

Chapter 5

Decolonization and Native Ethos :

Scott Momaday, Jeannette Armstrong and James Welch

The purpose of my writing has always been to tell a better story than is being told about us. To give that to the people and to the next generation. The voices of the grandmothers and grandfathers compel me to speak of the worth of our people and the beauty all around us, to banish the profaning of ourselves, and to ease the pain. I carry the language of the voice of the land and the valour of the people and I write not be silenced by a language of tyranny. (Armstrong 106).

Decolonisation is the process of revealing and dismantling colonialist power in all its forms. This includes dismantling the hidden aspects of those institutional and cultural faces that had maintained the colonialist power and that remain even after political independence is achieved.

(Ashcroft Tiffin 63)

We have seen in the preceeding chapters how different indigenous as well as post colonial modes have shaped Native writing. The modes employed by the Native writers were history, myth, oral narratology, autobiography respectively. In some ways these strategies of writing by Native writers calls for a move towards decolonisation. Within post colonial theory

decolonisation is one move towards neo-colonialism. Since Second World War, wars of independence and struggles for decolonisation by former parts of European Empires have shown the indigenous people that attempts to break can involve enormous violence: physical, socio-economic, cultural and psychological. The struggle for freedom has been viewed by writers such as Frantz Fanon as a necessarily, inevitably violent process between 'two forces opposed to each other by their very nature. Fanon argues that 'Decolonisation which sets out to change the order of the world is, obviously, a programme of complete disorder. (27).

Decolonization like colonization is a social process. Drawing suggestions from Prof Enriquez's - processes of colonization, Poka Laehui offers five distinct phases of decolonisation from a Hawain perspective. The first phase is rediscovery and recovery. This phase of rediscovering one's history and recovering one's culture, language, identity and so on is fundamental to the movement of decolonisation. The second phase is mourning - a natural out growth of the first phase - a time when people are able to lament their victimization. The third phase is dreaming - most crucial for decolonisation. It is during this phase that colonial people are able to explore their own culture, experience their own aspirations for their future and consider their own structures of government and social order to encompass and express their hopes. The fourth phase is commitment, which will culminate in people combining their voices in a clear statement of their desired direction. The action in the fifth phase is not reactive but

pro-active step taken based on consensus of the people. This responsive action calls for survival.

In order to rewrite themselves into existence and maintain Native solidarity the Natives in Canada and U.S.A. are using the enemy's language, English to erase the misconceptions held with respect to their people. As a kind of resistance the Native writers are creating a new Native World order untainted by White principle for their true sense of self determination and liberation.

In a post-colonial society at the heart of decolonialization, the recovery of geographical territory is preceded by charting of cultural territory. It involves a two way process. The first being the period of 'primary resistance' that literally means fighting against outside intrusion. The secondary period is the 'ideological resistance' where efforts are made to reconstitute a "shattered community, to save or restore the sense and fact of community against all the pressures of colonial system" (Davidson 252).

In the case of the Africans, decolonisation meant to imagine an Africa stripped of its imperial past. The process of radical decolonisation proposed by Ngugi; one of the foremost African writer, involves rejecting English in place of his mother tongue for restoring an ethnic or national identity. To put it differently Ngugi rejected anything that carries the label of the colonizer. For him, this kind of rejection rests upon the assumption that an

essential Gikuyu identity may be regained which the language of the colonizer seems to have displaced or dispersed.

In the same way for the Native Indians of North America decolonisation is the solution to systematic oppression perpetrated on them by the colonizers. It is also a means to contest the land claims issue in order to achieve self sufficiency. However for Howard Adams, a Native activist and writer "decolonisation in the third world colonies of Africa and Asia has meant violent confrontation" (122). This violence in the term of political activism in the 1960's and the 1970's in North America was a platform to free Natives from their sense of inferiority, despair and inaction.

Before the publication of Fanon's *Black Skin White Masks* (1952) it had been commonplace to use the 'other' and 'Not-self' for the White view of Black and resulting Black view of themselves. Such a kind of implication leaves Whites as the subject in and Blacks as the objects in the dominant White discourse. This terminology is similarly applicable to the Native Indians, Maories and other aboriginal groups. This concept of duality is central to Abdul R. Jan Mohammad's *The Economy of Manichean Allegory* that frames the Natives as under humanized, anti-democratic, backward, barbaric and so forth. Decolonization, therefore for the Native Indian meant to reject the notion of self as on other". In other words, to consider themselves as proud "First Nations".

We therefore find that the Native writing in the post 1960's reflects a sharp critique of colonialism. The presentation of everyday life is marred by suicide, alcoholism, self-destructive behaviour, poverty, family violence, disintegration of the extended family and the breach of trust between generations of Native population. The political dimension has been an inherent feature of this kind of writing and "has always been quintessentially political addressing their persecution and betrayal and summoning their sources for resistance", (Petrone 182). Native writers in particular express what they experiences everyday. As a result the theme of cultural clash and dilemma of Native Indian's identity are the main object of inquiry. This overt kind of representation had labelled Native writing as protest literature. While making critique of White colonial power politics, Native writers also incorporate traditional values to heal their scars and become liberated. Liberation for them rests on their old Native Indian rituals and traditions that have for generations enabled their ancestors to survive in extreme hostile conditions. In the following pages, it is proposed to read Momaday's *House Made of Dawn*, Jeannette Armstrong's *Slash* and Welch's *Fools Crow* as novels that aim at decolonising the Native from his sense of dispossession through Native traditional mode and values. The three novels taken as case studies posit decolonisation at three levels: cultural, political, and social.

In re/visioning, re/claiming and re/voicing history there are a number of aboriginal and minority poets and writers who address the silences of the past in their poetry and others forms of writing. In doing so, they provide

the reader with clues as to how to proceed in a de-colonising process. From long years of oppression, the voices of poets like Beth Cuthand, Bernice Louise Halfe, and Marlene Nourbese Philip emerge as cool, healing water to the Native people who are in a state of semi-apartheid situation. The English language blankets indigenous history resulting in the illusory overlay of "I' anguish," a deadweight that sinks into the collective psyche of the colonised (Nourbese Philip, 1989:52). The silence addressed by Nourbese Philip may be used as a guide to discuss that form of silence experienced by First Nations people in Canada, particularly through the images found in Cuthand's poem "Horse Dance to Emerald Mountain" (40) and Halfe's "Crying For Voice" (6).

As part of an overall strategy, the colonists prohibited communication between slaves to prevent rebellion, and tribal members were therefore separated. This strategy was also applied in the enforced separation of aboriginal children from their families during the residential school years and the attendant punitive treatment of those students who spoke their mother tongue in school. Nourbese Philip comments on the effect of growing up in the language of the oppressor in her essay "Managing the Unmanageable", in which she asserts that the coloniser uses language as a means to control the colonised, the "unmanageable". She states,

The challenge for me was to use that language, albeit the language of my oppression, but the only one I had, to subvert the inner and

hidden discourse – the discourse of my non-being. (Nourbese Philip, 1991:296).

Further, as a product of her own colonial history, where the blood of the oppressor runs together with the blood of the oppressed in her veins, she embodies the nature of the oppressor and the oppressed and by extension, the silence of the oppressed and the ability of the oppressor to speak. It is difficult for her to reconcile these internal oppositional forces. It is equally difficult to move through the obstacles of false perception and ultimately false consciousness and explode out of imposed definitions into a place that was always there.

That place is one of self-acceptance and trust in one's voice. If anything, it is a discovery of a place of courage out of which to express the cur/rage long silenced by years of oppression. As Halfe states in the afterword of her book *Bear Bones & Feathers*,

I often suffered the rash of shame bursting through thin layers of skin. Yet my spirit demanded the spring of clear blood. I saw no need to run. The land, the Spirit doesn't betray you. I was learning to cry with the Spirit. I was safe to tear, to lick, to strip the stories from my bones and to offer them to the universe. (126).

Beth Cuthand, another Canadian First Nations poet also makes an attempt to address the issue of silence and violence in her poetry. Ritual and

ceremony constitute and inform to a high degree the structure of her poem "Horse Dance to Emerald Mountain", from her collection *Voices in the Waterfall*. Basically, the poem concerns itself with a spiritual ceremony that was historically outlawed by the Canadian government, but was integral to the Cree culture. The poem, as with Nourbese Philip's *Looking for Livingstone*, traces a physical journey on a metaphysical level. Structurally, it is divided into seven sections with each section describing various emotional states and voices, a journey of transformation and metamorphosis for the "self" in the poem. What is the "Emerald Mountain?" It is the essential self, which is "selfless/unfettered/free" (Cuthand 54). In Cree culture, the "...Horse Dance was traditionally a prelude to the Sun Dance, an important ceremony for the Cree in which the community gathered as a collective to pray for the well-being of the world" (Cuthand 1996).

In *House Made of Dawn*, the protagonist Abel is alone and alienated throughout much the story, and the wasteland imagery and "bleakness" of the narrative reflect his isolation. Having lost his communal language, he has lost the words to express. Further more, he has reached this condition because of his exposure to an alien, non-communal culture in which individualism reigned. In the novel, Momaday attacks at the distortion of language and losing truth value in words as a White cultural phenomenon. In the "Priest of the Sun" chapter Tosamah gives a sermon contrasting White versus Indian attitudes towards the word, "Old John was a White man", he preaches, "and the White man has his way....." He talks about

the word. He talks through it and around it.... He adds and divides and multiplies the word. And in all of this he subtracts the "Truth" (87). Tosamah's grandmother, on the other hand, is a storyteller who respects and takes delight in language : "She had learned that in words and in language and there only she could have whole and consummate being (88). This sentence resembles the one cited earlier from Momaday's non-fictional discourse "generally speaking, man has to consummate being in language, and there only" ("Man", 104), and thus suggests that Tosamah speaks for the author.

For the Natives who view the word as sacred and whose very existence depends on the ability to express themselves through language, being denied verbal expression or not having the right words is equivalent to self and communal annihilation Momaday makes this point in his novel by having Abel finally realize the value of healing rituals and thereby regain his voice. As Momaday suggests: "One of the most tragic things about Abel, as I think of him, is his inability to express himself. He is in some ways a man without a voice..... so I think of him as having been removed from oral tradition" (19).

Like many oral narratives the novel is shaped thematically and structurally in a cyclic manner. The prologue is dominated by the race, a central theme in the novel as Momaday has suggested :

I see (House Made of Dawn) as a circle. It ends where it begins and its informed with a kind of thread that runs through it and holds everything together. The book itself is a race. It focuses upon the race "that's the thing that does hold it all together. But it's constant repetition of things too. (19).

According to Parson, racing is a conspicuous feature of Jemez ceremonialism. The winter race Abel runs in the prologue and at the end of the novel is the first race in the Jemez ceremonial season. But the race may be seen as a journey, a re-emergence journey analogous to Navajo and Kiowa oral tradition. Infact, the language echoes a Navajo re-emergence song sung in the Night Chant from which the title of the book is taken.

The journey undertaken by Abel stretches in four parts. His journey in Part I is a journey of return to Walatowa and his illness is most explicitly related to World War II experience. At the end of his seven memory fragments in the first dawn of his return Abel recalls:

This everything in advance of his going – he could remember whole and in detail. It was the recent past, the intervention of days and years without meaning of awful calm and collision, time always immediate and confused, that he could not put together in his mind (25).

Abel lost both the sense of place which characterized his tribal culture and the very community which supports that sense of place. "He didn't know where he was, and he was alone" (26). Incredibly, he doesn't even recognize the earth : "He reached for something, but he had no notion of what it was; his hand closed upon the earth and the cold, wet leaves" (26). Part II of the novel opens with Abel lying broken, physically and spiritually on the beach in Los Angeles. Abel's problem continues to be one of relating to place. As in part I at Walotowa, he fails to establish a sense of place in Los Angeles because of a failure to find community.

On the beach, then, Abel finally realizes that "he had lost his place" [96], a realization accompanied by the comprehension of the social harmony a sense of place requires. Out of his delirium, as if in a dream, his mind returns to the central thread of the novel, the race, and here at last Abel is able to assign meaning to the race as a cultural activity:

The runners after evil ran as water runs, deep in the channel, in the way of least resistance, no resistance. His skin crawled with excitement; he was overcome with longing and loneliness, for suddenly he saw the crucial sense in their going, of old men in White leggings running after evil in the night. They were whole and indispensable in what they did; everything in creation referred to them. Because of them, perspective, proportion, design in the universe meaning because of them. They ran with great dignity and calm, not in hope of anything, but hopelessly; neither in fear nor

hatred nor despair of evil, but simply in recognition and with respect. Evil was. Evil was abroad in the night; they must venture out to the confrontation; they must reckon dues and divide the world [96]

Abel killed the albino "the terrible strength of the hands was brought to bear only in proportion as *Abel resisted them*" [78, emphasis added]. The murder is an expression of Abel's disharmony and imbalance. As Abel here realizes "evil is that which is ritually not under control" In the ceremonial race not in individual resistance, the runners are able to deal with evil.

The second sermon, "The Way to Rainy Mountain," which Momaday has used in his book by the same title and several other contexts, addresses the relation of man, land, community, and the word. In it Tosamah describes the emergence of the Kiowa people as "a journey toward the dawn" that "led to a golden age" (118). It was a journey which led the Kiowa to a culture which is inextricably bound to the land of the southern plains. There, much in the manner of Abel looking over the Canon de San Diego in Part I, he looks out on the landscape at dawn and muses: "your imagination comes to life, and this, you think, is where Creation was begun". By making a re-emergence journey, Tosamah is able to feel a sense of place.

That coherent Native relation to the land described so eloquently by Tosamah is counterpointed in the novel not only by Abel's experiences but also by the memories of Milly, the social worker who becomes Abel's lover in Los Angeles. Milly, like Tosamah, is from Oklahoma. There her family too

struggled with the land, but "at last Daddy began to hate the land, began to think of it as some kind of enemy, his own very personal and deadly enemy" (113). Even viewed in the dawn her father's relation to the land was a despairing and hopeless one:

And every before dawn he went to the fields without hope, and I watched him, sometimes saw him at sunrise, far away in the empty land, very small on the skyline tuning to stone even as he moved up and down the rows (113).

Part III is told from the point of view of Ben Benally, a relocated Navajo who befriends Abel in Los Angeles. Roommates in Los Angeles, Ben and Abel share many things in their backgrounds. On his one visit to Walatowa, Benally finds the landscape there similar to that in which he grew up. Like Abel he was raised in the landscape without parents by his grandfather. Benally even suggests that he is somehow related to Abel since the Navajos have a clan called Jemez, the name of Abel's pueblo. Moreover, we recall that Abel's father may have been a Navajo, and that Francisco regards the Navajo children who come to Walatowa during the Fiesta of Porcingula as "a harvest, in some intractable sense the regeneration of his own bone and blood" (72). This kinship gives Benally special insight into Abel's problems and strengthens his role as Night Chanter.⁴⁰

Nevertheless, Benally is a night Chanter, the singer who helps restore voice and harmony to Abel's life. In the hospital having realized the significance of the runners after evil, Abel asks Benally to sing for him:

"House Made of Dawn". I used to tell him about those old ways, the stories and the songs, Beautyway and Night Chant. I sang some of those things, I told him what they meant, what I thought they were about. (113)

The songs from both the Beautyway and the Night Chant are designed to attract good and repel evil. They are both restorative and exorcising expressions of the very balance and design in the universe. Abel perceived in the runners after evil. Ben's words from the Night Chant for Abel are particularly appropriate, since the purpose of the Night Chant is to cure patients of insanity and mental imbalance. The structure and diction of the song demonstrate the very harmony it seeks to evoke. Dawn is balanced by evening light, dark cloud and rain by dark mist. All things are in balance and control, for in Navajo and Pueblo religion good is control.

Part IV opens with a description of a grey, ominous winter landscape. Olguin is reflecting on his seven year's service at Walatowa. Though Francisco's memory Abel is re-taught his ordered relation to place and how it is expressed in "the race of the dead" (185-6). Abel similarly participates in Francisco's memories of his initiation as a runner (in the race against

Mariano 187-7), as a man (with Porcingula, "the child of the witch" 184-5), and as a hunter (as he stalks the bear 178-78).

All signs then point to a new beginning for Abel as he rises on February 28, the last day of the novel. His own memory healed by Francisco's, for the first time in the novel he correctly performs a ceremonial function as he prepares Francisco for burial and delivers him to Father Olguin. He then joins the ash marked runners in the dawn. Momaday comments on that race in his essay "The Morality of Indian Hating:"

The first race each year in February, and then the dawn is clear and cold, and the runners breathe steam. It is a long race, and it is neither won nor lost. It is an expression of the soul in the ancient terms of sheer physical exertion. To watch those runners is to know that they draw with every step some elementary power which resides at the core of the earth and which, for all our civilized ways, is lost upon us who have lost the art of going in the flow of things. In the tempo of that race there is time to ponder morality and demoralization, hungry wolves and falling stars. And there is time to puzzle over that curious and fortuitous question with which the people of Jemez greet each other. (50)

Hailing from Blackfeet and Gros Ventre tribal background, James Welch draws on his Northern Plains background in both his poetry and fiction. According to Kathleen Sands, "elements of tribal sensibility that permeate

his work so thoroughly and are sometimes so imperceptibly woven into the westernness of his writing that they can perhaps be most comprehensively addressed in terms of his skill at closing the distance between the reader and the landscape haunted by loneliness, tensions and a sense of loss" (74).

In the first two novels, *Winter in the Blood* and *The Death of Jim Loney*, the characters are caught in an identity crisis with a hope that their traditional past will come to their rescue. The unnamed narrator of *Winter in the Blood* is lost because he cannot reconcile his personal or historic past with the present. Although his feelings of emotional numbness are similar to Jim Loney's, he is able to survive in this world because he finds his Blackfeet grandfather who gives him a knowledge of his ancestry and who does not reject him. Jim Loney, abandoned by both White and Indian parents, ultimately does not physically survive this ordeal; yet he spiritually transcends his circumstances by intuitively following a traditional Indian path.

Welch's *Fools Crow* is a departure from his earlier works. A novel perhaps more deeply grounded in the landscape than his previous ones because it recreates a period in the history of the Blackfeet tribe, immersing the reader in a tribal world in crisis. Set in the 1870's when the tribe was being ravaged by disease and conflict with White culture, the novel draws the reader into a world that is charged with potent dreams and a landscape that is alive with signs and sacred beings. No free ways, fences, none of the

symbols of modern alienation Welch has used so effectively in his previous work. Trading post and parts, and a few ranches intrude upon the land, representing the growing conflict between tribes and White men, but they do not dominate.

In this novel Welch develops a sense of the land in an entirely new way. For *White Man's Dog*, the protagonist who soon earns the name Fools Crow, the land is "peopled" with topographical markers and animal helpers, as in the following passage :

Finally he stood at the top of the ridge, sweating and panting, and looked around. To the south and west he could see Heavy Shield Mountain, and at the base, Jealous Woman Lake. Beyond, he could make out Old Man Dog Mountain; then south again, Rising Wolf and Feather Woman – all mountains of the Backbone, and he prayed to Old Man, Napi, who had created them, to guide him and to allow him to return to his people. He looked down the other side of the ridge and he saw the raven sitting in a snag beside a pothole lake that was covered with snow. Below the lake, in a grove of quaking leaf trees, he made out the shiny ice and open water of a spring that led away to the north. "Oh, Raven," he cried, "do not lead me too far from my people, for the day approaches its mid-point." At that, the raven glided down to the shiny ice and lit on a rock beside the bubbling dark hole of water. (46-46)

In this scene, the protagonist locates himself in the terrain, naming the peaks that people the Rocky Mountain range, powerful representations of mythological beings directly related to the history and continuance of the Blackfeet as a people, and directly related to the protagonist's successful journey and return to his encampment. They lead him naturally to seek guidance and protection from the deity who has created them and himself. The protagonist occupies his place in the landscape harmoniously with other entities – mountains, lake, spring, and raven – no psychological distancing here. The intimacy of his relationship to the beings of the landscape is intensified as raven speaks to him and guides him to a task he has been charged to complete by a medicine dream. The fragmentation and alienation so characteristic of Welch's earlier fiction is utterly absent from this scene. Seen with a Native eye, the world is animated and unified, and the sacred language of prayer is a powerful force for harmonious action.

Welch does not make an issue of the landscape in this novel; it is simply there, only rarely described in much detail. In this novel, the protagonist does not ruminate on his relationship to the land, ponder the significance of landmarks, speculate on the actions of those who preceded him. He knows. He is part of a continuum of connections between people, animals, mountains, stars, cycles of seasons and ceremonies stretching into the mythic past.

These connections are even more evident in the vision that marks Fools Crow as a man chosen to fully understand and bridge the mythical past

and the ominous present of his people, to keep alive the identity of the Blackfeet. In the vision, Feather Woman – wife of Morning Star, and mother of Star Boy, who brought the Blackfeet the Sun Dance ceremony – not only tutors Fools Crow in the mythic history of his tribe, but she reveals to him the future of his people, literally mapped out on buffalo skin. It is a grim prophecy of disease, soldiers, suffering, mourning. He sees a landscape barren of all game:

He searched around the Sweet Grass Hills, the Yellow River, the River-where-the-shield-floated-away, Snake Butte and Round Butte. But he did not find the blackhorns. He looked along the Breaks north of the Big River and he looked to the country of the Hard Gooseneck and the White Grass Butte, the Meat Strings. But there were no blackhorns. And there were no long-legs and no bighorns. There were no wags-his-tails or prairie runners. It was as if the earth had swallowed up the animals. Where once there were rivers of dark blackhorns, now there were none. To see such a vast, empty prairie made Fools Crow uneasy.... The scene faded into the design, and that too faded, until there was nothing but the yellow skin. This time Fools Crow did not attempt to call it back. He had seen the end of the blackhorns and the starvations of the Pikunis. He had been brought here, to the strange woman's lodge in this strange world, to see the fate of his people. (291-292).

The skin that maps the future of the Blackfeet, magical document of dream that it is, comes from the mythic mother of the most important of Blackfeet rituals, the ceremony that keeps the world in balance that perpetuates the people. The message of the dream is grim – a barren landscape, a land of starvation and death – but the story that accompanies the map vision suggests that proper ritual behaviour, which has sustained the Blackfeet over thousands of years, still has power to sustain them.

He balances sorrow with survival when Fools Crow identifies with the fate of Feather Woman in accepting his own and his people's future. *Fools Crow* is Welch's most optimistic novel: far as the Blackfeet emerge from a winter of epidemic and massacre they celebrate with their traditional Thunder pipe ceremony. The buffalo have returned to the Pikuni hunting grounds "all around, it was as it should be" (391). The true historicity of this novel resides in its presentation of the Blackfeet way of life and its redefinition of Blackfeet heroism in epic terms. By retelling and extending sacred Blackfeet myths within the context of tragic historical events, Welch has given to the children of the ancient Blackfeet a new myth and a hero whose acceptance of the future "tells them be alive".

The landscape of *Fools Crow* and other Native novels reinforces Davidson's claim that these books share "A border lands model of the West as a wavering and elusive site of hybridity, cross-fertilization, complication and ideological contestation and transformation (as opposed to manifest certainty)" (36). This ideological contestation of, among other things, the

landscape, leads to a reading of American Indian novels as sites of cultural resistance. As Edward Said notes the novel form, instead of preventing another sort of narrative form “forming and emerging” in true colonial style (xiii) may be used and transformed by author’s to assert their own identity and existence of their own history” (Said xii). Native American Authors like James Welch are transforming the way their histories and identities are being read and constructed. Novels like *Fools Crow* recuperate specific notions of cultural identity and link identity with notions of literary genre and critiques of ideology.

Jeannette Armstrong was born on the Penticton Indian Reserve in British Columbia. She grew up speaking both Okanagan and English fluently. Like other Native women writers who locate the roots of their oppression on the basis of race, sex class. Armstrong also finds the means of changing the system which perpetuate that oppression. In *Slash*, Armstrong identifies “decolonization as the solution to the systematic oppression and as the means to defuse specific issues such as Native land claims, which are easier to deal with from a position of self-sufficiency (Currie 138).

The Native revisioning of the self is made possible by the writers after having exploded the structural and institutionalised racism inflicted on the Native population. Such interventions are helpful in changing the world view of the non-Native vis-à-vis – the Native Indians. This note of change in perception is rightly observed Mardi in *Slash* :

The only way that we can really regain control is for us to really change. It means that we are going to rebuild ourselves, rebuild our health, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. We are a long way from being totally in control over our lives. Infact we can't even talk about it, except we know, that it is possible and that is what we are moving towards. (*Slash* 218)

Published in the year 1985 *Slash* is the first novel by Native woman in Canada, that deals primarily with the protagonist Tommy Kelasket's struggle for human rights and self determination. *Slash* is the story of one Indian man's search for a "way out of this living death by way of prison, spiritual conformation and active political struggle" (Ryga 9). It was primarily written to give the Native perspective in the North American Indian protest movements of 1960's and 1980's for a contemporary social studies grade eight to eleven. This kind of political activism in the form of nationalism in a post-colonial society is an act of liberation for the Natives from their imperialist oppressions.

Theorizing national liberation discourse has thus been particularly strong in African context, with writers like Frantz Fanon and Ngugi. Fanon's position on national culture represents as contained in *The Wretched of the Earth* represents his most well articulated implication of colonialism and the anticolonial struggle. The kind of cultural evolution that Fanon talks about can be traced back to the colonial days and is clearly demarcated into three phases. The first phase is the assimilationist phase in which the

Native intellectual gives proof that he has assimilated the culture of the occupying power". The second is the "cultural nationalist phase in which the Native intellectual remembers his authentic identity and kicks against attempts to assimilate him. The third and the last phase is the revolutionary and nationalist-phase in the literature of the colonized in which the exposure of more Natives to democratisation of the drive for literary expression (178). Consequently the resuscitation of past glories in literature is only a defence mechanism by Native intellectuals "to shrink away from that western culture in which they all risk being swamped (Fanon 179). The third phase as stated by Fanon is crucial in understanding the stands taken up by Native Indian writers. Just as Ngugi's historical consciousness surrounds around Mau Mau armed struggle which Kenyan peasants and nationalists had to wage against British colonialism. Armstrong too resolves around the nationalistic fervour of 1960's and 70's Red Power Movement. In both the cases it was the period of national emergency which "revealed not only the physical violence with which colonialism sought to entrench itself but also the cultural violence which it inflicted on the consciousness of the colonised" (Amuta, 'Fanon' 166). The revisioning of the self of the Native Indian was possible by examining the changes that Native Indian was possible by examining the changes that Native people went through those times. For Armstrong "It is crucial because I am Indian person. As Indian people, we each stand at a pivot point at this time in history. We each have the burden of individuality deciding for our own descendant how their world shall be effected and what shall be their heritage (*Slash* 13).

Structurally this novel resembles cyclic shape with four chapters and a prologue and epilogue in the beginning and end respectively. However it does not carry traces of picaresque novel with a frustrated protagonist in search of a goal, who is also a rebel against the established White order. This is equally juxtaposed with an episodic plot that renders satiric and implicit exposure of colonialism. In the words of Frank Davey :

Its first person narration and focus on Slash's 'growth' from childhood to adulthood identify it as a coming of age novel in which the central character both achieves a coherent sense of self and demonstrates this achievements by creating a coherent life narrative. (57).

The first section of the novel is aptly titled "the Awakening" which carries the account of White Native conflictual relationship that the protagonist witnesses at a town school off the reserve. Here Tommy is confronted with cultural shock, amidst racial prejudices perpetrated non him by teachers and fellow students. This is the beginning of his dilemma where he begins to question and think "I don't know who is right anymore" he confesses to a friend.

One of the ways of exercising power over the Natives was through education and church. At the town school Tommy experiences the discriminatory

attitude of the Whites and the stigma associated to a Native. He further admits:

There were some things we were too ashamed to tell. Like all of the White girls laughing at Tommy, when he asked one of them to dance at the sock hop. He quit school after. Also how none of Indian girls ever got asked to at the sock-hops because guys wouldn't dance with them because the White guys didn't. (Slash 35).

In his book *Prospero and Caliban – The Psychology of Colonization*, O. Mannoni recollects the manner in which the colonized feels a sense of antipathy for his own culture. The feeling of inferiority and dispossession is induced by the colonizer, thus rendering him rootless without a distinctive identity. This is the primary reason for the growing assimilation of the Natives into White culture and is well marked in the character of Jimmy who has adopted White ways. He says, "All I know is I like to feel you. I feel good when White friends of mine talk and joke to me as if I were like them. They only do that if I wear like them. They only do that if I wear smart pants and shoes and have money to play with. I don't like them to think I'm like the rest of the Indian (Slash 40). Yet his concentration on the material appearance is a typical White middle class phenomena. This doesn't work, in the long run and despite a degree in Business Administration. Jimmy is unable to find a job. This type of internal colonialism is well explained by Slash:

Everything that the colonizers do, tell the Indians they are inferior, that their lifestyle, their languages, their religion, their values and even what food they eat is somehow not as good it gets transformed in subtle ways by our own people... They attempt to become same as colonizers in as many ways as they can to escape, being inferior, in being tainted by it. They don't want to hurt inside, you see. (68)

To contest this internalised oppression, decolonisation is an effective tool for asserting Native cultural identity. The character named Mardi is therefore important in the development of Slash's personality. It is Mardi who infuses in him the concept of direct political action. As a result we find Slash caught up in the political ideological world of American Indian Movement when strong feeling of unity persisted among the people. It was te time when Natives talked on the same agenda irrespective of band or tribe. In a deliberate attempt of Native cultural revival, they came out with drums, sang protest songs, grew hair, wore chokers, beads and blue jeans. Thus there was a growing anxiety among the White since "it was a time when FLQ thing in Quebec" Petrone 141). This is the reason that we find Slash travelling between Canada and the U.S.A. with blockade, protest rallies, occupations, caravans and demonstration.

Bearing the shape of an oral tale, the narrative is broken down with historical events like Wounded Knee, Red Power Movement, battle of Alcatraz and the early land claims struggle. The growing militancy of 1960's

movement was essential since "violence was sometimes needed when nobody listens, but it is needed now mostly to help Indian, people wake themselves up more than to wake up the White (Slash 73). These struggles were also meant to show the discriminatory attitude in judiciary in handling Indian matters and also to unearth the manipulation committed by Bureau of Indian Affairs over the control of Indian affairs in the event called 'Trail of Broken Treaties Caravan'. These political events developed group consciousness among the Native where they felt proud in being an Indian. In Slash's view "the biggest victories won't be in politics and deals made, but in the putting back together of the shambles, of our people in theory thinking and attitude" (148).

The historical thrust in the novel is well marked and is defended by Armstrong "as a tool to use in education to give not just the historical documentation of that time, but beyond that the feeling of what happened just prior to the American Indian movement and military period..... what the people are feeling what they dreamed, and what the pain and joy were during that time (Lutz 14).

Unfortunately this revolutionary fervour couldn't solve the dilemma that Slash was in, like he questioned "What was being Indian about?... I realised I had feelings that arose from somewhere, that seemed to be really old part of me that I couldn't explain away as teaching from my elders" (Slash 182). It is after meeting Jow "deeply religious in Indian way" (1999) that Slash goes beyond the options of assimilation or extermination. It is Joe who

suggests him the "Indian way". He therefore goes back to his traditional ways – particularly medicine ways of his people which provide the only means for him to survive and succeed as a whole person, as 'Indian person' and on his own terms. After understanding his identity as an Indian person, Slash feels that "we are slowly learning decolonisation" (223). This traditional approach provides a source of strength and truth to combat generations of misinformation. At the same time this 'Indian way' has the potential to ensure the survival of the Native in the face of genocide. Both political struggle and spiritual awakening provide Slash the necessary steps for the Native revisioning of the self.

Towards the end we find Slash, a satisfied man with a hope that the next generation as symbolized in his son would have some advantages:

You are an Indian of a special generation. Yours world will be hard but you will grow up proud to be Indian that will make you different than some of us. If I keep to the Indian path and protect your rights the way Pracwa explained, you will be the generation to help them White man change because you won't be filled with hate. That's why the prophecies say yours is a special generation. I'll go through anything to see that come about. You are the part of me that extends in a line up towards the future. (250).

Thus by examining the dynamics of protest movements of the 1960's and 1970's Armstrong restores in her protagonist Slash the lost sense of self as

a Native through his journey from innocence to experience. His narration is represented as an alternate history – involving many events that shaped his life too. Hence, “Slash justifies his narration in the framing Epilogue”, which thematizes the instance of enunciation of his personal hi(s) story that is representative his tribal history” (Godard 203).

Jeannette Armstrong in her essay “Words” observed that “...Residential schools were agricultural schools where children raised pigs, raised potatoes and fed the nuns and the priests really well” (24).

Almost all children in these schools were fed very badly. Manuel and Polsuns note that “every Indian pupil smelt of hunger” and Sterling who asserts that “the sisters would eat bacon, ham, eggs, toast and juice for breakfast and we, get gooey mush with powdered milk and brown sugar”. (Barman 286).

The Cree priest Edward Ahenakew observed that in the decade and the half before World War I, the immigrants to British Columbia were provided with the best of teachers for their children, whereas the Native children were ignored.

With all these oppressive tools of institutional racism which instilled inferiority in the minds of the Native children, the coloniser paralysed a whole generation of people through the educational system, which Barman calls “the Educational misadventure”. (Barman 296). This resulted in the

internal colonisation of the Native and many were frustrated, humiliated and degraded and took to drugs and alcohol, left as mixed up human beings unable to cope up with family or life with high inferiority complexes, also Native girls resorted to promiscuity for want of emotional support and boys turned to alcohol. There again the state trapped them if they were convicted for any kind of crime. They had to undergo further humiliation. Patricia A. Monture Angus believes that the notion that aboriginal communities do not live in harmony with each other is made popular by the Coloniser and the government funds academic study in the same area by this emphasising its legitimacy. Natives in Canada also have the maximum rules and regulations against them. With researched data from the Correctional Services of Canada in the year 1994,

The head count of Native men in Federal prisons tallies around 18,400 men and 500 women. Ratio of chances of aboriginal men to non-aboriginal men in federal prisons is 20:1. Jackson believes that a treaty Indian woman is 131 times more likely, a Metis woman 28 times more likely to be incarcerated than a Non aboriginal woman. (Angus 333).

Angus also believes that

....the system of corrections in Canada was designed by White men for White men. As a result statistics in Winnipeg indicate that 43% of aboriginal families are head by single women...The Native is caught

in the web as he is more likely to be charged by police, with multiple offences of being held in jail against his Non Native counterparts, once in custody, is allowed to see his lawyer less frequently, and if he sees him, is allowed to spend less than an hour with him (341).

Like Tommy, the male protagonist of *Slash*, Penny, the central female character of *Whispering in Shadows*, too, finds herself forced to live an alien in the city of Vancouver because of her need for a job, education, and children's upbringing. Prior to her shift to Vancouver, she lives with Francis, her live-in partner, near an orchard in Keremos, working at picking apples. Of this life, Penny writes to her cousin Roberta thus, "I'm gonna have a baby....If this is a girl I want a new kind name for her. Not some same old name. We're living in a new generation. I want her to be able to be free of the same old, same old". (15). Penny here reveals her desire to give her yet-to-be born child a fashionable name, for she knows that the child will be growing up in a town where her Native name is bound to attract derision. She wants to fit in for the sake of her children.

Penny hunts for a job for the upkeep of her three children, and arrives at an apple-packing factory. Her interview with the White boss throws light on the fact that Indians are held in contempt, and exploited by their White employers. On coming to know that she is an Indian, the boss remarks happily, "Yeah, well that helps, too. I get a better subsidy for hiring minority and women. I can kill two birds with one stone." (24). He warns her not to drink or dress smart, thinking that she is like other city Indians

who are drunken and showy. Penny is asked to tie her hair up. That is, she cannot afford to look like an Indian woman. In other words, she has to fit in, and be an alien to herself. The oppressive atmosphere in the factory is so suffocating that she says, "*I feel sick and dizzy*". (26).

Penny decides to register for college⁴ study, obviously, to prove that the Native is not inferior to the mainstream society in any respect. On arriving at the spot for registration, Penny feels the agony of being an outsider, "Only she is Native". (41). She hopes that college education will help her defeat sexism and racism. Penny finds the education imparted at the university orientated towards sheer materialism, and, hence, entirely different from the Native concept of education, which aims at moulding responsible men and women who believe in sharing and caring, and whose lives are dedicated, by and large, to the well-being of the community and the land. At the academic/student discussions on economics, management, and business administration, Penny displays her strong disapproval of the government's policies, and the job-seeker's attitude to work, which is determined by a desire to make more and more money in order to live comfortably enjoying the luxuries money can buy. Though her view is looked upon as radical, non-conformist, and unsettling, she makes no secret of her views that she puts across thus:

The whole system is set up to suck everything from the powerless to serve the rich. Every one of you will just end up making more money for them. For their limousines and vacations and jewellery and

facelifts, no matter, which courses you, take, nobody even stops to think that these resources out there weren't made by the government. Why should only those who already have money profit from them? May be there's something wrong with the whole bloody system which drives it all. Maybe it's brain washing at it's best and you're all sheep being herded around. (67).

To Penny, a true Native, all the modern electronic gadgets are "monsters". She writes in a note thus:

I take the things in the world and reduce them to symbols revealing what they actually are. Television as teacher. Replacing story-teller. As custodian of brain. Of free-will. Computer as guardian of information. Coyote, how will you transform these monsters? Pretending to be real and sucking kids and adults alike deeper and deeper into the trap. (92).

Writing from the position of "cultural siege" (Godard 203), Momaday, Welch and Armstrong accept the traditional ways to break the chains of internalised oppression and thereby resist the dominant order. This 'revisionistic' process is in a way one form of decolonisation, enabling them to live as a 'Native' in true sense. This integration into Native culture is best expressed and clarified when a character named Maeg speaks out at a meeting giving a nutshell view of whole process :

We are not aggressors. We must simply resist for as long as we can the kind of destruction. We are talking about here... If we are to be successful to any measure then we will have to be sure that we see the whole question we are faced with and deal with all of it in an Indian way. It is the resistance of our forefathers and the continued resistance of our fathers that has left us with something to call ours. (Slash 225).

Coming to know the past has been part of the critical pedagogy of decolonization. Telling stories from the past, reclaiming the past, giving testimony to the injustices of the past are all strategies which are commonly employed by indigenous people, struggling for justice. This is one kind of representation. Representation of indigenous people by "indigenous people is about countering dominant society's image of indigenous people, their life styles and belief systems. It is also about proposing solutions to real life dilemmas that indigenous communities confront and trying to capture the complexities of being indigenous" (Linda Smith 151). Many of the dilemmas are internalised stress factors in community life which are never named or voiced because they are either taken for granted or hidden by a community. There is an element of the raw, tough and unsympathetic representation of indigenous life by a writer such as Allen Duff who wrote the novel *Once Were Warriors* and there is humour in Sherman Alexie *Reservation Blues*. Film makers such as Merata Mita have a very clear purpose in their work which locates it firmly within a decolonisation framework. She says that:

Not surprisingly, when my obsessive struggle with film making began, it was with the issues that most concerned us as Maori Women that I became preoccupied – the issues of injustice, land, te reo Maori [Maori Language], the Treaty and racism. Add to that women and gender issues, and for those who don't know, these are the things that consume us, consume our energy, beset us every moment of our daily lives, they are brutalizing, violent, and some of us die because of them. (37-41).

Armstrong in her fiction foregrounds the tension her protagonists experience as they are exposed to the White civilisation as it manifests in the city in the form of racism, assimilation, and acculturation. Tommy of *Slash* and Penny of *Whispering in Shadows*, do at some point in their lives get divorced from their traditional ways of life, and suffer the ordeal of being the 'other' in the 'alien' cityscape. The novels thus address the element of alienness that their protagonists experience when they are transplanted in the mainstream White milieu. Major sites of their alienness are the school, and the city. The sense of being 'alien' engenders fatalism in their psyche, and for a time, they indulge in self-destructive activities. However, this alienness that causes alienation even from themselves does not last long. At length they recover themselves totally through their return to and avowed adherence to Native values.

The novels *Slash* and *Whispering in Shadow* show that Armstrong looks at Native culture from "an authentic aboriginal perspective and sensitivity". In his essay entitled *Cultural Decolonisation* Howard Adams dwells on the need of the Natives for a cultural revitalisation to be accomplished through cultural decolonisation. He observes, "One of the first tasks of cultural decolonisation is to analyse and interpret our history and culture from an aboriginal perspective." (252). This, according to him, will create a 'counter-consciousness' which will decolonise and liberate the Natives. He credits a few writers with promoting this counter-consciousness, and Jeannette C. Armstrong is one among them. To quote him, "Several [sic] outstanding aboriginal creations from a centric perspective have been produced by Maria Cambell, Jeannette Armstrong, Lee Meracle, Emma Laroque, Duke Redbird and other". (254). The veracity of this statement is borne out by Armstrong in her two novels, which are records of the perilous passage that a contemporary Native negotiates in his/her life.

According to Kathleen M. Sands, "Land and nature, myth and ritual, cyclic patterns and continuum, ceremony and the sacredness of storytelling are all basic elements that distinguish the Indian mode of literature from any other" (4). In addition to these elements, both Louise Erdrich's *Love Medicine* and Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony* offer solutions to healing the rift between cultures. They challenge the reader to see from another point of view; this new way of looking at the world is revealed to be not new at all, but is actually a quite ancient spiritual outlook. Silko's novel is in itself a demonstration of changing the world; it is a ceremony that requires the

reader's participation and thus changes the reader's view. In addition, the world view that could heal the gap brings us full circle in our discussion of contemporary literature by minority American women writers and connects with ancient traditions of the East.

Both Erdrich's and Silko's novels foreground characters who are on a heroic quest, in the Western sense, or searching for the center, in their Native traditions. Erdrich's Lipsha himself is symbolic of the old traditions that are lost or thrown away; as he becomes centered, becomes more synchronised with the old ways, he finds himself able to make a difference to his people. In a similar fashion, Silko's Tayo is both lost and thrown away; he must heal himself in order to heal his people and the earth. As Lipsha gains his maturity and strength, he is able to join heaven and earth; in order for Tayo to become both healed and healer, he must learn and alter the ancient rituals to accommodate contemporary conditions. Both characters develop a spiritual perspective and engage in sacred activities.

Ngugi wa Thiong'o believes that literature and politics are inextricably linked with each other because both are about "living men, actual men and women and children, breathing, eating, crying, laughing, creating, dying, flowering men in history of which they are the product and the maker". (WP-72). He, therefore, chose as the subject of his writings that single event in the history of Kenya which has affected them the most, namely, the most crucial phase of their struggle for freedom – the so called Mau Mau. Again, Ngugi believes, together with many an African Writer that the primary aim

of literature is not merely to entertain but also to persuade. Ngugi, therefore, does not confine himself to mere chronicling of factual details of historical events, but he also takes a certain partisan attitude towards them. In his own word –

What is important...is the attitude and the world view embodied in his work and with which he is persuaded us to identify vis-à-vis the historical drama his community is undergoing. (WP-75).

It is because of this historic responsibility which he believes lies on the shoulders of a writer that Ngugi makes known his partisanship while portraying, as we have seen in all his writings, the basic opposition between the forces of imperialism and capitalism on one hand and the forces of national liberation and socialism on the other, between a small class of 'haves' backed by transnational monopoly capital and the 'have nots' representing the masses of Kenyan people. Ngugi, therefore, has refused to confine his portrayal of the national struggle – as has been the case with many other Africa writers portraying similar struggles in their respective countries – as a struggle of the Black against the White. Once again, unlike his other fellow African counterparts, Ngugi is very forthright – particularly in his later novels and plays – in advocating socialism not only as a viable but the most desirable political system of governance for solving the problems of the newly liberated African nations realing under the covert attack of neo-colonialism.

Ngugi, however, is not satisfied, as many of his counterparts in other countries of Africa are, by mere portrayal of the socio-politico-cultural situation in Kenya during and after the national struggle for independence. He suggests, in a book of the same title, *decolonising the mind*. By this he means a kind of 'dialectical negation of the colonial process', dismantling, as it were, of the various psychological structures which had been in the minds of men as a result of sustained colonial propaganda, covert as well as overt, during the period of colonisation. In his *Writers in Politics*, he suggests to the writers and intellectuals the task of 'going back to the roots' with the aim of restoring 'the African personality to its true creative potentialities in history, so as to enhance the quality of life'. To teachers and educational institutions he exhorts to emphasise African languages and literature while pleading with African writers to write in their own languages rather than in European languages.

The moment of truth for Ngugi wa Thiong'o had arrived. He had to link up his struggle through creative literature with the struggle of the Kenyan masses – now against the comprador bourgeoisie which had usurped the power in Kenya and was clinging to it. Thus, in a statement prefixed to *Decolonising the Mind* Ngugi declared that –

This book, *Decolonising the Mind*, is my farewell to English as a vehicle for any of my writings. From now on it is Gikuyu and Kiswahili all the way (DH-xiv).

Ngugi wa Thiong'o has made the history of Kenya – pre-colonial, during colonisation and post-independence – as the theme of his writings – stories, plays, novels and essays. By echoing his concern through his books, Ngugi has become the most significant interpreter of his country's socio-political events, providing a picture of Kenya in transition.

Said traces in Western representations of African difference “a systematic language for dealing with and studying Africa for the West”, which figures Africa as a primitive vitality and includes the great colonialist texts on Africa – Conrad, Paton, Isak Dinesen. Toni Morrison also employs *Africanism* as “a term for the denotative and connotative blackness that African people have come to signify, as well as the entire range of views, assumptions, reading and misreadings that accompany Eurocentric learning about these people.” Jan Mohammed's “The Manichean Allegory” shows how the kind of literature that he names “specular” fixes the Native “as a mirror that reflects the colonialist's self-image”. Apart from its use in legitimating the discourses of slavery and colonialism, Africanism has largely been used by Europe to define itself in opposition to an African alterity. If the slave must be dehumanised to elevate the European master, colonised must be primitivised for creating the civilising Saviour. Invariably, the African ‘darkness’ has been put into the service of Europe's narcissistic preoccupations. In the representation of the African as the Dark Other threatening the European, Chinua Achebe rightly detects a “desire – one might say the need in Western psychology to set Africa as a

foil to Europe, a place of negation, at once remote and vaguely familiar in comparison with which European's own state of grace will be manifest".

Stephen Slemon has called attention to the reiteration of metropolitan discourse as a form of "figural resistance" wherein the imperial text is worked outwards to open a space for "post-colonial supplementation". Achebe admits to "writing back" to the canonical texts of the Empire when he speaks of replying to representations of Africa such as Carey's *Mister Johnson*. As post-colonial writers redo the tropes of the West, they restore, in Said word's, an "African- Africa". On top of the post-colonial agenda, therefore, is to tell a story "that could not be told for us [Africans] by anyone else". It is to tell the story of Caliban, the paradigmatic figure of post-colonialism from Caliban's point of view, Caliban serves as "the silent object of colonialism" that must be shown to have a history capable of development.

How can the post-colonial writer write the self in the language of the other without participating in the othering? Decolonisation is possible, according to Ngugi, only through recovery of one's own language. Simon During, defining post-colonialism as the desire of decolonised communities for an identity, similarly, locates it in language. But During views the project as historically doomed because if one looks at nationalism as the convergence of capitalism and printing technology on the Babel of human voices, any identity given in print language is given as a death warrant. Post-colonial resistance, thus, translates a battle to represent the Self with the purpose

of making 'otherness' its 'own', paradoxically through an alien "language" that 'others'. Translating one's own world through a "language" of the 'other' makes the choice of language crucial to the efficacy of post-colonial opposition.

The writer's recourse to the "poison" of writing to preserve the wisdom in orality is an acknowledgement of the loss of oral memory to which writing might have contributed. Nostalgia for a bygone world destroyed by writing is replaced by the relief of having recovered it, in a more permanent way, through the same medium.

Coming to know the past has been part of the critical pedagogy of decolonisation. To hold alternative histories is to hold alternative knowledges. The pedagogical implication of this access to alternative knowledges is that they can form the basis of alternative ways of doing things. Transforming our colonised views of our own history (as written by the West), however, requires us to revisit, site by site, our history under Western eyes. This in turn requires a theory or approach which helps us to engage with, understand and then act upon history. It is in this sense that the sites visited in this book begin with a critique of a Western view of history. Telling our stories from the past, reclaiming the past, giving testimony to the injustices of the past are all strategies which are commonly employed by indigenous peoples struggling for justice. On the international accounts are accepted and acknowledged as valid

interpretations of what has taken place. And yet, the need to tell our stories remains the powerful imperative of a powerful form of resistance.

Leonie Pihama makes a similar point about the films. In a review of *The Piano* she says: 'Maori people struggle to gain a voice, struggle to be heard from the margins, to have our stories heard, to have our descriptions of ourselves validated, to have access to the domain within which we can control and define those images which are help up as reflections of our realities'. Representation is important as a concept because it gives the impression of 'the truth'. When I read texts, for example, I frequently have to orientate myself to a text world in which the centre of academic knowledge is either in Britain, the United States or Western Europe; in which words such as 'we', 'us', 'our', 'I' actually exclude me. It is a text world in which (if what I am interested in rates a mention) I have learned that I belong *partly* in the Third World, *partly* in the 'Women of Colour' world, *partly* in the Black or African world. I read myself into these labels *partly* because I have also learned that, although there may be commonalities, they still do not entirely account for the experiences of indigenous peoples.

Telling her story became a revitalising, culturally affirming experience for Campbell. It empowered her by providing her with an opportunity to analyse her life, her community, and the society around her, in a way that helped her to reconnect with her culture and regain her identity as a Metis woman. However, it became more than a personal, literary act of

autobiography. It became a important public act of telling and was therefore, both a social and political act. By speaking out, Campbell, through her story/telling gives voice to a silence born of oppression, hardship and domination. It speaks the unspoken, the unspeakable. It lifts the veneer of complacency in Canadian society and shines a bright light on the ugly racism supporting our nation state. A telling story, *Halfbreed* is an act of self-determination, of defiance, and of liberation so that by the end of the telling Campbell, as storyteller, teacher and healer can confidently assert: "I no longer need my blanket to survive" (Campbell, p.184).

Culleton's semi-autobiographical novel *In Search of April Raintree* follows a form that is very similar to Campbell's. like Campbell, she begins with brief section which establishes the narrator's retrospective position and her reasons for telling her story. She writes, "I always felt most of my memories were better avoided but now I think it's best to go back in my life before I go forward" (Culleton 9). For April Raintree, the narrator of the story, the telling of her life story is a process of personal healing, an opportunity to confront that past and resolve the painful issues that haunt her. For author Beatrice Culleton, the writing of the book was also a process of healing and resolution. Culleton says that, like Raintree, she was moved to write the book as a result of the suicide of a family member. Culleton began writing the novel after

The second suicide of a member of my family. I have two sisters and a brother. Both of my sisters committed suicide at different

times.....So it was after the second suicide that I really thought, "Why are my family members alcoholics?" And "why do we have so many problems?" (Culleton in Lutz 97-98).

It was upon thinking about these questions and the events in her life that Culleton decided:

It I write it [the book], maybe I can figure out some of the answers", or something. At least rethink the way I've been living. Kind of blind, with my head in the sand, or something. And eventually it came out as a book. As I wrote, it wasn't going to be about a search for identity. But while I was writing that's what I realised about myself: that I had to accept my identity.... (Culleton in Lutz 98).

Clearly, Culleton strongly and closely identifies with the narrator in her book who she says is profoundly affected by her sister's suicide and ultimately "decides she has no choice but to accept who she is" (Culleton in Lutz 100). In many ways, the events in April Raintree's life intersect with events in Culleton's own life: the alcoholism of her parents, her separation from her family and placement in foster care, her experiences with racism resulting from her identification as a "visible" minority, the suicide of a sister, and the decision to write her story as a way of confronting suppressed memories, of searching for her self and of finally accepting her identity as a woman of Native descent. *In Search of April Raintree*, can, therefore, legitimately be read as fictionalised lifewriting since it shares

many of the same strategies, themes, structures, and forms as the lifewriting of 'real' people.

April's disconnection from her culture, her isolation, her deprivation screams out in every line of her story. Her difficulty in telling her story then becomes further evidence of the losses and damage she has suffered through the social 'welfare' policies which separated her from her family and her community. Although, unlike Campbell, she has not learned how to tell her story, even to herself, she has, even more importantly, recognised so that a better future can be created.

As I stared at Henry Lee, I remembered that during the night I had used the words "MY PEOPLE, OUR PEOPLE" and meant them. The denial had been lifted from my spirit. It was tragic that it had taken Cheryl's death to bring me to accept my identity. But no, Cheryl had once said, "All life dies to give new life." Cheryl had died. But for Henry Lee and me, there would be a tomorrow. And it would be better. I would strive for it. For my sister and her son. For my parents. For my people (Culleton 228).

As Metis women Raintree and Culleton had been silenced by the dominating society; they had been brainwashed to "look down on Natives and not want anything to do with them" (Lutz 101) but ultimately their true voices as Metis women who have been apprehended, abused and deprived refuse to be silenced. They speak the truth, they tell what happened though they

have not yet been healed thought their communities have not yet been healed. They are the "stakeholders" referred to by Armstrong, they are the ones who need the system to change and who therefore begin to see themselves "undefeatably pro-active in a positive sense" (Armstrong 210).

The road to decolonisation is one of the chief modes in post-colonial world order to contest the Western/European hegemonic power. With almost four hundred years of colonial rule, for the Natives of North America it was through decolonisation that they could perceive themselves differently from their received versions. The resurgence of the Native voice in literature arose out of a feeling that non-Natives have "disregarded, infantilized and falsified" (La Rocque, "Interview" 181) much about their history and their lives and have not understood them "culturally, historically, philosophically and spiritual" (Keeshing - Tobias 173). Using the enemy's language, English, the Native Indians are trying to erase the misconceptions held with respect to their people. As a kind of resistance the Native writers are creating a new Native World order untainted by White principals for their true sense of self determination and liberation.'

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