktadır. Roman, anlatıya yayılan düşünce, konuşma ve eylemin çelişkili ikiliğini simgeleyen bir eşik deneyimidir. Sınırlarda gezinen arafta bir figür olarak hilebazın kendisi, ikili kimlikleri nedeniyle kendilerini marjinalleşmiş ve toplumdan dışlanmış hissedenlere hitap etmektedir. Onların ikiliği, ötekini reddeden bir benlikle değil, iki kimliği harmanlayarak farklı yönlerini kucaklayan bir benlikle ilgilidir. Böylece roman, ayrı kimlikler arasında liminal bir varoluşu vurgularken, sömürgeci ve sömürgeleştirilen ikilik karşıtlıklarına meydan okumaktadır.

Kürk Kraliçesi olarak adlandırılan, hilebaz figürü, doğal çevreyle daimi olarak bağlantılı çevresel kimliğin önemini temsil eder. Highway'in romanında doğal çevre, Kürk Kraliçesi'nin ve Cree kardeşlerin kim olduklarının ayrılmaz bir parçasıdır. Kanada kültürüne asimile olmalarına rağmen, Cree kardeşler doğayı kendilerinin bilişsel temsillerine dahil ederler. Bu anlamda, hilebaz figürünün Cree kardeşlerin doğanın gücüne olan inancını temsil ettiğini söylemek doğru olacaktır. Bu inanç, çevresel kimliğin sürdürülmesi için gizli bir kaynak olarak hizmet etmektedir. Highway, doğayı Kanada kültür ve medeniyetinin sosyal yaşam ve sosyal çatışmalarından farklı olarak tanımlar. Bununla birlikte, Highway, çevresel kimliklerin kaçınılmaz olarak sosyal bir bileşen içerdiğini ve çevresel duyarlılığın sosyal anlama katkıda bulunduğunu vurgulamaktadır. Cree kardeşler, çevrenin, kimliklerinin doğuştan gelen parçası olarak ruhlarında bulunduğunu kabul edip onaylayana kadar roman boyunca bir iç mücadele yaşarlar. Romanın sonunda Highway, Cree kardeşlerin, kendilerinin doğanın bir parçası olduklarına dair farkındalığa eriştikten sonra ruhsal ve bedensel olarak iyileştiklerini ve bütünleştiklerini göstermektedir. Böylece, Kürk Kraliçe'sinin Öpücüğü romanı, kaynağı yüzyıllar öncesine dayanan ve kadınların temsil ettiği bilginin çevresel farkındalığın özünü temsil ettiğini ve bu bilginin yeniden canlandırılarak çevre ve insan uyumunun sağlanabileceğini örneklendirmektedir.