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## **Torn Between Worlds: The Collision of Spiritual and Cultural Realities in The Orenda by Joseph Boyden**

**G. Lakshmi Priya**

Ph.D. Research Scholar (Full Time), PG & Research Department of English  
Sri Meenakshi Government Arts College for Women (A), Madurai-02.

**Dr. N. Gnanaselvi**

Guide & Research Supervisor, Associate Professor  
PG & Research Department of English  
Sri Meenakshi Government Arts College for Women (A), Madurai-02.

### **Abstract**

During Canada's early colonial era, the complex and frequently destructive interactions between Indigenous and European worlds are examined in Joseph Boyden's *The Orenda*. The story is told from the viewpoints of three main characters: Christophe, a Jesuit priest; Snow Falls, an Iroquois prisoner; and Bird, a Huron warrior. The intersection of political realities, cultural identities, and spiritual beliefs is analysed through a variety of perspectives. Fundamentally, the novel depicts the conflict and violence that result from the external forces of colonialism and Christianity clashing with worldviews based on spirituality and tradition. Boyden skillfully demonstrates how European influence alters and reshapes Indigenous social structures and spiritual practices, signifying the larger topic of cultural survival and degradation. For Aboriginal communities, the path to empowerment and healing is a continuous one. One may strive toward a more welcoming and encouraging society if they recognize the difficult circumstances they encounter while also applauding their determination and diversity of culture. It has become more difficult for indigenous people to survive and preserve their distinct identities in the face of colonization and rapid changes in society. This paper examines how *The Orenda* captures the multifaceted experience of being "torn between worlds." It analyses the mechanisms of cultural imposition, resistance, and adaptation, considering how Boyden's narrative reflects historical realities while resonating with contemporary discussions about reconciliation and cultural preservation.

**Key words:** cultural identities, cultural preservation, cultural survival, Christianity clashing, spirituality and tradition.

Joseph Boyden's *The Orenda*, which eloquently depicts the indigenous people's struggle and survival in the face of colonization, provides an accurate depiction of the hard realities faced by the aboriginal people. The effects of this cultural collision have been extensive, and many of them are still felt in modern life. Tribal culture and tradition have been significantly impacted by the collision of indigenous and European views. "A Global History of Indigenous Peoples' Struggle and Survival" details the tremendous obstacles that indigenous people around the world have had to overcome in order to preserve their cultural, political, and economic independence. The Huron-Wendat people's attempts to maintain their way of life in the face of mounting outside influences are shown in the novel as a reflection of this conflict. Indigenous populations are still impacted by the trauma caused by colonization. Numerous Aboriginal

groups' actual experiences are reflected in the novel's depictions of brutality, cultural assimilation, and the devastation caused by European illnesses. The loss of ancestral lands and resources is one of the many current problems that have been exacerbated by these past tragedies. Loss of cultural customs and language, social problems and trauma across generations.

In both fiction and reality, indigenous people's persistence is evident despite the immense obstacles they encounter. According to The Guardian, the significance of maintaining cultural diversity in order to safeguard biological diversity is becoming increasingly apparent. This change signifies a new paradigm in which attempts to address global ecological challenges place a greater weight on indigenous knowledge and traditions. The intricate ways that indigenous people and societies have adjusted to shifting conditions while attempting to uphold their fundamental identities and values are depicted in *The Orenda* through characters like Bird and Snow Falls. The intricate web of trauma, resiliency, and cultural preservation characterizes the indigenous people's battle for survival. Examining the hard reality faced by Aboriginal people makes it become evident that their experiences are shaped by historical injustices and contemporary challenges. Because of colonization, forced assimilation, and institutionalized discrimination, Aboriginal tribes have endured trauma for many generations.

Cultural identity, social cohesiveness, and mental health are all impacted by this collective wound, which can take many different forms. Higher rates of substance misuse, marital violence, and suicide are among the harsh realities faced by Aboriginal people, and these conditions are frequently connected to unresolved past traumas. Many Aboriginal groups show incredible tenacity in preserving their tribal culture and customs in spite of the difficulties. People may connect with their ancestry and derive meaning from their common experiences thanks to this preservation, which serves as a source of strength and healing. But maintaining these customs in the face of industrialization and cultural deterioration is still quite difficult.

Aboriginal communities are still dealing with modern problems like economic inequality, poor

healthcare, and few educational opportunities. These difficulties exacerbate the trauma that many people and communities have gone through. Nonetheless, the necessity of culturally aware methods of support and healing is becoming more widely acknowledged. There is hope that the varied demands of Aboriginal populations can be met by initiatives that blend traditional knowledge with contemporary methods. Aboriginal people face the painful fact that their traditional knowledge, which is the foundation of their identity and legacy, is constantly in danger. This knowledge, which has been gathered over thousands of years, includes a multitude of agricultural, medical, and meteorological facts that run the risk of being lost forever. The preservation of indigenous languages is one of the most important facets of tribal culture. These languages serve as invaluable archives of information and are essential for passing down customs from one generation to the next. However, the survival of these languages and the wisdom they contain are at risk because many indigenous children are not educated in their original dialects.

When these different views collide, an explosion of cultural conflict and spiritual crises is created. The survival and struggle of the indigenous people are intrinsically related to the preservation of their spiritual legacy, as the story demonstrates. In the face of cultural change and colonization, the protagonists struggle with issues of faith, identity, and life's purpose. The violence, cultural relocation, and identity loss that the Indigenous characters go through throughout the novel are all manifestations of this spiritual war, which is not only abstract. The narrative curiously depicts the area as a spiritual battlefield. Boyden demonstrates how the characters' relationship to the land influences their spiritual experiences and perspectives by using ideas such as "psychogeography" and the "genius loci" (spirit of place). The European viewpoint, which frequently sees the land as a resource to be exploited, contrasts with the Indigenous characters' strong spiritual ties to their surroundings. The novel's already intricate network of religious and cultural tensions is further complicated by this dispute over the land's spiritual importance. *The Orenda* provides a potent reflection on the trauma and current problems that still impact tribal culture and tradition through its detailed examination of

two opposing worldviews. It acts as a moving reminder of the everlasting impact of colonial encounters on indigenous people's spiritual and cultural identities.

The difficulties of tribal culture in a changing world are brought to light by Snowfalls struggles to preserve her Iroquois ancestry while assimilating into Huron conventions. Her inner turmoil is a reflection of indigenous peoples' larger battle to maintain their customs while negotiating assimilation demands. The difficulties faced by contemporary indigenous game developers that aim to accurately portray their cultures in new media formats are reminiscent of this tension. The way Snowfalls changing identity is shown in the novel emphasises how environment and terrain influence cultural affiliation. Similar to "winter children" in Scandinavia, her experiences with the Huron show how one's sense of self and community may be significantly impacted by interactions with nature. Snowfalls struggle with her dual background serves as a moving illustration of how identity can appear.

When Bird meets Snow Falls, a young Haudenosaunee girl, during an attack, his journey takes an unexpected turn. Bird decides to adopt her as his own daughter in a moment that tests his vindictive determination. "...with the girl in his arms, her body as straight and stiff as if she were frozen solid... I take her and make her my own child?"(11). This choice is a turning point in Bird's story and demonstrates the intricate relationship between morality and tribal culture. The act of adopting an enemy's child demonstrates the adaptability and resiliency that are essential to the survival and struggle of indigenous people. A microcosm of the greater cultural conflict taking place in Canada in the 17th century is produced by Bird's decision to erect Snow Falls. Bird has to face the long-standing hostility between their peoples as he tries to include her into Huron culture. The arrival of a Jesuit priest named Christophe further complicates this issue. Bird is forced to reevaluate long-held beliefs and customs as a result of his experiences with Snow Falls and Christophe, highlighting the significant difficulties that indigenous communities suffered during European colonialism. Boyden examines the conflict between upholding one's customs and adjusting to a changing society

through Bird's journey; this dilemma still affects indigenous tribes today.

Christophe, sometimes known as Crow, set out on a determined mission to convert the Huron people to Christianity in the harsh reality of 17th-century Canada. His attempt to convert individuals he considered to be "savage and godless" exemplified the clash of cultures that characterised this colonial period. "In matters of the spirit, these Sauvage's believe that we all have within us a life force that is similar, if you will, to our own Catholic belief in the soul. They call this life force the orenda." . The wider European perspective that saw indigenous people as primitive and in need of redemption was mirrored in Crow's resolve to convert the Hurons. As Crow persisted in trying to enforce his religious views, the fight for the survival and cultural preservation of indigenous people grew more intense. Crow's steadfast dedication to his cause, in spite of criticism for his inadequate command of the Huron language, brought attention to the intricate power dynamics at work. He acted as a continual reminder of the growing European influence among the Hurons.

The Hurons were caught between the new faith being imposed on them and their traditional beliefs as Crow's teachings started to gain traction. The trauma and current problems that Aboriginal people experienced at this turbulent time were further compounded by this spiritual struggle. The missionary's attempts to start a mission and school served as more evidence of the European colonists' methodical approach to cultural assimilation. The Hurons' reactions to Crow's mission were mixed; some fervently adhered to their old customs, while others welcomed the new faith. As indigenous groups struggled to maintain their identity in the face of tremendous external forces, this internal conflict within the tribe represented the larger difficulties they faced. Gosling is a key character in the story of the harsh reality of Aboriginal people, representing the spiritual depth and tenacity of their battle and survival. Within the Huron-Wendat culture, Gosling is a revered mystic whose prophetic skills act as a beacon of light, assisting her people in navigating the perilous waters of external dangers and cultural upheaval.

The complex interrelationship between tribal cul-

ture and tradition and the creeping influence of European invaders is best illustrated by Gosling's character. Her concerns that Crow would convert the tribe draw attention to the conflict between upholding traditional practices and embracing modern spiritual ideas. As many indigenous people struggle to preserve their identity in a world that is changing quickly, this conflict lies at the core of their pain and current problems. Gosling also acts as a spiritual advisor, providing direction to help Bird and others in making important choices. As the tribe confronts existential threats from both competing indigenous groups and European colonists, her ideas prove vital. Boyden used Gosling to highlight the value of spiritual practices and traditional knowledge in assisting indigenous people in overcoming the severe obstacles posed by colonization. Gosling's character also stands in for the sometimes-disregarded contribution that women make to tribal leadership and decision-making. Her impact on Bird and her capacity to direct the tribe's activities highlight the intricate power relationships in indigenous cultures, casting doubt on oversimplified ideas of gender roles in these civilizations.

The tribe's survival plans depend more and more on Gosling's predictions and advice. Her insight aids in the community's readiness for upcoming threats, both cultural and physical. Gosling's insight connects the past to an uncertain future, offering a thread of continuity in the face of tragic losses and the degradation of their way of life. In the end, Gosling's character is a moving reminder of how resilient and flexible indigenous cultures can be. In a world ripped apart by the collision of divergent worldviews, her prophetic voice, which leads the tribe through adversity, reflects the resilient spirit of Aboriginal people in the face of insurmountable odds and provides hope and direction.

The intricate realities of 17th-century Canada are brought to life through the interwoven stories of Bird, Snow Falls, and Christophe. While acknowledging the complex web of relationships that arise from such interactions, the novel challenges to face the destructive effects of colonization. Readers are forced to think about the long-term effects of cross-cultural interactions and the potential for both adaptation and destruction in hu-

man follow the characters' experiences. *The Orenda* invites readers to reflect on the enduring impact of historical events on their current conception of identity, spirituality, and coexistence while serving as a moving reminder of the fine line that separates tradition from change.

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