Pakistan Journal of Social Research
ISSN 2710-3129 (P) 2710-3137 (O)
Vol. 5, No. 1, March 2023, pp. 267-280.
www.pjsr.com.pk

AMERICAN INDIAN LITERATURE AS '*LITERATURE OF COMBAT*'

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ABSTRACT
The present research paper aims to explore the ways in which literature and its celluloid stepchild, the cinema, have been employed in combination with supposedly nonfictional venues to falsify the realities of Euro- American interaction with the continent's indigenous people, both historically and in the contemporary setting. Its purpose is to shred away to some extent an elaborate shroud of misimpression and misinformation behind which the dreadful visage of Euro-American subjugation, occupation and massacre have been so prudently veiled. These all complications are accredited to ethnic and social deterioration which is outcome of intensified control of genocide, colonialism, enforced cultural and institutional accommodation, monetary reliance and racism.
Keywords: Colonization, American Indian cultures, Collapse of social structures, Resistance literature, Native survival, Systematic marginalization.

INTRODUCTION
Robert Thomas coins the term "internal colonization"[†]or "settler colonization" for the situation of American indigenes. He further differentiates "internal colonialism" from "classic colonialism" in which a small minority from metropolis exercises power over indigenes far from their 'mother country'. Ashcroft, Grifth and Tiffin (2002, p. 67) use the term "settler colonialism" in opposition to invaded colonies in which European colonists occupied the land and dispossessed the indigenes. Edward Said (1993) in his book, *Culture and Imperialism*, accredits the US as a "settler colony" having negative presence because it "superimposed" its foundations on the wreckage of native cultures. Vizenor (1991) uses the term "Para-colonialism" for this phenomenon. He is of the view that "for natives, the organizations of colonialism will continue substantively undamaged if the established customs of racialism, tyranny and discrimination remain to accept distinctively on indigenous inhabitants are not also demolished" (p. 69).

Jace Weaver (2011) writes in O*ther Words: American Indian Literature, Law and Culture*, that although American Indian cultural expressions are not post-colonial literatures[‡] but they are anti-colonial or "resistant literature". The phrase "resistance literature" acknowledges a conglomeration of a nation's relation to a "common land, a common identity or a common cause". It denotes "writing back" to subjugating authority that has expatriated and quashed the indigenous population. This literature speaks back to a systematic process of intervention in the literary and cultural development of the local inhabitants who have been dispossessed of their land, religion and culture. To put it simply, "resistant literature" becomes a critical domain for battle to gain voice that has been denied through five centuries of colonization.

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[†] It was coined by Robert Thomas to characterize the subordination of the Scots and Welsh by the English
[‡] Because, in contrast to post-colonial societies, where a formal process of independence called "decolonization" is achieved, whereas for American Indian indigenes, no such decolonization is looked forward to.

Barbara Harlow (1987) in *Resistance Literature* traces a process of cultural degeneration where the dominant culture not only dispossessed local people of land, (where every single mountain and lake was significant for their collective identity and faith); rather, it distorted the identity of people by intervening consequently in the literature and culture of the indigenes. This intervention resulted in breakdown of social order for the native inhabitants and making Indians an oppressed minority in the United States. A sociologist, Manno Boldt (1993) claims in *Surviving as Indians* that the result of systematic marginalization has been a complete collapse of social and cultural order with increasing substance abuse, suicide, crime and violence among both urban and reservation areas (p.176).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Franz Fanon (1995) believes that colonialism does not get satisfaction by deforming the present and marring the future of a nation, or enslaving the people in their enthrallment; rather, "by a kind of a perverted logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures, and destroys it" (cite in Ashcroft, Grifth and Tiffin, 2005, p. 234). Fanon posits a heavy duty on native intellectual's shoulders and asserts that fighting for national culture is tantamount to fighting for national liberation. The native writer must fasten on armament to defend "his nation's legitimacy" which can be done by digging into past of their culture to unearth a splendid and golden tradition beyond self-contempt, surrender, and abjuration. The native intellectual cannot stand the charges of barbarity and savagery and feels an urge to commit himself to a passionate search for his glorious and solemn past. This search for a glorious past not only furbishes up a nation; rather it serves as psycho-affective equilibrium of the natives.

American Indian literature manifests an unabashed commitment to reclaim the past through orality. Oral story telling has been the part and parcel of American Indian culture. Leslie Mermon Silko (1981) holds that in native cultures story telling operates metaphorically as a written web in which Nature and culture co-exist. In *Storyteller* Marmon Silko condemns the practice of taking children away from their families where they were nourished by generational story tellers. Hence she writes in a poetic passage:

Taking the children away from the tellers who had
In all past generations
Told the children
An entire culture, an entire identity of a people

No matter how absolute and total was the process of oppression; American Indian[§] cultures did survive in the face of internal colonialism. The resurgence of native traditions in the wake of cultural and literary Renaissance during 1960's attest to Said's iterated composition that native cultures retain something in them which is beyond the reach of dominating systems. Some postcolonial theorists, following Ngugi Wa Thiango (1986) in *Decolonizing the Mind* argues that material decolonization cannot be effected without cultural independence. Louis Owens writes that native voices were systematically silenced in the ongoing discourses that evolved as a result of colonization. Cultural genocide being the main target of dominant culture, through concerted assault on subject-hood of the native cultures, seeks to eradicate tribal literature. It aims to deracinate the colonized people by snatching their culture, literature and language to make them "lost generation" as Said (1993) says, "the night of the sword and the bullet was followed by the morning of the chalk and board (p. 37).

Holm, Pearson and Chavis (2003) contend that four inter-reliant and permeating constituents[**] of American Indian culture are integral part of the resistant literature. Using the term "Peoplehood' as matrix for American Indians as a cluster with a resilient cultural footing is more expected to endure hostile communal, political or historical conditions, and literature provided that communal ground to these people. Since the arrival of Euro-Americans in the fifteenth century, Indian story weavers and song makers employed oral literature to speak crucially about the devastating experience of cultural assault and responded creatively to colonization. Simon Ortiz (1981) asserts that the shift is seen in twentieth century, when oral literature has been taken over by written Word. The outpouring of fiction produced by current Indian writers attests that the resistance against colonialism is a continuous process.

[§]The term American Indians is preferred to native Americans by the local inhabitants, (see Helen May Dennis)

[**] Four constituent parts of Native American culture and Literature are Language, sacred history, place/ territory, ceremonial cycle.

Assuming a nationalistic character, opposition literature shoulders commitment to sponsor for native's self-determination, dominance and governance of terrestrial and natural possessions and at the same time challenge racialism, and white supremacist philosophy.

Paper

Released in 1998, *Smoke Signals,* an innovative work of cinematic story telling by Sherman Alexie occupies a prominent place on the contemporary U.S media-scape. A Maori film analyst Barry Barclay (2003) claims that *Smoke Signals* (1998) is "Fourth World Cinema" [††] as it attempts to "speak back to the western representational history (pp. 7-11)." Barclay coined the term "fourth cinema" to describe the films by indigenous artists who asserted sovereignty and tribal nationhood in relation to specific land claims and treaty documents. Alexie marks it as "the first film to be directed and produced by Native Americans to have a major distribution deal." He emphasizes in one of his interviews:

> The fundamental thing which must be known to people about Indians is that our identity is least cultural now and more political. We exist as political unit and autonomous political nations. (cited in Hearne, 2012, p.18)

The Native director of the film Chris Eyre asserts that it would be a mistake to watch this film as an anthropological play only because it is about Indians. Alexie's statement coupled with that of Chris Eyre's invites viewers to see it using a political and historical lens. They see it an intervention in US media-scape. Hence a careful analysis of the film develops a nexus between political sovereignty and visual culture embedded deeply in dominant media narratives. Alexie (1998) realizes that artistic, social, economic and political sovereignty is and should be at the heart of cultural production created by the Native writers. He substantiates that Indians have always been nations within US where the relationship between dominant and marginalized nations has been that of violence and paternalism. Alexie emphatically calls for; "process-centered understanding of sovereignty" rather than a rhetorical claim. In a social context, reclaiming sovereignty amounts to fighting for the institutional interventions in native families, such as the aggressive removal of children through foster care systems and boarding schools.

Aesthetic conception of indigenous sovereignty is particularly important to the production of *Smoke Signals* (1998) as an indigenous artistic and intellectual work of art. It shifts native's experience from a victimized stance to a strategic one. Being an interventionist screen play *Smoke Signals* challenges centuries old misconceptions about Native Americans popularized with the release of romanticized representation of plain Indians *in Dances with Wolves.* Alexie (1998) deliberately buffets misrepresentations of Indians in western iconoclastic media. In this way, it affects an 'indigenization of mass media" by employing an established formula of road movies which are comic in their operation. The indigenization of Western mass media helps dismantle the prevalent meanings, hence reshaping American cinema from within. Alexie iterates time and again that native people are essentially different from Euro- Americans which is a key to understanding the distinctiveness in mainstream film. Film's director Eyre and Alexie realize the power of cinema and subject this power to assert an activist pedagogical status apart from an entertainment media. Targeted at Native and non-Natives alike it asserts the need for their political sovereignty denied to the Natives.

Thomas Joseph, one of the main characters of the movie, brings back the authority to regulate native stories in public as well as private behaviors. The iconoclastic representation of honorable, ferocious and threatened Indians in Hollywood and westerns media, has been lopsided by the native media experts. The subject of absent fathers and abandoned children that has been echoing with dreams of Indian absenteeism in conventional media has been replaced with the narrative about recovery and come back albeit shown through the retrieval of the remains of the deceased father Arnold Joseph. Also, it devises its media narrative by highlighting the unequal power relation existing between American Indians and the United States by a verbal play where US Independence Day is celebrated leading to devastating fire.

The film *Smoke Signals* (1998) has been adapted from one of Alexie's short stories "This is what it means to Say Phoenix, Arizona". The film follows Victor Joseph and Thomas Builds –the –Fire two young men from Spokane reservation, who start their journey away from reservation towards Phoenix where Victor expects to retrieve residue of his lately dead but long missing father. The film questions the conventional Hollywood depiction of Natives in films like *Dances with the Wolves.*

[††] Fourth Cinema refers to the films presented by Indigenous minorities working in the First World

Through this journey, Alexie lets the viewers analyze representation of Indians. Victor is trying to make Thomas learn how an Indian should behave and in doing so, he reveals that thought process of both have been polluted by misrepresentations. Victor teasingly blames Thomas of acquiring to be Indian from *Dances with the Wolves* and initiating to teach Thomas how to be a 'real Indian'. However, Victor's guidance to Thomas trolls through some more Hollywood stereotypes, as usual as the overpowering Spiritism that Thomas had gathered from *Dances with the Wolves*. "Get stoic," Victor counsels. "White people will run all over you if you don't look mean." The good look is the warrior look as depicted in conventional Hollywood depiction, as Victor comments, "You look like as you just got back from killing a buffalo." Although Thomas clearly mentions that his people have never been buffalo hunters and they were fishermen but Victor contends on the practicability of the typecast. The success of *Smoke Signals (1998)* invites more artists and intellectuals to consider film making as a project to back a Nationalist project.

Being in charge of their own images, Alexie and Chris (1998) use humor and irony as most effective weapons against the "Western media imperialism" in *Smoke Signals.* The film's comic tone, even in a story of loss stands out in the representation of native history. The film's politicized references, symbolic places, and technologies of film language like sound and editing integrate densely woven allusions to both historical events and popular representations. Disjunctive editing brings together multiple time frames; it continually redefines the relationship of the past to the present even within the context of the road movie genre's linear movement across the western landscape. The flashback sequence in which Victor remembers events from his childhood suggests the impact of systematic imperialist infrastructure on individual native families, children and on the tribe as a whole.

The choice of location as Spokane River has been political indeed to advance film's sovereign position. The film abounds with conversation about salmon which adverts to US construction of Grand Coulee Dam over Spokane River which resulted in the loss of salmon. Depended for their sustenance on the fish, Spokane tribe lost their traditional means of living. The film employs river images bereft of fish to construct and disseminate the discourse of hunger to unveil the callous face of the so-called democracy called US. The hunger discourse of Natives is juxtaposed with commodity foods exemplified in the character of Arnold Joseph who stands for both "scarcity and plenitude". Deprived of the natural and healthy source of food, the Natives are put to highly unwholesome commodity fast foods. Throughout this media representation character's personal memories are entwined with historical US- Native relations to suggest inextricable relation between a Sovereign power and individuals held captive by Federal policies.

Retrieval of Arnold Joseph's remains is the central action on which the entire structure of the film is based. Arnold's irresponsible play with fireworks becomes the cause of house fire ultimately killing Thomas-Builds- the- fire's parents. The film's opening frame announces disastrous Independence Day Celebration which is linked artistically with fire, thus establishing America as an invasive power which consumed and destroyed Native cultures and families. The film brings forth federal Indian policies and enforced paternalistic legislation meant to subject Natives into a relation of extreme dependence. Arnold Joseph's character symbolizes a complicated relationship between the Natives and US. Arnold stands for an individual colonized by the United States. He becomes a vehicle for destruction of Thomas's family through his celebrating US Independence Day.

The film provides a number of intertextual references in the wake of tribal relations with US by selecting the Independence Day of US as the film's primary event. To say, "white people's independence day" is to highlight the racial contrast between two races in opposition. The film rearticulates this day as a mourning day for the local inhabitants, hence positing death anniversary of Thomas' family on The US Independence Day thus highlighting the birth of US as a visible marker of racial extinction of the Natives. Arnold Joseph's apocalyptic mistake in "celebrating white people's independence" stimulates a genocidal fire that 'rose up like General George Armstrong Custer, unleashing the enemy into Thomas's house and the entire Reservation community.

Racial, sexual and ecological colonization is at the heart of Victoria Nalani Kneubuhl feminist theatre. Her plays present Hawaii as a unique embodiment of historical, cultural and social entanglements. Apart from the crucial changes brought about by westernization and Christianization, her plays depict the fiscal, and communal invasion of Hawaii by Anglo Americans. Victoria's plays depict sexual colonization by employing land as a metaphor of mother/ woman. Having a deep insight into the onslaught of globalization, she shows the transformation and violation of the ecological system

of Hawaii. The dual themes of land's violation and woman's exploitation have been beautifully interwoven into her play *The Story of Susana*. Determined to give voice to silenced and suppressed women by reconstructing their stories, Kneubuhl ventures on a feminist project. *The Story of Susana* presents Hawaii as a land which has been assaulted, transformed adversely and made nearly extinct because of repeated violations. History is consistently interwoven into the play underscoring western based patriarchal advent into Hawaii. The play records Hawaii's women's passage from a communal set up to a corporate based consumer culture where they are nothing more than aesthetic objects deprived of self-esteem, then again to the communal set up in an exclusively female world characterized by healing.

Structuring the play on a cyclical mode rather than developing a linear progression in Western style, the play brings about scores of characters blurring past and present, reality and imagination. More concerned with character development, Victoria focuses on dialogue rather than action. She states that violence against women and land has transcended cultural, geographical and historical boundaries and to give it a theatrical representation, she juxtaposes contemporary Susana with Babylonian and Biblical Susanas, thus making Susana's character as a generic woman character. In Victoria's estimation land and woman of Hawaii both have been subjected to "feminine principle" to provide gratification to their oppressor i.e. man. The play elaborately discusses the cultural transmutations done because of economic, social and legal invasions by the colonizers. In "Introduction" Victoria comments, "apart from becoming a conduit of cultural and human experience, theatre can serve as a powerful platform for examining the social and political issues of our times" (p, 329). In love with multidimensionality of theatre she brings in complex issues and three intersecting circles make the structure not only complex but novel as well. It is augmented by equally baffling contemporary times and historical times, a transitional house. Susana lived:

Behind a wall, in the company
Of betrayal
Anger
Hurt,
Fear
Silence

The Susana of Babylon was "pious and beautiful and well raised in the law of Mosses" but was attractive and subject to the gaze of two elders who were appointed judges and they demanded sexual favors from her by declaring, "you made in our image. You made for our wanting". On her refusal, Susana was accused of adultery in public. Since they were judges and people trusted them unquestioned, they were believed and Susana was condemned to a shameful death. But before the action took place, Daniel interfered and investigated the matter, whereupon Susana was proved innocent and relieved.

Susana's problems did not end with her relief. Male gaze dispossessed her of her self-esteem. Violated and threatened by penetrating male gaze, she hid herself behind the walls. Susana comments:

> Only, I could always feel the eyes on me, on the back of my neck, on my waist, my lips, my breasts...all this time, like someone was tracing me with a pencil. I could feel the terrible eyes, staring. Fear spread like a rapacious weed. It covered everything.

Susana states that though her family pretended to be concerned about her but it was a relief to them to "have swept under the carpet like a dirty little secret."

Victoria blurs past with present, and depicts Susana being raped by violent colonial gaze. Susana's rape is symptomatic of Native land's rape. Susana comments, "I'm sitting here looking at myself in the mirror and this strange feeling comes over me that I'm not real. I'm looking at my reflection, but it's like I've left my body and I'm looking at an empty thing." Western patriarchal aesthetic norms introduced a fake self in the native women. It regressed women and transformed the culture from matriarchal to male centered; where upon empowered women were disenfranchised and turned into sex objects available to be toyed with. Susana says, "They wanted to keep me in a state of publicity, as if my abuse was a public delight and they call it art." Susana is reminded of pre-colonial serenity in these lines:

> Once in my garden there was no watching. In that garden, no webbing of desire, no feeding on images, no glossy destinies and now robbed by the prophets. They speak and a foul mist curls the flowers. They snapped things off that were meant to bloom. They transplanted things that, for the first time ever, had a chance to grow. (p. 330)

The lines indicate double theme of forceful penetration of the land as well as rape of Susana. Colonial violence against Native women and land is best expressed in Molly Lightfoot's words that belongs to a place "that was once the house of her "mother's mother's mother" and in that place women were powerful because they spoke. She further says that in past they sang a song about "the river, and the reeds, of nets swaying in the water and fish slipping along. They sang songs for men who were harvesters, gatherers, hunters and fishermen" (p. 330); her song becomes a motif of the play thus drawing attention of the reader towards serenity of the pre-colonial time and also highlighting importance of song making in Native culture. Molly's song shifts from a calm and serene past to a troublesome present where:

> Song that killed the luminaries' moon with flags and swords and glistening guns, brass buttons shining and boots. And the moon turned upside down, pouring out our blood and our bleeding-you have killed the singers, the elders curled in their blankets and nothing to stop your blood. Let us sing. (p. 334)

Thus the society degenerates from wholeness and serenity to disintegration and conquest by imperialism. The scene shifts from colonial gaze and violence to Neo-colonial trope of globalization interspersed with glossy magazines and imported television emerge in Hawaii to advertise lipsticks, high heels and curlers. From the wise old woman the role of teaching has been taken over by the imperialistic mass media which teaches the local girls the do's and don'ts; in short the lesson of femininity is being inculcated through a bombardment of consumer culture. These magazines transport American fashion. Pam is confused that "high heels like can ruin your back…. but they make your legs good" (p. 334).

Scene five is all about beauty and making up, lipstick, eye shadows, powder and mascara. Annie elucidates other girls about the sex and sexual cumbersome role that Hawaiian women trained by corporate culture have to perform. Contemporary Susana says:

> First they spied on me because it gave them pleasure. Then they ruined my gardens with mirrors because they thought it would give them more pleasure to look at me looking at myself, and later, they accused me of vanity. (p. 334)

This was the advent of the beauty culture imported into Hawaii. Annie indicates that the market is full of a lot of stuff which makes women look pretty. She also indicates that its duty of women to look pretty, because no one wants to accompany a girl not equipped with beauty. One of the girls, Barbie reads from a magazine that the eye liner makes eyes look bigger, doe-like and more inviting; so, the beauty ideology imported into Native land was a backlash against Native women who enjoyed power and reverence in past and who are reduced to being objects of male gaze.

The further deterioration of native culture is catalogued through a dance party in which two white men, John Rook and Lee, are introduced playing with girls and the girls are desirous of dancing with them. Bobby Lee singles out Susana for dance partner and instructs her to dance, "I'm leading and all you have to do is follow me closely, okay?" Hierarchy is introduced and from a matriarchal culture the indigenous culture is changed into patriarchal culture. Introducing Susana to his mother's cabinet, he shows her delicate and fragile china wares. She is impressed and comments, "It is very nice china" whereupon he comments, "I want you to be the one." After meeting him, she freezes in a sculptured pose. Entrapped by deceit and an illusionary love, she ceases to be a human being and transformed completely into a voiceless statue that serves only an aesthetic function. The play introduces "drink culture" which shows further regression of the Native culture and values. Susana takes drink excessively. Scene ten traces the source of silence of Canadian women, where Susana experiences, "In one breath, his loving hand across your cheek so easily becomes a hard fist on your mouth." Scene fifteen shows Lee injecting drugs into Susana's body by connecting a small piece of rubber hose around her arm (p. 324).

The lower circle in Act two integrates the traumatized characters. The threshold house becomes "a model institution whose enlightened methods are entering the mainstream." Adele the organizer of the institution attributes this success to "inmates' integrity". She comments:

> What heals here more than any knowledge is the hope that there is some kind of stability to life, truthful and honest way of living with us and others? This place is for women who have had extenuating life circumstances to overcome, who has survived against the odds. (p. 336)

Susana meets a number of other women traumatized by similar experiences. Marina, another refugee is stifled completely; Molly is wayward; Hazel is a new comer and a bit cynical. Hazel discloses the source

of Marina's victimhood that Marina Montclair was a media star of the past. Her only child died and her husband eloped with a much younger girl two weeks after the funeral.

Threshold becomes a place for synthesis of all women across race and culture or history where they are healed of all violence. Hence Hazel who was tormented with jealousy for Marina is also cured of that jealousy. The jealousy has been bred in her by White corporate culture by dividing women between upper and lower classes. Hence Hazel is reminded of her childhood in which Marina floated through a shining screen. That shiny screen or TV created allusion of affluence around Marina, where she has everything, and rang for smallest things in her pent house. Being an icon, she was shown floating in her plush mink dress from ballrooms to bedroom. Hazel, on the other hand, had to war with scarcity and hunger; she expresses her sense of deprivation by voicing her being mischievous girl who "coveted [her] neighbor's goods, and loves it that [she] can never be trusted (p. 324).

In the Threshold, strong women become the voice of weaker and voiceless women. Hence Molly Lightfoot who is a Native woman, speaks vociferously against women's objectification and comments that she carries "every hurt that's been done to them". She takes "it very personally" and stands up "to tell the truth, and a man shot [her]. She tried to made men hear that women "are whole human beings." The story ends at beginning of the first new day and time of planting, which in a way dusk of suffering and violence against women and dawn of self-hood and empowerment. Susana calls the women into the garden and says, "I give this to the earth, that it may grow you a miraculous garden, where, with each sunrise arms branch out, unfolding into life" (p. 336).

Linda Hogan (1993) an American Indian fiction writer and poet, writes persistently against "ecological racism" by conjuring up oral story telling mode. The readers can feel the pain and frustration Hogan feels for the voiceless and marginalized segments of Nature who have been subjected to racism (ecological and human). Hogan feels that there is a dire need to show reverence to all living and breathing creatures. Healing the wound caused by white man and bridging the gap between man and Nature is the cornerstone of her poetry. She tells time and again that sea and land creature, no matter how insignificant they may appear to human eye, have a right to survive. She strongly condemns the anthropocentric philosophy that makes Euro-American culture to subjugate and exploit all other living creatures to bring material gains to white man. Propagating an Eco-centric vision Hogan voices her desire openly in the following lines:

I want the world to be kinder
I am a woman
I am afraid
I saw a star once, falling toward me

As a woman, she is afraid of much that goes unnoticed by men and hence she demands for a kinder and eco-sensitive perceptive world.

Hogan's terrain involves not the territory of the great Plaines, her terrain involves aquatic imagery. Hellen May Dennis (2007) writes about Hogan, "She is in the water or water is in her" (p. 156). Her verses brim with aquatic metaphors: whales, fishermen, sand, salt, dolphins, ships and shells inhabit her poesy. In her poem "Crossing" Hogan traces human descent back to an aquatic beginning. In that poem, she longs for "the terrain of crossed beginnings". Her craving for aquatic is mythological, primal and is repeated in several other poems in *The Book of Medicine* (1993). The poet seems nostalgic for a period when human beings had not acquired territorial domination on the ground but were marine organisms crossing paths with the whales in the course of growth and development. This longing for aquatic existence not only highlights prehistoric connections and co-existence between whales and humans, it also suggests the transformative character of American Indian cultures, accommodating to their milieu to endure rather than compelling the setting to regulate to their necessities which is a distinguishing feature of Western cultural legacy.

*The Book of Medicine (*Hogan, 1993, p. 34) is not only a repossessing of cultural identity and dominance over her Chickasaw chronicle but also a postcolonial eco-feminist endeavor: a voice sounding off against environmental unfairness. She asserts:

> Spiritualism involves varieties of political actions. If you think that the Earth, and every animate thing and all the stones are sanctified, then your obligation is to defend these things. I believe strongly that we are duty bound to be stewards of the planet." (cited. in Dennis, 2007).

Linda acts as a custodian through her writings. As we explore her poetry in the light of stewardship and myth, we see that Hogan draws our focus to inequalities committed against her acculturation, her sex and her surroundings. In "Hunger" Hogan personates greed as a person who "crosses" through a ship which reminds one of colonial settlers crossing the sea to fulfill their lust for riches. Hence she writes:

Hunger was the fisherman
Who said dolphins are like women,
We took them from the sea
And had our ways
With them

She further develops the analogy between women and the sea in these words:

It is the old man
Who comes in the night
To cast a line
He knows the sea is pregnant
With clear fish

Using a highly sexual imagery, Hogan (1993) equates rape of the sea with rape of a woman. The first passage talks about women's and Dolphin's objectification and assault by taking them away from their habitats to satiate the man. In the second stanza, the sea is compared to the anatomy of a magnanimous pregnant lady who is uninformed when the man accesses at night expecting to dispossess her of whatever she nurtures in her womb. These verses remind the reader of documentation of early colonialists who looked for a "Garden of Eden" and land of opportunities to satiate their lust for riches and adventurous penetration in the new continent. The *Journal of Columbus* describes a luxurious farm with cinnamon and spice, aromatic plants, herbs, flowers, fertile soil, and plenty of gold; the colonizers saw in that land an opportunity for capital. Hogan speaks vociferously against capitalistic mentality of the colonizers who took the Native land, air, water, soil and resources within it as a real estate to multiply their capital upon.

Hogan explores time and again the motif of "feminine principle" i.e. land not as a mother, but a woman characterized by sexuality and an incumbent role of gratification. Women and land are viewed always within this order of feminine principle for openness, adaptability and reception. Her poem "*Hunger"* is spatially posited on an unnamed ocean whereby the poet gives reference to the advent of colonial settlement that eventually became the cause of American Indian cultural genocide encoding patriarchal practices of domination and subjugation.

"*Harvesters of Night and Water"* is another poem that graphically presents an analogy between sexual assault on a woman and physical abuse of land. She invokes the image of a man on boat who tries to capture and possess a resistant octopus. The boat is not unnamed; rather it is identified as "white" and "small". Hogan's use of all these epithets provides descriptive references to colonizers who used trickery, guile and cunningness to possess not only the land, but also people inhabiting that land. The poem laments over the violence and cruelty of the colonizers and appreciates the resistant efforts of the octopus. The Octopus of Hogan's poetry is harmless and wise in the sense that it preserves treasures for its hereafter consumption and constructs its house deep in water. In that sense it is as wise and active as man who constructs his abode on land. Hogan raises voice against its objectification and undeserved consumption by the white male. The oppressors of ocean and women who enter the ocean by stealth can murder and exploit females in the same fashion as they cruelly assault the octopus. According to Hogan, this contempt for other shapes of life has produced an unpleasant and cruel universe. She is of the view that the fishermen who are reaping the night in the seas fail to recognize and reverence the marine acumen that surrounds them.

The poem "*Tear*" is particularly postcolonial in theme. Hogan invests the title with dual meaning in order to define the female's outfits in her tribes and the historical elimination that desolated the antecedents on the western tract known as the "trail of tears". The water imagery of the poem cruises the reader through a deluge of grief induced by a huge cultural assault. The aquatic medication in Hogan's literary pieces has numerous curative drives. The therapeutic effect emanates through affection, in memorizing the past, in narrating the tales, by giving words reverence and in esteeming the ground and the nurturance that it offers. The closing piece of the collection is "*Flood: the Sheltering Tree*". It contains an image of the poet standing under the lonesome tree surviving on an embankment

where water continues rising in. The rain in the poem rinses the bruises of the wounded people and serves to purify the soil and souls of the people to help them to see clearly away from the materialistic lens of science and technology:

The beautiful unwinding field
And remember their lives
From before the time of science
Before they fell from history

Vine Deloria (1999) said, "The traditional Indian stood in the centre of a circle and brought everything together in that circle. Today we stand at the end of a line and work our way along that line, discarding and avoiding everything on either side of us." (p. 257). This view of all-inclusiveness exists in all supportive kinship setups celebrated by American Indian recipient of NWCLAA poet Luci Tapahonso[‡‡]. Tapahonso (1997), believes that these relationships enforce responsibilities on humans to perform tasks that uphold the "basic structures of the universe and ensure biodiversity. She interweaves beautifully oral story telling tradition in her poetry thus gaining strength from its nurturance on one hand and highlighting the cultural assault by colonization on the other hand. In *Blue Horses Rush* Tapahonso (1997), cherishes the glorious past and celebrates the art of storytelling and craft of weaving baskets, both Native skills transferred generationally. In accordance with the paradigm provided by settled societies in contrast with settler societies Tapahonso starkly rejects the development gifted by industrialization and hyper individualism. She informs the readers through an intermingling of poem and story that settler societies move at a frantic pace whereas the settled societies move slowly never exceeding a human scale. Since the settled societies persist usually (not always) on local resources, they are powered by sunshine and winds. To their young ones the older member transfer skills necessary to sustain their lives in a wholesome manner, rather than leaving them open in a hyper competitive world, ruled by a hypermarket. Instead of an individual brilliance, the settled cultures rely on collective wisdom, hence paying homage to grandmothers, grandfathers, shamans and medicine men. Since, the settled societies are not governed by a cut throat competition inculcated by watch and hypermarket; these societies tend to limit the speed of its members in a variety of ways i.e. by celebrating meals, sharing gifts, singing songs, storytelling, and weaving. David Orr (2002) writes, "Showiness, ego trips, great wealth, huge homes, hurry and excessive consumption are mostly discouraged, while cooperation, self-responsibility and self-reliance are encouraged in settled societies" (p.19). These traits are manifest in Tapahonso's poetry.

In her poetry there is a deeper worldview not limited by a linear thinking characteristic of western civilizations. She has a more integrated view of the world characterized by love for everyone and everything around paying attention to insignificant to render them significant. Hence in "Preface" she writes that mobile phones, emails did not mar the circular world view enjoyed by the people. Since linear time and watch did not dictate the people's life, they meet their friends, kins, and attend medical appointments in a relaxed manner. The meetings are studded with fine jokes, and intricate word play augmented by cup of coffee and sandwiches. Hence she professes to arouse concern and empathy for the land, for humans, and for those in despair by incorporating the speed breaking devices of storytelling, songs, communal meals and fine jokes.

For Tapahonso , human happiness stands irrespective of scientific progress. She longs to stay close to her kins and nature, hence she says:

My beloved baby, if only we could stay here,
There is no end to this clear, sweet air.

In her village, far from city, the air is clean and refreshing, whereas away from her home, "To the west, immense rocks lie red and stark in the empty desert" (1997, p. 6). Tapahonso condemns compromise of human happiness at the altar of developmental projects erected in the shape of monuments and museums to preserve the past relics. "Rain in the Desert" addresses the similar issue where she juxtaposes millions of dollars poured on developmental projects with weak, sick and poor people living below the poverty line. Close to the newly re-preserved and reconstructed archaeological site are homeless and uprooted people who do not have clean drinking water. Tapahonso (1997) creates telling imagery of people having water containers to collect rain water, which will be used for all sorts of purposes from drinking, to cooking, to

[‡‡] Luci Tapahonso received in 2006 Native Writers Circle Lifetime Achievement Award

washing to paint mixing. She weaves a story of "White Mountain people" who venture in a "cold morning" exemplifying their white and cold ethics, drink coffee and gather at the "pueblo Grande Museum" help constructing "steel grates designed to help protect the archaeological sites". The poem is the best example of the illogical and irrational claims of white civilization that preys upon the settled societies to improve their barbarity. The poem shows that thousand year's old Hohokam Ki people were ingenious to such an extent that they developed a perfect irrigation system lined with bricks and cement centuries back. Her trees not only populate and make her word pictures colorful; rather they testify a glorious past and a devastation brought by imperialism:

The old gnarled trees also bear centuries of memories-
Of disasters, of celebrations, of transitions of all types.

To Tapahonso, kinship enfolds its members in a supportive womb, even though one is living in city. Hence she writes in "Ahidziskell" that togetherness mitigates the fear and enfolds a person in sanctuary of other's presence:

When we're together, checking locks doesn't occur to me,
Local crime seems so far away (never mind
That we are in the heart of the city),
If I turn over, your warm chest or arms will surround me.

Away from the kinship support system, Tapahonso is tormented by fears, worries and anxieties. Hence she

Listens intently (for what I am not sure)
Leave a light on for safety
A little noise and I'm sitting in bed, surveying the room
I check the lock again.

Fears and anxieties which are gift of hypercompetitive and individualistic city life characterized by Western penetration can be reduced only by going back to a glorious past marked by sharing rather than looting and stealing in Tapahonso's poetry. In contemporary Native American Theatre, William Robe (1981), is certainly a conspicuous presence who courageously employs the Native Theatre as a means to highlight penetration of "materialism and commodification" as by-products of colonization into Native ethos. Robe (1981), identifies the living conditions on the reservation as long term consequences of colonization, perpetuated into a vicious cycle of social injustice, poverty, alcoholism and violence and uses Native theatre to share stories, values and cultural identity to young generations. He structures his stories on a different pattern from conventional Euro-American cannon where happenings are arranged in a linear way.

In *Star Quilter*, with only two characters, Robe (1981)presents the inherently trespassing nature of Euro-American imperialism which works on capitalistic principles. Western capitalism sucks the blood of the lower class workers to gain material benefits from them and then throw them like peel of a squeezed lemon. Using technique of negotiation, Robe brings in a white woman soaked in capitalist philosophy and keeps on trespassing the physical, spiritual and psychological space of native woman Mona and then in the three decades she makes false promises, succeeds only to impoverish Mona with her duplicitous deals. LuAnne's racial complex and haughtiness is reflected throughout the play.

She not only enters Mona's home without knocking, she hammers her materialistic values on Mona thus making cultural trespassing possible. Hence she persuades Mona to make a Star Quilt to be presented to the Senator. She insists to commodify a cultural symbol made to be gifted to people bound by blood or affinity, but LuAnne insists, "I'll pay whatever you want for it." The play starts with fall season and ends with winter where a complete deterioration of cultural, physical, spiritual and psychological space has been done and an irretrievable loss suffered by Mona literally and American Indian cultures metaphorically. LuAnne is blind (metaphorically); unable to see the havoc she has done to Mona and her culture by bringing in capitalist values in her home, whereas Mona is physically impaired by blindness. Since Mona cannot see the hurt on the face of woman who has never treated her as a human, rather only a cog in the wheel of her self- interested, self- centered capitalist project where the only valuable thing is the price fixed on a commodity. The deterioration of the local cultures and health of Mona is clearly stated by Mona who says that she used to do a lot of beadwork and then she received medication (spiritual reinvigoration) and started working on star quilts. But she did not make

them for money. The consciousness and lamentation of infiltration of capitalist values into Mona's mind let her voice her concern:

> This "job' of yours led me off my path, the right path. Star quilts are beautiful, because they have one color and all different shades of that color leading to the center, the heart. That's why I made those quilts- they came from my heart. (Robe, 1981, p. 39)

Where cultural practice of giving away "gift" is turned into "job" by western cultural invasion, watching over a dead body of a fellow kin is transferred into "job" in *Body Guards*. Desecration and profanation of the dead bodies is at the heart of a short comic play *Body Guards*. The play centers on only three characters Benny, Skin and Clarence (the dead body). Benny and Skin wait for Sheriff to come. Sheriff in this particular play symbolized marker principles and commodifying philosophy. It's the market that has driven away and channeled cultural and religious practices away from communal space and made the dead body a capital to earn money. Hence in this play the dead body of a fellow kinsman serves as a capital. Benny highlights this materialistic aspect in these words, "We'll get more money the longer the Sheriff takes to come. All we have to do is watch him and then load him up into the hearse." (p. 45). Hence watching over a dead body of a native kinsman and preventing him to be preyed upon by animals is turned into a "job". Skin remarks, "If it bothers you so much, you shouldn't have taken the job. Thinking about it, this is the only job you could do."

The play time and again highlights the theme of "Indian playing Indian" to show the dehumanizing and horrific results of colonization that engulfed them in a vicious cycle of self-destruction and violence. Benny and Skin speculate the possibility of Clarence's murder by another Indian by mentioning that Clarence has got his oil lease money and was found dead in elevator the next day with, "no money, just a half-empty bottle of muscatel." Violation of Clarence does not end with his death, his dead body has been subjected to further violation when Benny searches his clothes and finds medals as remembrance of Clarence's participation in Korean War. Medals have no material value hence Benny says, "We should see what else he has on him, besides those old medals."

Rez Politics explores 'inter-cultural ethics" where he pleads for inter-tribal and intra-tribal harmony and peace in order to promote pan-Indianness as a way to deflect the divisive politics of colonization. Curtis becomes the mouthpiece of the writer and says, "Indians aren't supposed to be fighting each other" (p. 58). *Sneaky* depicts stringent hold of a master race over the rituals and religious practices of the natives symbolically presented in the form of dead body of a native woman. White mortician Jack Kencetakes hold of the dead body of the woman and plans to give her burial dictated by white laws which denigrate the local customs and traditions as trivial. Three sons of the woman plan to steal the body from the store house of the mortician to give her traditional burial to their mother and succeed in their endeavor. Jack Kence however discovers the stealth but allows the brothers to proceed with their plan, in spite of laws and health codes' (p. 161).In the end, all characters realize that death is universal human experience. "They all have one thing in common', as jack cynically notes about the dead, "after a certain amount of time, they rot and they're forgotten' (p. 162). In the end the three brothers prepare the traditional funeral by a hybrid ceremony of burning sweet grass and reciting an adapted version of the Lord's prayers. The play concludes shortly before the lightening of another fire-resuming the symbolism of the first scene in a cyclical structural gesture- as the brothers "hold arms and sing" (p. 169). Even though the temporary harmony remains fragile, it also encloses the seed for change, joining the brothers in the spirit of community.

Robe's signature piece *The Independence of Eddie Rose* presents aftermath of colonization in a graphic way. The play depicts prevalence of poverty, unemployment, addiction and domestic violence in reservation household. Its protagonist, a teenager, is trying to cope with his employment, alcoholic mother Katherine and her violent boyfriend Lenny while feeling responsible for the protection of his younger sister Theia. Expelled from the local school for his regular use of controlled substances, Eddie Rose is supposed to continue his education elsewhere but refuses to attend a boarding school (p. 48). Like *Sneaky*, the play microcosmically represents larger communal and cultural conflicts. Eddie breathes in an environment which is self- destructive and violent towards others. Born to an alcoholic father who 'threw him against wall as a baby' (p. 59), he opens eyes in lap of a mother who is mentally and spiritually deadened to help her children to forge a way out of this dysfunctional atmosphere. Katherine and her boyfriend alternatively attack Theia, Eddie and each other. In addition to the constant outbreaks of verbal and physical violence, both Eddie and Theia are subject to sexual abuse. Katherine makes incestuous passes at Eddie, culminates in the brutal rape of Theia by Lenny (p. 91). In Native

North American drama, rape usually serves as a trope for colonialist conquest since it graphically captures the aggressive intrusion of white supremacist patriarchy. In *The Independence*, too sexual violence symbolically reminds the readers of institutionalized abuse of executive power through the character of Eddie's friend Mike who is repeatedly forced to extend sexual favors to his detention officer in jail (p. 67). Similarly, Eddie's step father Lenny admits that he too was once raped by a white guard in a drug rehab center (p. 90), a fact that suggests the epidemic perpetuation of colonial violence. Like *Sneaky*, the play thus subtly probes the historical roots of domestic violence, making easy accusations or solutions impossible. Therefore in spite of the fact that, as one character in *Better –n- Indian* puts it, "most of our problems in this part of the hemisphere are due to colonization' (p. 267). Eddie's loyalties and affiliations do not run along ethnic lines. Quite on the contrary, in process of victimization or rather 'denotation' requires particularly courageous act of separating himself from his biological roots.

In this bleak domestic environment, the adolescents only solace in the hope for escape first through drugs and eventually through a physical change of place. Quite telling, is Aunt Thelma who represents the lost link to Eddie's cultural heritage who helped him with his decision: in a traditional sage-burning ceremony conducted at the cemetery where Eddie's grandparents are buried, she accompanies his site of passage into adulthood. The play ends on a note of hope; Aunt Thelma takes over the custody for Theia and Eddie devotes to begin a new life away from the existential threats of his home. Leaves the reservation, he takes along the cultural knowledge, communicated to him by his aunt and begins to affiliate with a family of choice, promising to his friend Mike that 'I will pray for you like Indians do: we'll along be brothers' (p. 82). Cultural identity becomes a dynamic process: instead of being friends by categories of blood quantum or generic heritages it depends on the individuals' affiliations, mobility and choice.

Most of Yellow Robe's plays highlight the complexities of identity by closely intertwining intra- and inter-cultural differences. *The Star Quilter* most densely focuses on the conflict between natives and white people. It is only when LuAnne understands that the quilts are not commodity articles that a friendship between the aging women becomes possible. *Rez Politics* and *Grandchildren of the Buffalo Soldiers* invite a critical investigation of historical injustices and cultural divides, but it also emphasizes that human decency does not reside in ethnicity, gender, religion, or class. Mona summarizes this in an ethical credo in the end, when she tells her antagonist, "I don't want to let our differences become a barrier... Deer, badgers, even a grasshopper will live near one another, though they are not the same, but each is valuable and necessary in completing the circle (41). In this holistic perspective on cultural diversity, the respect for otherness and an inclusive understanding of community matter all the more.

Better-n-Indian is the most bitingly satiric play which employs thirty two characters and a variety of media to contrast stereotypical non-native expectations with both intra-cultural tensions and colonial practices. The play serves as a historiography rewriting the history of institutional assimilation that have systematically exploited the indigenous cultures from the BIA[§§] to the Hollywood film industry. Like *Pieces of Us,* in which a chorus holds the right to define what an Indian is, *Better n Indian* explores the issues of native identity. This is most pointedly displayed by the final of ten episodes: a TV game show features two 'unaware, uninformed, and just plain uncaring citizens' (328) who have to 'correctly identify people in the photographs are presented as Indians or not Indians' (322). The show exposes the absurdity of judging people by their outward appearance: the candidates mistake a Chinese child and even a science fictional character- 'an admiral in the Romulus fleet from Star Trek' (326) for Indians." *Better-n-Indian* critiques the practice of what Spider Woman Theatre calls "plastic shamanism'- the commercial exploitation of indigenous spirituality is effectively disrupted by the recurrent appearance of the Museum's director, representatively named Adam Redman, who announces the scenes.

While Robe's plays revolve around question of mixed identity, particularly located at the cross roads of African American, native American and European American influences, they also promote an ethic of respect and understanding regardless of the characters' genetic backgrounds. As plays such as *Rez Politics*, *Mixed Blood Seeds* and *Grandchildren Of Buffalo Soldier* demonstrate subject positions and especially native African American ones are never easily claimed. Contemporary Native American identity involves confrontations with both history and the ongoing challenges of colonization, but it is

[§§] Bureau of Indian Affairs

also a site of negotiation, dialogue and reconciliation. Robe's plays are thus part of a larger movement towards a more differentiated perspective on ethnicity: refusing to take sides either with the strategies of separatist essentialism or with the harmonizing lure of assimilation, they liberate indigenous identity from the grip of ontological categories and emphasize its dynamic processes instead. Instead of the contested sites of differences and sameness, Robe's plays are also humorous and often optimistic, celebrating the survival of indigenous North American people.

Geiogamah's play *Foghorn* (1978) opens with Columbus spying at Indians. The play introduces white colonizers reprimanding Indians and savoring: "don't talk back"- vermin, Varmints!" "Filthy savages" and recommending, "I say let's force them off the land"! Assenter 'generously sets aside wasteland reservations'. A century later, all in quick succession, Indians "reclaim" Alcatraz Island and plan to rescue Whites and acculturate non- Indians natively to "save them from themselves". A chain of platitudes fall down around the stage, "My blessed savages", a sister calls her brood of Indians, and a "clownish" school teacher terrifies "bucks and sequins" acquiring English, "the one true language, OUR language!" beating an American flag, one child struts the 'first word of the American way': Hell-O. Hell-o" and the sarcasm are not lost on a German stage. Pocahontas babbles her fabled beloved calls and narrates the 'true' story a big ... big captain's campaign to aim her virginity but exposes the infertility of a megalomaniac nation. Tonto, fed up by making the Lone Ranger's shoes gleam and digesting his egoism, slits the masked man's throat.

In *Foghorn* the dramatist cautiously choreographs instructions. The small vignettes in the play enact the wrath, annoyance and the price of being Indian for five centuries. The act opens up the floodgates of Indian impersonations fixed into a cigar to re-disguise. It was primitively executed as the lobotomy of an enlarged head, the Foghorn hassling Indians just off Alcatraz in 1969. It's jesting taps a deep historical ill feeling and burns a contemporaneous bruise that maturates in social evils. And the drama's humor lives in acknowledgement, truly telling in playing out the distress. At last *Foghorn* flushes the torment and rejoices what is meant to be living today as America Indian.

49 is the concluding composition in the edition. It asserts all Indians arriving in crowd to rejoice their clannish identities. "More than anything else", Geiogamah guides the troupe "I wanted the young people to be affirmative in the face of despair and unreasoning farce." The play is studded with a variety of indigenous musical instruments such as "bells, rattles, ratchets, bull roars, Apache violins, flutes, and whistles, various sizes of drums, piano, and guitars." Tribals' bodies get in concert, whistling and dancing on the 1885, Oklahoma traditional ground the Arbour Circle at the center. The circle's synchronization and equilibrium extends a comic 'control line'. For Geiogamah, singing song on the beat of drum is tantamount to assert clannish identity. The dancing youth sings proudly and assertively:

I got a drum
Let's make a song
All night long.

This affinity of societal songs, communal stimuli and binding against hardship interlink the individuals with their past and present. The dancers join hands against the police, resist disturbance; confirm Indian rights of "existing Indians in Native America". *49* is an optimistic play of opposition and tribesmen affirmations through social brotherhood. It is a cheerful play that appeals to readers through its throb of drum and bull roars and cedar flute notes from the past into present. This follows an 'umbilical control line', Geiogamah says, attached to the tribal past and threaded through an on-going humor.

CONCLUSION

The expression established in the above mentioned works is not a sheer theatrical manifestation of a sociological practice, but it is a determined demand by individuals resolute to be free not only physically, but intellectually and mentally. American Indian literature vehemently projects the horrible aftermath of five centuries of colonization but it also rejuvenates the spirit of the indigenous people to rake for a glorious past and restructure their lives in accordance with their solemn past. The resistant literature revives oral storytelling to reveal not only the rich creativity of the American Indians but also as cement bonding the people and tribes in a solemn bond of Indian-ness. This resistant literature becomes the speech of innumerable other non-literary Indian males and females of the nation who breathe an everyday life of fight and hard work to accomplish and uphold connotation which gives the most reliable charisma to a nationwide Indian works.

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