

## The Indian Ghost in Lynn Riggs' Play *The Cherokee Night*

Rasha Abdulmunem Azeez

College of Languages/ University of Baghdad

rasha.albayati@hotmail.com

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### Abstract

This play is written in 1932 by Lynn Riggs who is half Cherokee. The play is set in Claremore Mound, Oklahoma almost a century after the Trail of Tears. Riggs presents mixed- blood, young Cherokees to portray a post-colonial state of spiritual loss and disruption of traditional community ties. The new generation lives in darkness, and the title of the play tells about the dramatist's view that night comes to his Cherokee Nation. The Indian ghost is one of the play's characters. It is an Indian ghost of a warrior. It comes to remind Cherokees of their heritage and traditions. The ghost sees the new generation as nothing as ghosts because they are neither good for themselves nor for their nation. This paper is important as it discusses the post-colonial state of Cherokees after a century of their displacement, concentrating on mixed-blood youth to give a broader dimension of the state of non-belonging and spiritual loss of these young natives. The paper aims at examining this state during that period, and the findings of the paper show that the Cherokee nation has no hope to regain their great heritage.

**Keywords:** Drama, Lynn Riggs, *The Cherokee Night*

شبح الهندي الاحمر في مسرحية (ليل الشيروكي) للكاتب لن ريكز  
رشا عبد المنعم عزيز  
كلية اللغات- جامعة بغداد

### ملخص البحث

كتب لن ريكز هذه المسرحية في عام 1932 . يعتبر هذا الكاتب من قبيلة الشيروكي بشكل جزئي. تقع احداث المسرحية في جبل كليرمور في ولاية اوكلاهوما بعد قرن من حادثة طريق الدموع. قدم ريكز في هذه المسرحية مجموعة من الشباب الشيروكي الذين ينتمون الى اكثر من سلاله هندية لتصوير حاله هؤلاء الشباب في مرحلة ما بعد الاستعمار حيث يعانون من الضياع الروحي واضطراب العلاقات المجتمعية . يعيش الجيل الجديد من الهنود حالة من الظلام . احد شخصيات المسرحية هو شبح الهندي الاحمر . وهو شبح المقاتل الهندي الذي يأتي لتذكير الجيل الجديد بتراتهم وتقاليدهم. يرى هذا الشبح الجيل الجديد لا شيء سوى اشباح لانهم غير مفيد لانفسهم ولامتهم. تبرز اهمية هذا البحث كونه يناقش حالة قبيلة الشيروكي في مرحلة ما بعد الاستعمار بعد قرن من ازاحتهم وبالتركيز على فئة الشباب المتعددي الانتماءات لاعطاء بعد واسع لحاله عدم الانتماء والضياع الروحي التي يعاني منها السكان الاصليين الشباب. يهدف هذا البحث تدارس هذه الحالة في تلك الفترة. وقد بينت نتائج البحث ان ليس هناك امل لامة الشيروكي في استعادة موروثها العظيم.

الكلمات المفتاحية: مسرح، لن ريكز , ليل الشيروكي

## Introduction

*The Cherokee Night* is a play written by Rollie Lynn Riggs in 1932. It is a seven-scene play. The scenes are set nonchronologically covering the period between 1895 and 1931. This play discusses many themes and issues that touch fundamentally the Native American, specifically youth. This paper will focus on the new Native American generation through the supernatural element of the play: the ghost of an Indian warrior. The setting of the play is Oklahoma. The play in its first production in Hedgerow Theatre was not accepted because of its structure that does not follow a chronological order. Critics and producers at the time considered this structure as unconventional and the Native content of the play was disdained (Darby, 2007, p.8). As a matter of fact, even as late as the 1930s the critics demanded the comfortable, conventional, and Ibsenian well-made play (Erhard, 1970, p.23). Broadway producers said that the non-chronological, episodic play was five years ahead of the New York audience. These words prove that Riggs really wrote ahead of his time (Braunlich, *Haunted by Home*, 1988, p.123). Thus, the play was forgotten and did not move to Broadway, New York as it was planned for. However, *The Cherokee Night* was finally received and appreciated, and it revived during the 1970s.

It is clear that Riggs is such a talented playwright whose high artistic standards kept him from offering his art to New York show business (Erhard, 1970, p.2). It is a credit for him that he never stopped writing plays although Broadway did not appreciate his art besides the continuous critical attacks on his play. In Riggs' opinion, the American stage must be "a platform for fervor, eloquence and blinding revelation of man. It must be more than entertainment. . . . It must touch and illumine the spirit of striving man" (qtd. in Braunlich, *Haunted by Home*, 1988, p.120). Riggs is described as one of the most gifted writers. In spite of his modest proportion, American theatre would be far less rich without such plays as *Green Grow the Lilacs* (1931) and *The Cherokee Night*. If Riggs had some professional regional theaters at the time to produce his plays, he would have gained his real value and fame as early as the 1930s. Speaking about Riggs' drama, one needs to highlight, first, the origins of Native American drama and the historical background of the suffering of the Native Americans that led Riggs to deal deeply with Native American status or affairs.

The history of Native American theatre started from the turn of the twentieth century through today. Native theatre companies started to appear since 1956. In 1999, Native play scripts became accessible to people of all income levels. The *North American Indian Drama* collection enters public libraries, and the online series aims to collect and publish the full texts of over 200 plays by different Native American dramatists (Stanlake, 2009, p.14-15). In fact, it is not only Riggs' drama that was not appreciated or understood, it was the Native American drama in general. In many cases, the Native American plays were not understood because they have different dramaturgy. For instance, the Native American drama has its distinctive portrayals of place, language, and motion. It complements and extends theories of theater, and it has a different, perhaps even better, use of the theatrical medium (Stanlake, 2009, p.15). For example, storytelling structure is used to have a non-linear or cyclical plot structure, like *The Cherokee Night*. There are liquid boundaries between past, present, and future, and between life and the afterlife. This intermingling may implicate the audience, making its stories and experiences part of the drama. Another important element in the Native American drama, which seems different from Euro- American drama, is the nature of the conflict itself. Characters appear complicated because they represent all the relations to what is mythological, non-human, the spirit world, and the land itself. Because of this split between sacred and secular spheres and

the earthly and spiritual interconnections, Native writing gains its distinctive quality (Stanlake, 2009, p.23).

Frequently, Native drama's topics have a political background. They address such issues like sovereignty, reclaiming identities, revising history and Native traditions, treating matters related to Native communities, and surviving culture. Riggs' plays usually dramatize the relationship between people and their natural environments. In *The Cherokee Night*, he shows how the land of Oklahoma responds to the aftermath of Indian Territory's transition into statehood. *The Cherokee Night* reflects a status of Cherokee Indians almost a century after the Trail of Tears, General Allotment Act of 1887, The Curtis Act, Oklahoma statehood in 1907, and federal efforts to break up the Cherokee Nation. As a consequence, millions of acres of land are lost in addition to the disruption of traditional community ties, spiritual practices, education, and sovereignty (Darby, 2007, p.8).

The early twentieth century, the time of the play, was a painful time for many Natives. It was the time of the federal policies of assimilation, repression, separation, and annihilation practiced by the European Americans against Indians. These practices eventually led to the disintegration of the Indian tribe (Braunlich, "The Cherokee Night of R. Lynn Riggs," 1988, p.46). This situation resulted in highly pessimistic literature by Indian writers that reflected problematic social realities especially that the Native American literature at the time portrayed Natives as a primitive or an uncivilized warrior, not the complex character that the reader encountered in Riggs' plays, for example. Riggs himself reflected his inner struggle to live out his own Indianness. As part Cherokee himself, he experienced, as some Indians or as his characters in the play, the feelings of hopelessness and loss. He said about himself,

“Actually, I have done little in life except try to discover who I am and what my relation to the world I know consists of. In the world itself I have never really felt at home. How can anyone feel at home in a world of unparalleled stupidity and cruelty, a world aching with hunger and despair? Can one be at peace with the economic and social and political organization of a world that makes man fear living, hate his neighbor, revile the sources of his being, and boast of his allegiance to violence and destruction? I do not think so. And turning from the consideration of the outer world in dismay, I look at myself. And what do I find there? Weakness. Lack of discipline. Feeble attempts at understanding. Ignorance. Vanity. Waywardness and conceit “ (Erhard, 1970, p.39).

He has a strong rejection of European American assimilation and annihilation (Weaver, 1999, pp. xiii-xiv), and he considers, in his play, the intermarried with non-Indians as early as 1877, which causes a lot of mixed-blood and raises the blood quantum issue. Into this upheaval of feelings and realities, Riggs presents his part- Cherokee characters in *The Cherokee Night*, taking them from their birth to different ages throughout the play. Riggs finds these young characters "a unique form of modern alienation and a stream of natural emotion that had been thwarted and turned aside by the overriding white culture. The resulting inner conflicts tore at the banks of [Riggs'] stability, his energy, his hope" (Braunlich, "The Cherokee Night of R. Lynn Riggs," 1988, p.48). It is a conflict between the reality of the mainstream, white society and the Indian traditions and roots.

*The Cherokee Night* opens with six young men and women who are all mixed-blood. They are having a picnic in Claremore Mound, Oklahoma, which is the location of the last battle between Cherokee warriors and Osages. The scene opens in 1915 when the characters are around twenty years old. They know each other since childhood, but everyone goes in a different direction in life. They are: Viney Jones, Hutch Moree, Audeal Coombs (that we never meet again in the play), Art Osborne, Bee Newcomb, and Gar Breeden. Bee and Gar share the same

father who is the part- Cherokee outlaw Edgar Spench who appears in the last scene of the play that is set in 1895. They appear violent and aggressive in speaking to each other, and mostly their speech is about blood quantum. Each scene of the play tackles a story and tells how each character gives up his/her Cherokee identity, brotherhood, and morality to resort to alcoholism, prostitution, murder, and laziness.

Talbert is an old Cherokee man, and he is the seventh character in the play. He has been there in Claremore Mound when the characters are picnicking. He has been digging the graves of the Cherokee warriors and collecting arrowheads that their ancestors used in fighting. Talbert tries to remind the young group of the past Cherokee heritage, and how he is collecting these arrowheads to make Cherokees remember their brave ancestors and how now their homelands are taken from them. The characters are set in a haunting environment. These haunting reminders turn the young characters themselves to ghosts because they live as ghosts in a land that is not theirs, and are trying to fit within a culture that is not theirs too. They do nothing for their Cherokee nation. They are neither good to themselves nor to their nation. Hence, they are like ghosts: "[w]e, too, are dead. We have nobodies, [w]e are homeless ghosts, [w]e are made of air" (Riggs, 2003, p.127). This includes Talbert himself. This is what the ghost of the Indian warrior said to Talbert when it met him long ago: "[w]ho made us that, Jim Talbert? Our children—our children's children! They've forgot who we was. Who *they* are! You too, Jim Talbert, like all the rest" (Riggs, 2003, p.127). It is, ultimately, the new generation's responsibility.

Old Talbert tells the young characters about that ghost of a warrior that appeared to him ten years ago and it reminded Talbert of the glory of the Cherokee nation, and it told him also that they must be proud of their Cherokee identity. The ghost saw that the new generation had forgotten their heritage and tribal life. The warrior ghost placed the blame on the new generation for neglecting their sacred, ritual responsibilities, and it condemned the new generation of being interwoven in the white life and culture:

Are you sunk already to the white man's way—with your soft voice and your flabby arm? Have you forgot the use of the tomahawk and the bow? Not only in war—in quiet times—the way we lived: Have you forgot the smoky fire, the well-filled bowl?

Do you speak with the River God, the Long Person no more—no more with the vast Horned-Snake, the giant Terrapin, with Nuta, the Sun? Are you a tree struck lightning?

Are you a deer with a wounded side? All of you—all our people—have come to the same place! The grass is withered. Where the river was is red sand. Fire eats the timber. Night—night—has come to our people! (Riggs, 2003, p.128).

The ghost's speech holds a lot of charges against the Cherokee youth who disregards the many elements of traditional Cherokee life and their Cherokee ancestors, and it is noticeable that the speech is full of images of Cherokee spirituality, mythology, and stories. By these details, the ghost has emphasized the rich and spiritual history of the Cherokee tribe or nation. The appearance and the story of the ghost are crucial to the play and to the subject matter of the paper. The scenes of the play discussed below will show whether these Cherokee characters really understand and appreciate the message of the ghost, and whether they fulfill this message and restore the things mentioned by the ghost and broken inside them.

The play can be seen as a ghost story. From the outset of the play, Riggs sets the play as the domain of ghosts (Driskill, 2010, p.182). Spectral Indians appear everywhere in American literature. They haunt eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth-century literature. They hover around both national and literary history, and they appear in works by Native Americans and European Americans. Although the Indian ghosts in the white writers' works are used to diminish and remove Indians from reality to imagination, the meaning of their appearance in the

works of Native American is mostly positive. In some circumstances, Native people call their forbearers as "vengeful ghosts" (Bergland, 2000, p.4). The appearance of the warrior ghost in Riggs' play can be thought to be a revengeful appearance in the sense that his message calls to revive the Cherokee nation, resist the assimilation and annihilation, and protect the Cherokee traditions. There are old stories in which Cherokee ghosts appear when they were angry with the Cherokees because they departed from the customs and ceremonial practices of their ancestors and adopted the ways of the white man. The Cherokees, according to the play, could regain the favor of their ghosts if they gave up anything they had acquired from the whites and returned to their old ways (McLoughlin, 1984, p.113).

Renee L. Bergland defines ghosts simply as "the things that we try to bury, but that refuse to stay buried. They are our fears and our horrors, disembodied, but made in inescapable by their very bodilessness . . . [they] are impossible to control or to evade" (2000, p.5). In the case of the play, these fears are the words of the ghost of the warrior who fought bravely and died in the battles and who could not be buried and stayed buried, seeing the horrible status of the Cherokees. The ghost comes to tell the Cherokees that they live a horrible life by forgetting their glories and past that they bury and try to forget. The general understanding of ghosts by people is negative: they are bad, terrifying things. However, Bergland relates the Native ghost to justice. He further explains how the history of Europeans with Native Americans is a history of murder, looted graves, illegal land transfers, and disruption of sovereignty. All these issues of public injustice give significant clues to the representation of Native ghosts as coming back for justice (2000, p.8). In this perspective, the Indian ghosts can be comprehended as a source of hope. The ghost of *The Cherokee Night* gives the youth a hope of being better in condition that they behave like real Cherokees: brave warriors.

*The Cherokee Night* with the message of the ghost seems to urge resistance to colonial racism, violence, and assimilation, and it urges Cherokee descendants to revive their cultural memory. Thus, the play can be dealt with as a post-colonial text. There is an invitation in the text through the ghost and Talbert to "subdue colonial forces that endanger the Cherokee community" (Driskill, 2010, p.182). The following sections of the paper will deal with some of the youths after the message of the ghost. How they react as Cherokees and how their life looks like, highlighting some community and family values that are lost after the removal.

### **Family Bond**

This section will show a family relation between two sisters (Viney and Sarah), and two brothers (Hutch and George). Scene three of the play tackles the relationship between Viney and her older sister Sarah. Viney did not visit her sister for ten years. She is married to the wealthy white mayor of Quapaw. She seems so happy and proud of her successful assimilation into Oklahoma society. She completely indulges in her new life. Sarah is a widow and a sick woman, and she does not have money to buy some ointment for her rheumatism. Viney is expected to visit her sister finally; however, Sarah is not expecting a lot from her, and Sarah's feelings toward her sister sound negative. Sarah tells her daughter, Maise, that "Viney and me was always kind of strangers to one another" (Riggs, 2003, p.147). A clash happens between the two sisters when Viney arrives at Sarah's house. Sarah reminds Viney of her Indian life and past that she discards entirely. She reminds her of their childhood and how their mother taught them to stick to their Indian life: "[r]emember it and your days'll be food and drink. They'll be a river in the desert, they'll be waving grass and deer feeding" (Riggs, 2003, p.153). Sarah appears proud of her Cherokee heritage. She emphasizes their mother's concepts of respect and thankfulness in an attempt to remind Viney of tribal bonds that in turn emphasize the family ties. Then, Sarah cries for her mother and the past days in great despair and hopelessness: "Maw! Maw! Where are you? Where has the good life gone to? It's got fur away and dim. It's not plain any more. I

can't follow. I tried! I tried!" (Riggs, 2003, p.153). Sarah is among those Cherokees who remain faithful to their Indianness, but apparently she becomes so tired and helpless. She lives in poverty and illness. She is unable even to keep herself warm in winter and prevent the pain of rheumatism. She cannot cope with the new life of the white that Viney welcomes and even feels happy that her Cherokee part does not show. Sarah tells her angrily: "[e]verything you say shames you. You try too hard to deny what you are. It tells on you. . . . They's nuthin' else in you but change. You've turned your back on what you ought to a-been proud of" (Riggs, 2003, p.151). Viney does not care or listen to her sister's words, and she mocks Sarah's words so harshly:

(*Angrily.*) Being a part Indian? What it get me? Do you think I want to be ignorant and hungry and crazy in my head half the time like a lot of 'em around here? Do you think I want to be looked down on because I can't do anything, can't get along like other people? Do you think I want to make the kind of mess of my life you have—and live in a filthy hole like this the rest of my days—? (Riggs, 2003, p. 151).

Viney is describing the life of Indians or part- Indians after years of the removal. She is criticizing them and their life but she says the reality. Her sister, Sarah, is an example of those Indians who do not truly try to assimilate with the white life and deny their Indian part. However, Viney is not better than them: "Riggs noted informally that Viney's resilience, which made her white was ... a defeat ... because it cheats her, makes her life thin and fictitious" (Braunlich, "The Cherokee Night of R. Lynn Riggs," 1988, p.56). Assimilation, from another perspective, can be seen as a dilution: not quite white and not quite Indian (Nelson, 2014, p.3). Sarah herself admits that her life is bad but she finds it better than Viney's: ". . . The hole you live in is filthier [than mine], and it suits you down to the ground" (Riggs, 2003, p.151). Viney leaves throwing fifty cents to her sister to buy her liniment. She visits her sister after ten years to give her only fifty cents, which is for her sister and her niece a luxury. Sarah tells her daughter when seeing the money: "[p]ick it up. We'll need it. Maise picks it up, crying out joyously" (Riggs, 2003, p.155).

Jane Darby finds Viney "the representative of desperate assimilation" (2007, p.15). She alienates herself from her heritage and she comforts herself by rejecting continuously and strongly her Indianness. She breaks the Cherokee kinship obligation and proves her failure to be a good sister or relative (Darby, 2007, p.16). What the reader sees is a selfish person who gives up her Cherokeeness by giving up the Cherokee community ties and leaving her sister and her niece to their poverty. Viney reminds us of the ghost's speech about Indians who are sunk in the white man's way of life, and who disregard the Indian tradition. She is an example of the loss of identity that most assimilated Indians suffer from. She develops a self-hating personality that her sister's speech and the blood relation between them do not change her. A similar confrontation happens between two brothers in another scene of the play.

Scene six introduces another blood relation between the two brothers: Hutch and George. Hutch appears in scene one stuttering all the time when he speaks, and Viney makes fun of him. Art tries to support him and says that Hutch was not used to stutter when he was a boy. Now in scene six that opens in 1919 that is four years after scene one, Hutch appears in a different status. He is the boyfriend of the wealthy Kate Whiteturkey who is an Osage Indian girl of eighteen. He is dressing very well and never stutters while speaking now. His brother George appears at the very beginning of the scene coming to see Hutch. George appears a self-confident person, and his speech with Kate, at the beginning of his arrival, seems so steady and witty at the same time. He is astonished that his brother has a lot of clothes and shoes, and he seems to live a luxurious life. He finds out then that Kate is very rich because of her right in oil lands. Hutch is

seduced by her wealth and, like Viney, he forgets his tribe and even his family. George comes to remind his brother of the honor and importance of the family and the land.

George feels upset, also, when he knows that Kate and her brother do not work and that Hutch is learning how to be lazy like Kate's family. When Hutch first sees George, "*he stops short, hostile, defensive,*" and he simply and angrily says, "[w]hat do you want?" (Riggs, 2003, p.193). He shows a clear dislike to his brother saying: "*(Quickly, to Kate.) What'd he say to you? (Turning on George fiercely.) You be careful what you say to Kate! I'll break you in pieces, you hear me! I don't want you around here. Why don't you leave me alone? (He turns away from him.)*" (Riggs, 2003, p.194). George is completely surprised, seeing his brother in this way and hearing these words. He concludes that Kate makes him have this ill behavior. George is astonished how Cherokee and Osages become friends after being enemies for a good while. He says, "Cherokee and Osage—the lion and the lamb lie down and sleep together!" (Riggs, 2003, p.195). George compares Cherokees to lions referring to their courage and power. He is very proud of his tribe, but the Cherokees seem to be not lions any more. In spite of Hutch's rejection and dismissing to his brother, George invites him to go back to his tribe. He tells him that there is a good job for him and that he can marry a decent Cherokee woman and get rid of his life with this weird, idle people. Hutch starts to think about his brother's speech silently; he has been disturbed by it. Kate breaks this silence by her continuous call for Hutch to join her in their modern car. He answers her stuttering again, "[w]ha-wha-what am I g-g-gonna do?" (Riggs, 2003, p.197) and the scene ends.

His return to stuttering is explained by Phyllis Braunlich as: "Hutch loses his new-found confidence, returns to his former stuttering, but resents his brother's call back to responsibility. He is not strong enough to take up the hard road again" ("*The Cherokee Night* of R. Lynn Riggs," 1988, p.55). Hutch is suffering from a lack of confidence that is why he has acquired the habit of stuttering after his childhood. His relationship with Kate and his new life with her give him a temporary, unreal confidence, which he immediately loses when his brother reminds him of his family and his status of being Cherokee. George's words make Hutch realize the false situation and life he lives in although he changes nothing except that he returns to his stuttering again. Hutch's final decision after George's advice is not clear or final; nevertheless, his stuttering can indicate that he realizes the burden of his responsibility (Stanlake, 2009, p.89). His stuttering means that he is helpless because it does not seem that he will take an action. The scene ends with him responding to Kate's call. Is Hutch the warrior that the ghost imagines? The ghost is a warrior ghost who appears in an attempt to promote the pride of the Cherokee nation. The young characters are not the Indian warriors any more who fought the Osages in the past. The young Indian in the play represented by Hutch is submissive to the Osages, forgetting about his tribal glory and unity. The event of this scene plays against the family values and the loss of brotherhood. Hutch's tone with his brother is very sharp just like Viney's tone with her sister. Hutch and Viney are cheating themselves by their illusive, new life away from their tribal roots. Weak family bond is not the only issue that the new Indians suffer from. The following section touches other crucial social and moral concerns.

### **False Friendship, Prostitution, and Bloodlust**

Art and Bee are two of the young characters that are introduced to the reader in scene one. In scene two of the play, they appear together again but in a jail. The scene is set in 1927, which is twelve years after their first meeting. Art is a prisoner now accused of killing his Indian Osage wife using a hatchet while they were in a boat. He claims that he is innocent and a reader may believe him but the Sheriff cannot. He uses Bee who works as a waitress and a prostitute to cheat her friend and make him confess for \$25. She approves and the policemen put a recorder in the cell where Art and Bee meet. By approving, Bee sells her Indian friend, knowing very

well that he will be hanged. She pushes Art to confession in a tricky way. First, she speaks about their past meeting in Claremore Mound, and they try to remember the other friends. Then, she starts speaking about his wife and how he kills her for her money. He tells Bee that it was an accident and that his wife fell on the rocks of the river and she died, but Bee remains insisting on the point that he kills his wife for her money and that he is lucky to get it. Shortly, Art admits that he kills her but not for her money but for something else. Before making a confession in front of her, he emphasizes that "[y]ou won't tell on me—Don't tell on me! I—No one cain't hear me, can they?" (Riggs, 2003, p.139). He trusts Bee as an old friend but she betrays him. He tells her that he hates his wife that is why he killed her. He says,

I hated her. Don't you know what it is to hate? (*In a rush.*) Her leathery old face, them eyes all bloodshot, her stringy hair, she hissed with her teeth when she talked, like a snake! You've saw her. I hated her I wanted to kill her. I always wanted to kill her! (*Fiercely.*) See the blood spout from her ugly face... (Riggs, 2003, p.139).

Art has no real motivation to kill her, and it is only out of hatred and bloodlust (Thunder, 2002, 362). Art behaves in an extreme way, and his motivation is not really comprehensible or justifiable. He married his wife out of consent and lived with her for a considerable time; she was old and rich and he married her for "security" (Braunlich, *The Cherokee Night* of R. Lynn Riggs," 1988, p.55). There is no real cause for marriage except to live with a wealthy woman securing a good life in a house. He is just like Hutch who overlooks the Cherokee's pride over their enemies, the Osages, for the sake of a false security. However, Art cannot adjust for ever to this life that he builds on false foundations. Riggs says that this scene illustrates "Cherokee hate and maladjustment" (Braunlich, "*The Cherokee Night* of R. Lynn Riggs," 1988, p.55). Art's hatred drives him to murder his wife, leaving her daughter motherless. Art appears here brutal as well as a victim to rancor and murderous fantasy. Violence and cupidity "are intentionally drawn to the surface of the play as invading forces that disrupt the Cherokee community" (Driskill, 2010, p.191).

Riggs evokes the idea of hatred and violence as characteristics of the young Cherokees through the character of Bee too. When Art describes the murder he committed and the hatred he carried toward his wife, his feelings of hatred evoked Bee's inner feelings of hatred too when saying, "*Almost savage joy, topping him in volume.*) Hate! Everybody! Me, too! Like me! (*Almost hysterically.*). . . . Listen, that's the way I feel—All the men I'd kill! I can see how you felt" (Riggs, 2003, p.139). Her feelings of hatred are no better than Art's. She is ready to kill all the men that she knows because of unnamed feelings of hatred. In Julie Little Thunder's perspective, bloodlust pervades the play (2002, p.362). Thunder refers to bloodlust simply as "an emotion which makes combatants abandon their tactical goals in battle and propels them into an orgy of bloodletting for its own sake" (2002, p.360). Art has no real motive or intention to kill his wife. He has been marrying her for years, and at the time of the murder they were in a boat not arguing or quarrelling. He used a hatchet for chopping grass that it was there in the boat. He did not take a certain weapon with him as he did not really plan to kill her at that certain time. However, in the boat something urged him to kill her. He explains,

In the boat they was a hatchet—one of them little hatches—sharp—sharp off the grindstone! I retch fer it. She grinned at me. I hit her and hit her, her grinin' at me like a fool! Hit her seven or eight times, her clawin' to git away! Killed her, throwed her overboard! The blood come on the water like oil! Not fer her money, thought, don't you think that! I wouldn't do that. I hated her, that's why, hated her, hated everybody—! (Riggs, 2003, p.139).



What urges Art in the boat to kill her is looking at her face and at her smile; unconsciously, he hits her more than one time till he sees the scene of her blood shattered and mixed with the water of the river. This scene satisfies him or his lust for her blood. The intensive feelings of hatred cause degeneration in the Indian personality (Thunder, 2002, p.356). Bee shares Art the same bloodlust feelings or urges. She wants or wishes to kill all the men although they have no guilt, and she is the one who prostitutes herself to them. Are Bee and Art the Cherokees that the ghost hopes to see: persons who have bloodlust for nothing but to kill other innocent people and cheat on each other? Does the ghost hope to see the young Cherokees as victims of the feelings of hatred?

They are the feelings of loss and alienation that most Indians feel in their new life that they cannot adjust to. Actually, Bee's feelings of blind hatred and revenge reach her Indian friend himself, and she sells him to the white authorities, further prostituting herself and showing the reader how friendship has a price in the new Cherokee community (Darby, 2007, p.15). Bee appears for the reader as a woman devoid of any sense of community. Not only does she experience the feeling of loss like some other Indians especially the mixedblood, but also she has experienced a bitter emotional shock. She developed an emotional relationship with Gar, but then they discovered that they share the same father (Spench). Her frustration drives her to be a lonely and indifferent prostitute. By the end of the scene, the readers, recalling the message of the ghost, find that Art fails to secure a life by himself and he becomes a vicious murderer, and Bee can do nothing except being a whore.

## Conclusions

*The Cherokee Night* manifests the condition of Indians in a post-removal and post-allotment era. Riggs means to make all his characters mixed-blood in order to emphasize the complexity of the situation, and the complexity of the belonging sense that leads the young characters to tragic ends. It is a play about the failure of the Cherokee nation. The nonchronological sequence of the play's scenes refers to the cycle of frustration from one generation to another. This nonlinear structure of the play reflects also a world out of balance. A forecasting of this condition of chaos and Indian trauma is made by Gar and Bee's father in the last scene of the play before their birth. This scene is set in 1895 and should be the first scene chronologically followed by Talbert and the ghost's message scene. A white posse shoots Spench. His wife Marthy says,

Now it's over. Sleep. Rest now. (*She shifts the child in her arms, looks down at it.*) But here's your son. In him your trouble. It goes on. In him. It ain't finished.

.....  
Your disgrace, your wickedness, your pain and trouble live on a while longer. In [Bee's mother's] child, in my child. In all people born now, about to be born (Riggs, 2003, p.210).

It is a prophecy made by the playwright in this scene of the play. It is a continuous or inherited problem and if there is a hope to end this trauma, it will be in memory and in honoring and accepting the Cherokee heritage by its people who must work for the well-being of the Cherokee community. The first scene of the play calls on the characters to follow just that advice, and the ghost calls exactly for the reviving of the Cherokee grace. Seeing scene seven of the play (Spench scene) and recalling the six early scenes, the audience realizes that the troubles are really going on, and that the ghost's message and old Talbert 's speech pass through the ears of

the six Cherokee adults ineffectively. Obviously, there is a parallel between the message of the ghost and the message of scene seven. These messages are putting the responsibility on the new Cherokee generation to rebalance its world and themselves after the severe period of colonization.

In fact, the concept of the ghost, the topic of this paper, can be interpreted in two ways here. Indians diminish as ghosts. Talbert alludes to that condition when he describes the Cherokee adults as homeless ghosts who are good for nothing. Thus, Indians appear, in the play, as useless and powerless like shadows or specters. The other meaning of the ghost here is a messenger that comes to convey a message or a warning to people. Mostly, it is a message of hope and justice: "Native American ghosts return to us again and again. The specters are signs of death and justice, and signs of life and hope. They are signs of the land itself, and of the land's history... They stand for the Native American community. Native American phantoms signify the triumph of nationalism" (Bergland, 2000, p.169). However, the new generation, in the play, does not listen. The scenes of the play warn against a deterioration of family and friendship bonds that leads to a deterioration of a whole nation.

The Cherokee tribe is known for its strong community ties. Cherokees care for even the most distant relatives, and the loss of one's parents never means the loss of one's family. The tribe feels obliged to help its members. These ties disappear in the new life of the Cherokees. The new generation is seeking a hope in a strange culture. Gar states that the tribal elder council is no more meeting to solve the tribal problems, and nothing directs the future of the young Cherokees. Riggs chose to write on a community of Cherokee youth instead of a certain protagonist. He was concerned to dramatize the forms of oppression that kill the human spirit within Cherokee country. The location here plays a role: the description of the setting of the play (Claremore Mound) appears in the stage direction of the very beginning of the play as follows: "*No smoke rises from this ghostly habitation. But somewhere inside is the muffled thud of a drum and the sound of deep voices*" (Riggs, 2003, p.112). Thereupon, it is a ghostly setting in which there is only a dim appearance of the Cherokee tradition signs like a fire and a drum. Despite the fact that the play concentrates on the mixed-blood and the Indian portion in the young character, the major core is that a person is judged as a Native American according to how he or she views the world, land, home, culture, and family. It is not a matter of how much the Cherokee quantum in the blood of a young character is; it is how far he or she is faithful to their tribal traditions. Riggs' concern is the Cherokees as a nation and as individuals. His concerns are complicated as the complicated identities of his characters, and these concerns carry a little or an ambiguous hope. This ambiguous hope is centralized around the title of the play itself where night and darkness are significant, and they seem never-ending.

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