

Conclusion

The mid-twentieth century saw the rise and visibility of marginal groups in varied discourses. Many of these voices belong to the indigenous people who have survived "European colonisation and cognitive imperialism" (Battiste xvi). These voices from being victims of empire and silenced in the social sciences have fought back in the 1960's. They have not only resisted colonisation in thought and action but also attempted to restore indigenous knowledge and heritage. For them writing is an attempt to heal their people, restore their dignity and apply fundamental human rights to their communities.

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Foucault has made us aware that all writings are political acts. Native literature is not in exception. This is visible in Native writing that calls for empowerment, resisting oppression, asserting identity and moving beyond survival. The political undertone in their writing begins from denouncing the 'White' to the rejecting the presence of dominant group. It goes in tandem within the same principle that White writings engage in. In other words as the White, the Native writers too don't clarify the presence of their specific community.

In the wake of postcolonial theory, the construct of the 'other' and the 'margin' have necessitated new ways of looking at them. The notion of the other itself is constituted in the principle of difference – or being different. In postcolonial theory these terms are used interchangeably with "alterity". In general terms, the 'other' is anyone who is separate from one's self. The colonised subject is characterised as the other through discourses such as

primitivism and cannibalism as a means of establishing the binary separation of the coloniser and colonised and asserting the naturalness and primacy of the colonising culture and world view. The principle of imperialism / colonialism worked on the binary logic between central / margin, coloniser / colonised, metropolis / empire, civilised / primitivism. This demarcation reflects the violent hierarchy on which imperialism is based and which it actively perpetuates in Jan Mohammed's concept of "Manichean aesthetics" based on these binary opposites. He uses the dualistic aspect of the concept and describes the process by which imperial discourses polarises the society, culture and the very being of the coloniser and colonised into the Manichean categories of good and evil.

Even as postcolonial theory is charged with evading the specificities of identity, there is a concomitant view that the term postcolonial is "simply a polite way of saying not-White, not Europe or perhaps not Europe but inside Europe". (Ahmed 8). In this view, postcolonial theory is about the Third World or recently decolonised nations. This understanding of postcolonial theory is the part fuelled by the fact that in the Anglo-American academy, texts such as *Orientalism* are referred in courses or settings concerned with "difference", the Third World, or those attempting to understand the other of the West instead of those directly concerned with Western philosophy and modes of knowledge production. As the terms "post colonialism" and "postcolonial" resurfaced during the 1980's in literary and cultural theories and in deconstructing forms of history writing, it did not include any reference of how the term had come into

being in the first place. Within the field of literature postcolonial writing commonly refers to literary compositions – plays, poems, fiction – of non-White minorities located in Britain and North America. Efforts are now underway to designate the contemporary literatures of Asia and Africa as "postcolonial" and "make them available for being read according to the protocols that metropolitan criticism has developed for reading what it calls minority literature" (Aijaz Ahmed 282).

Like other minority groups, the Natives too have been neglected in the dominant discourse and discursive practices. Except for few anthologies that have accommodated non-White writers for the purpose of political correctness, the majority of books on Canadian Literature are White-centred. In other words these minority writings have been relegated to the position of the other-ed writing. Such an elitist perception of Canadian Literature itself is against the multicultural policy of Canada. This us-them hegemonic divide has seriously affected their rightful place / space in Canadian world of letters.

In the 1960's - the year of Centenary celebration, some of the White writers felt the need to write about Natives to acquire a "rooted" Canadian identity. This interest in the Native was part of the larger nationalistic objective. However, it is was still the White voice speaking by borrowing Native myths, legends, stories and songs from the premise of their discursive practices. Consequently the White perception of Native remained on outsider's vision of the red world. The Native continued to be either romanticised or

patronised as noble savage or brute further confining him to the position of a marginalized / misconstructured figure.

In the last three decades, authentic Native voices are beginning to challenge the appropriation of their culture by the non-Native culture's discursive formations. In place of Richardson, Lawrence, Rudy Wiebe, we now have a host of Native writers from Basil Johnston, Culleton, Campbell, SlipperJack, Eden Robinson. These voices have necessitated a different view of Natives in order to evolve a more authentic perception of the other-ed culture. Their writing be it poetry, drama, fiction accounts their experiences and emotion from specificity of their other-ed culture. It is this cultural specificity that makes it different. And it is this difference that demands a re-vision of the misconstructured notion of the Native in the White discourse. This difference also calls for ignoring, hegemonic power structures of White / mainstream writers / discourses.

Many of these contemporary indigenous writers challenge non-indigenous writers' way of seeing and subsequently writing about indigenous people. Contemporary indigenous writers positively and knowledgeably construct aspects of their cultures that have been previously misrepresented by outsiders who knew little about the cultures about which they wrote. In this way, indigenous writers following the example of Maria Campbell's *Halfbreed* significantly challenge literary trends. Writing from places of strength – their own specific cultures – these writers provide an abundance

of new ways to see and thus understand indigenous peoples. Emma LaRocque strongly emphasises that:

...there are just a thousand angles from which to see Native people – our vastness, our diversity, our different personalities, never mind, just plainly, our humanity. White North America, not to mention White European peoples, haven't even begun to see us (198).

LaRocque's calling attention to the "thousand angles from which to see Native people" challenges the former monolithic "Indian" so prevalent in Euro-Canadian literature. However, while there are numerous cultural differences among indigenous peoples, there are also some very basic similarities.

The discussion on indigeneity alongwith the modes employed by Native writers in the preceeding chapters enables us to know the inherent political dimension of Native writing. It rightly echoes Emma La Rocque's statement that "To discuss Native Literature is to tangle with a myriad of issues : voicelessness, accessibility, stereotype, appropriation, ghettoization, linguistic, cultural, sexual and colonial roots of experience" (XV). The central concern of these writings is to make people read and see themselves / Native Indian in a new way. In their quest, their will to be heard has remained strong and their refusal to be silenced finds an image in the words of Alanis Obomsmin : "I know I'm a bridge between two worlds" (Petrone 201).

To bridge this link, Native Indian writers have taken up the task of challenging the defacto apartheid that reigns in North America. Their story therefore traces back the amount of pain, fear and hopelessness that the colonial regime inflicted on Native population. The identity problematic confronting the Native Indians received a new dimension in the 1980's and 1990's with a shift towards legal forum for the resolution of the Native Indians grievances. In the U.S.A. the number of American Indian attorneys has increased greatly and Indian communities have become increasingly sophisticated at negotiating issues like unsettled land claims, repatriation of Indian remains and artefacts and self determination rights including the right to regulate and develop reservation resources. In this regard, the "Charlottetown Accord" in Canada on August 28, 1992 is worth mentioning. Among the various constitutional changes, this accord proposed to recognise the inherent right to self government of aboriginal people. This proposal directed a process for recognising, negotiating, creating and fostering development of a third order of government by and for aboriginal people within Canada. Further the publication of the *Royal Commission of aboriginal People* in 1997 in Canada marks a new chapter in examining the predicament of the Native Indians, further providing unprecedented scope of aboriginal learning and perspective.

The 1990s began with the Oka crisis. "Protecting what is sacred" might well have been the slogan summarising the sentiment of many Native writers and creating an awareness of their unique and separate cultural realities. It was an era of literary proliferation reinforcing an appreciation of Native cultural

diversity. Marie Annharte Baker opened the decade with her collection of poems, *Being on the Moon*. Her deft humour and cynicism as well as her extraordinary and beautiful symbolism launched into an era of poetic celebration of being Native, each in their own unique ways. En'owkin's premier "Survival" issue of *Gatherings : A Journal of First North American Peoples* was launched, promoting the annual publishing of new writers and celebrating new works by established ones. Joining hands in the celebration of publishing first collections in the early 1990s were Duncan Mercedi, Joanne Arnott, Connie Fife, Kateri Akwenzie-Damm, and Joseph Dandurand, each contributing a diversity of style, subject, and view of being Native. Armand Ruffo, Louise Halfe, Marilyn Dumont, and Gregory Scofield powerfully cemented a decade of exciting works, giving insight and appreciation through their critically acclaimed and award-winning collections. At the close of the decade and the opening of the new millennium, well-known writer Lee Meracle brought a collection of poems published over the last four decades, *Bent Box*, which mirrors the legacy of Native literary development through those times.

The ever increasing corpus of Native writing points to the fact that this literature is there to stay. But it is for both the academic world comprising of students / teachers and Native writers to be sensitive enough to the polemics surrounding Native text with an insiders perspective, for this othered wor/ld to be understood in a more authentic manner. Reading Native literature requires, as Armand Garnett Ruffo argues, more than an anthropological approach; "rather, for those who are serious, it is more a question of cultural initiation, of involvement and commitment". ("Inside" 174).