CONCLUSION

If you can’t locate the other, how are you to locate yourself?... Furthermore, where should the dividing line between outsider and insider stop? How should it be defined? By skin colour (no blacks should make films on yellows)? By language (only Fulani can talk about Fulani, a Bassari is a foreigner here)? By nation (only Vietnamese can produce works on Vietnam)? By geography (in the North-South setting, East is East and East can’t meet West)? Or by political affinity (Third World on Third World counter First and second Worlds)? What about those with hyphenated identities and hybrid realities?

The semiotic system, by which the indigenous peoples of Australia and India (Categorising Aborigines of Australia and Dalits of India as being offsprings of ‘indigene’ group) have been represented, looks, according to Terry Goldie, something like a Chessboard in which the semiotic pawn signifying the indigenous person can only be moved in very circumscribed ways. Terry Goldie is of the view that the shape of the signifying process as it applies to indigenous peoples is formed by a certain semiotic field, a field that provides the boundaries within which the images of the indigene function. The existence of this semiotic field constitutes an important aspect of the ‘subjugated knowledges’ to which Foucault refers in Power/Knowledge. The indigene is a semiotic pawn on a chess board under the control of the white signmaker (in the case of Aboriginals in Australia) and the caste Hindus signmaker (in the case of Dalits in India). And yet the individual signmaker, the individual player,

the individual writer, can move these pawns only within certain prescribed areas. The signmaking is all happening within two fields of discourse: one is that of British imperialism and the other is that of caste oppression by the caste Hindus.

To extend the chessboard analogy, it would not be oversimplistic to maintain that the play between white and indigene (in the case of Australia and Dalit and the caste Hindus in the case of India) is a replica of the black and white squares, with clearly limited oppositional moves. The basic dualism, however, is not that of good and evil, although it has often been argued to be so, as in Abdul R. Jan Mohamed's 'The Economy of Manichean Allegory':

*The dominant model of power – and interest – relations in all colonial societies is the Manichean opposition between the putative superiority of the European and the supposed inferiority of the native.* Jan Mohamed maintains that in apparent exceptions 'any evident "ambivalence" is in fact a product of deliberate, if at times subconscious, imperialist duplicity, operating very efficiently through the economy of its central trope, the Manichean allegory such a basic moral conflict is often implied but in contemporary texts the opposition is frequently between the 'putative superiority' of the indigene and the 'supposed inferiority' of the white (in case of Australia) and the caste Hindus (in case of India). As said suggests, the positive and negative sides of the image are but swings of one and the same pendulum: 'Many of the earliest oriental amateurs began by welcoming the Orient as a salutary derangement of their European habits of mind and spirit. The Orient was overvalued for its pantheism, its spirituality, its stability, its longevity, its primitivism, and so forth.... Yet almost without exception such overstep was followed by a counter – response: the Orient suddenly appeared lamentably under-humanized, antidemocratic, backward, barbaric, and so forth.' I believe that almost all of these characterizations could be applied to the indigenes of Australia and the Dalits of India as positive or negative attributes.

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5 Ibid., P.61.
It has been a commonplace, since Fanon's Black Skin White Masks,\textsuperscript{7} to use 'Other' and 'Not-self' for the white view of blacks and for the resulting black view of themselves. The implication of this assertion of a white self as subject in discourse is to leave the black Other as object. The terms are similarly applicable to the Indian and the Aborigine but with an important shift. They are Other and Not-self but also must become self. The importance of the alien within can not be overstated. In their need to become 'native', to belong here, whites in Australia and Aryans (the caste Hindus) in India have adopted a process which Terry Goldie has termed — 'indigenization'.\textsuperscript{8} A peculiar word, it suggests the impossible necessity of becoming indigenous. For many writers, the only chance of indigenization seemed to be through writing about the humans who are truly indigenous, the Indians and Aborigines. As J.J. Healy notes in \textit{Literature and the Aborigine in Australia}:

\begin{quote}
The Aborigine was part of the tension of an indigenous consciousness. Not the contemporary Aborigine, not even a plausible historical one, but the sort of creature that might persuade a white Australian to look in the direction of the surviving race.\textsuperscript{9}
\end{quote}

It is certain that the whites in Australia and the caste Hindus in India have responded strongly to this creature and to their own need to become indigenous... Neither the racial split or caste discrimination between self and Other nor the process of indigenization originates with Australia or India, but neither do they have clear origins which might be seen as the source for these manifestations. Presumably the first instance in which one human perceived another as Other in racial terms came when the first recognized the second as different in colour, facial feature and in caste oppression came when the first


\textsuperscript{8} See Terry, Goldie.

recognized the second as 'polluted' or 'untouchable'. And the first felt need for indigenization came when a person moved to a new place and recognized an Other as having greater roots in that place. The lack of a specific origin for these conditions is reflected in the widespread occurrence of their modern manifestations.

Dalit and Aboriginal discourses, by virtue of their alterity and their being marginal discourses, have the power to offer resistance to the hegemony of the central discourses by interrogating the lacunae, incongruities and contradictions within the latter's own discursivity thereby effecting the disruption of its normative claims. By revealing how in society, dominant culture has become an automatized agency implicitly underpinning the status quo, these marginal discourses allow subversive elements to identify the determinants of hegemony and eventually alter power configuration in their favour. By exposing how the premises and paradigms of hegemonic power structures are insidiously internalized by those they disempower, these marginal discourses can also controvert the sophistry involved in positing these premises and paradigms as putatively essential and immutable. 'From this dialectic of discursive struggle, truths about the social formation – its characteristic modes of reproduction and its previously hidden vulnerabilities inevitably emerge.' In my view, these subaltern discourses in both countries i.e. Australia & India have been subordinated through processes of accommodation, exclusion or total elision with reference to putatively normative discourses. These subaltern discourses, however, have the potential to dialectically provide alternatives to the central discourse's epistemological premises and socio-historical paradigms.

Dalit writing in India and Aboriginal writing in Australia — these subaltern discourses, having emerged discursively as powerful visible forms of

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protest against a chequered history of exploitation, have thus become sites for
the contestation and negotiation of identities at several levels and in several
ways. However, there is no denying the fact that there are many divergences
and convergences between these two writings. In my study, I have dealt with
and touched upon some of the areas, platforms whereby these are happening,
looking at the literary genre of ‘autobiography’ from both subaltern discourses.

Recent critical theory on autobiography serves as an interesting lense
trough which to analyze Dalit as well as Aboriginal autobiographical works,
since, unlike the autobiographies of famous individuals, autobiographies of
marginal groups differ in that they are usually written by anonymous individuals
who emphasize the ordinariness of their life rather than their uniqueness in
order to establish themselves as representative of their community. For Dalit
autobiographies and Aboriginal autobiographies, the entire life-narrative is
based on the idea of the communal identity. As Stephen Butterfield writes of
African American autobiographies, “the self belongs to the people, and the
people find a voice in the self” subjectivity in these autobiographies is thus
complicated by the deep connection between the individual self and the
communal self. Furthermore, theoretical studies by Margo Perkins and Barbara
Harlow have discussed the ways narrative and autobiography have been used
as a means of political assertion by marginal groups. Many of their insights
reveal important similarities to the way Dalits as well as Aborigines use their
own autobiographies as a political act. For Perkins and Harlow, the
autobiographical narrative is perceived as the actual site of the power struggle,
where the voice of the marginalized individual contests the institutionalized
narrative of the dominant group. Harlow writes:

If resistance poetry challenged the dominant and
hegemonic discourse of an occupying or colonizing power
by attacking the symbolic foundations of that power and
erecting symbolic structures of its own — resistance

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University Press. P.51.
narrative go further still in analyzing the relations of power which sustain the system of domination and exploitation.\textsuperscript{12}

Just like the black women activists of Margo Perkin's study, Aboriginal autobiography is both an expression and the extension of previous activism. However, one strength of Dalit autobiographies has been their act of exposing the continuation of caste-based discrimination and the power structures and belief systems that support the practice of untouchability.\textsuperscript{13} Thus, it seems to me that for both Dalit as well as Aboriginal communities, autobiography is not simply a kind of literature but is a form of assertion and resistance in its own right.

Religious and racial prejudices are the basic components which continue to suppress the lower classes in various forms across the globe. The predicament of the lower classes can be attributed to racism, colour distinction, caste discrimination, religious prejudice and economic misery. These degraded human beings have been worst hit for centuries. The past and the present conditions of these helpless victims of subjugation and inequality have been critically analysed. As mentioned above, similarities and dissimilarities in the social predicament, depicted by auto-biographers, of the Aborigines and the Dalits in India are drawn up for parallel study.

Over the past two hundred years Australia has moved from colonial status to independence while Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have remained in a situation described by Beckett\textsuperscript{14} as one of internal colonialism. Internal colonialism is characterised by relations of dominance and

\textsuperscript{13} Perkins' study, Autobiography as Activism, looks at how three African American women activists use the very fact of writing itself — of making personal experiences public — in order to contest dominant narratives and rewrite or reinterpret the ‘self’ since, a Janice Morgan has argued, ‘to be marginalized to a dominant culture is also to have had little or no say in the construction of one’s socially acknowledged identity’.
subordination, the expropriation of the land and natural resources of the colonised peoples, the exploitation of their labour and their marginalisation to the fringes of the majority society. It involves systematic discrimination of the subject peoples by the conquering group in a manner that serves to separate them and entrench inequality. Their subordination is justified and rationalised by the emergence of ideologies based on beliefs of racial and cultural superiority and becomes institutionalised throughout the structures of society. Aboriginal people were not human beings even in the eyes of the law as is clear from the following heartfelt comment made by Marcia Langton, professor of anthropology at Darwin University and the Aborigines' long time spokesperson at the U.N.:

For most Australians, the Aborigines are still not human beings, but a kind of sub-race close to the animal kingdom. We're dealing with the most visceral, the most primitive racism on the whole planet! As soon as they got here, the whites hunted us with rifles, just like rabbits. Then they want on constantly working to wipe out our culture, our languages and our people. They've so much hatred in them that today, even though there are no more than 300,000 of us, we're their favourite source of complaint, the thorn in their flesh, as if we were counted in millions!

The colour of the people and the nature of their work determined their social status. So colour and racial difference played an important role. As Isaac observes, "Racial mythologies built around differences in skin colour and physical features were among the prime tools of power used in the era of the Western empires." In Australia, it was around Aborigines' colour, physical features and its concomitant characteristics that the white world built up its rationale for

reducing him to a less-than-human status. For instance, Aboriginal people who tried to locate themselves in the white world met with hostility and rejection:

On the street there are the eyes, staring at the black skin.  
I'd walk into a town. You walk down the street and you're black and the white man doesn't have to say a word to you. He steps around you, you're shit, you're nothing. And they cut you down with this sort of concept and you get that way, you feel it; you feel inferior.

Popular theorizing that Aborigines were less than human, that they had no "souls", permitted the massacre of Aboriginal people on a scale wide enough to see their extermination as being, at the very least. countenanced on the part of the policy makers, who remained passive in the face of wide-scale killings. The earlier conceptual nihilation of the existence of Aborigines was thus carried to un ultimate conclusion in their physical nihilation. This was brought about by such measures as giving people damper poisoned with corrosion sublimate, driving them from waterholes, and murder by the police themselves. The "scientific" view that Aborigines were less than human was rejected by South Australia in an Adelaide newspaper through the publication of "scientific" findings which came to the conclusion that the Aboriginal people were human after all! The Register of 17th June, 1914, made the following startling announcement:

The native tribes of Australia are generally considered to be at the bottom of the scale of humanity.... and probably to be inferior in mental development to many of the stone-

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age inhabitants of Europe in prehistoric ages. Yet they have every right to be considered man.

HUMAN AFTER ALL
Though infantile in intellectual development, the Australian natives are thoroughly human, as can readily be seen by the cubic measurement of their brains, 99.35 inches compared with that of a gorilla 30.51 inches.20

The statement itself is absurd. Even more absurd is the arrogance of the dominant group recognizing as "human after all", or "thoroughly human", the Aboriginal people of South Australia, people such as those from Port McLeay who, in 1914, were well educated in comparison with White people of those times.21 They read the newspaper22, and would have been well aware of the "scientific" decisions being made about them; indeed, well aware that though now considered "human", they were still held to be at the "bottom of the scale of humanity". Kenneth J. Gergen rightly says:

"For the person who may potentially be discriminated against because of his skin colour, additional liabilities may accrue... unlike a uniform or group affiliation, skin colour cannot be donned or doffed as the situation may demand. The person is thus placed at an important disadvantage because he must always present to others information about his racial background"23

So on the lines of skin colour Australian Aboriginals have always been ostracised from the White World Society. It is also important to note that their racial status was defined not only in terms of their colour of the skin but also in

21 Ibid. PP.226, 234-5.
22 Ibid. P.240.
terms of “blood” and here categorized as ‘half-blood’ and ‘full blood’ children. It is pertinent to note here that one of the major issues of Aboriginal literature is the issue of half-castes, who were born out of the relationship between white men and Aboriginal women, sometimes vice-versa, but considered illegitimate for most of them were born outside the wed-lock. They were neither accepted by the Whites nor admitted by the blacks and were removed by the government saying that since they have white blood, aboriginal mothers are not eligible to look after them and that they can be trained to become civilized beings C-Eric Lincoln writes of African – American's skin colour which reveals important similarities to the way Australian – Aboriginals are evaluated in Australia. He writes:

In the united states where the enduring problem in social relations is between whites and Negroes, skin colour is probably the most important single index for uncritical human evaluation. It is paradoxical that this is so for colour is notoriously unreliable as a tool for determining any substantial qualities of an individual particularly his ‘race’. In social relations, colour is often read as a signal to denigrate, to discriminate, to segregate ... American children, both Negro and White, very early develop behaviour patterns and adopt value systems based on colour, and American adults are seldom free from its connotations. That a racial determination on the basis of colour can only be approximate and for a limited spectrum of individuals at best does not seem to impair its credibility as a legitimate index for human evaluation ...24

Given G. Eric Lincoln's views on racism I would like to agree here that if it is colour which defines African-American's racial status then in the case of Aboriginals it is colour as well as blood which are used as signals in social

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relations to denigrate, to discriminate and to segregate Aboriginal people. Just like African-Americans, Australian Aboriginal children also develop their behaviour patterns very early and are forced to adopt value systems based on colour and blood and are seldom free from its connotations.

In Australia if it is Aboriginals who have been placed at the bottom of the scale of humanity, in India it is Dalits (untouchables) who have been placed at the bottom of the scale of humanity. John Hope Franklin opines: "In India the problem of race and colour is complicated by the infinitely more perplexing problem of caste". Caste genesis is the worst phenomenon in Indian history. It is the root-cause for many evils in society. Caste discrimination continues to distance the lower classes from the caste Hindus in all spheres. Long ago 'caste' was taken in the sense of race or breed which was associated with a group of people with a set of social norms. It prevented a community or a group of people from inter-marriages and it conditioned their food habits too. Certain groups were associated with specific occupations. These groups were further identified with caste or class. In the Indian context, all the castes and sub-castes constituted the Hindu society. For more clarity, 'caste' as a class was developed only after the advent of the Aryans in India. Before the Aryans, the Dravidians came to settle in India where Aboriginals (natives) already existed. After the Aryans arrived, the Dravidians and the aboriginals became a united force to resist attacks by the Aryans. The Aryans being the advanced group defeated the Dravidians and the aboriginals, and dominated them in all spheres. Due to the climatic conditions the Aryans were wheatish while the Dravidians were black in colour. Wheatishness dominated blackness. Thus between the groups of the Aryan race and the Dravidian race, colour played a part to make a sense of superiority and inferiority. In their fierce struggle, the aboriginals were defeated. The conquered aboriginals were made slaves in the Aryan social order. This serving class was taken into the fold of Hinduism only

25 John Hoge Franklin, P.xii.
to become the lower classes. Gradually, the two main classes, the Aryans and the Anaryans emerged with cultural differences. We may agree with Senart Emile that the term 'varna' was used keeping in view the two hostile groups. Non-Aryans were reduced to Shudras whom the Aryans regarded as their collective property. The victory of the aggressive Aryans over the Anaryans created a sense of 'superiority' and 'inferiority' complex.

The Varna system acquired firm ground in the Vedic period. Dr. Ambedkar who was himself a deprived person and an untouchable argued that "Hindu religion has created Chaturvama which provided the base for the caste system. Chaturvama is based on hierarchically arranged and graded classes in the Hindu society. Purushsukta, a hymn included afterwards in Vedic texts contained in it all the characteristics of Chaturvama."\(^26\) The Purushsukta which made an official gradation of society into four classes was regarded as natural, ideal, sacred and divine. During the age of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, Varna in the sense of class system became rigid as is evident from Rama's act of beheading a Shudra (Sambuka) for performing a religious ritual. Though caste system was in its infancy in Vedic times, it spread rapidly. In every age, the caste system continued to grow. On the consequences of the caste and Varna system and also Hinduism as a religion Ainapur observes:

\[\text{Caste has killed public spirit. Caste has destroyed the sense of public charity. Caste has made public opinion impossible. A Hindu's public is his caste. His responsibility is to his caste. His loyalty is restricted only to his caste. Virtue has become caste-ridden and morality has become caste-bound. There is no sympathy to the deserving. There is no appreciation of the meritorious. There is no charity to the needy.}\]\(^27\)

E.M. Forster feels that untouchability is even worse than slavery. He writes:


\(^{27}\) Ibid., P.162.
The sweeper is worse off than a slave, for the slave may change his master and his duties and may even become free, but the sweeper is bound forever, born into a state from which he cannot escape and where he is excluded from social intercourse and the consolations of his religion.28

To sum up, some pertinent comparative aspects in terms of certain similarities and dissimilarities with reference to Dalit Writing and Aboriginal Writing can be mentioned as under:

Dalit writings and Aboriginal writings bear considerable resemblance because first, the predicament of the Dalits in India and Aboriginals in Australia go together in the context of oppression; second, thematically, human suffering because of social discrimination is similar in both writings; And thirdly and most importantly, the emotional worlds they inhabit — constituting their pain, rebellion, hopes and desires — are similar though there is a lot of difference in the geographical background. An important similarity between Dalit autobiographies and the autobiographies of Aboriginal community is the difficult struggle these writers face to gain the right to speak. More than anything else, the ‘right’ or ‘ability’ of the marginalized group to write literature comes under immediate contestation, and Dalit writers as well as Aboriginal writers have likewise been forced to fight for the right to speak as well as to redefine the boundaries of what can be said. Dalit writers and Aboriginal writers have attempted to negotiate the challenge of securing narrative authority by emphasizing one, the ‘experience of discrimination’ and two, ‘Dalit identity’ or ‘Aboriginal identity’ as two necessary criteria for writing autobiographies. These autobiographies are not simply the narration of a life-story, but they are also used as a means of political assertion. They are a process of ‘self-emancipation’ in the creation of a ‘dissident space’ within the public sphere. At the same time they are also a process of ‘self-creation’ through the narration of


284
a public persona. Thus, these autobiographies also serve as means for Dalit as well as Aboriginal writers to reclaim narrative authority over the construction of the 'Dalit self' or 'Aboriginal self'. While dominant Indian society has identified Dalits as 'inferior', 'polluted' etc., and White British society has identified Aboriginals as 'inferior', these auto-biographers 're-write' selfhood, so to speak, in their description of their life and the life of their communities. Dalit society and Aboriginal society are not inferior, as is claimed by the dominant communities, but are 'different', or 'oppressed' or 'inventive in the face of extreme exploitation'. Thus, rather than describe their life only as one of 'victimhood', pain becomes transformed into a uniting, 'enlightening' experience in which an assertive identity is realized and incites the individual to action and political struggle. Watching their community continually oppressed by the upper castes (in the case of India) and the white people (in the case of Australia), the protagonist of the particular autobiography does not experience his/her pain 'lying down', but rather pain incites him/her to unite with his/her community in a fight against caste/racial discrimination. Similarly, the process of 'reliving' this pain, while writing the autobiography is not viewed as a process of healing or forgetting in order to move on with one's life. It is a way of solidifying individual connection with the larger imagined community and at the same time contributing to the political assertion by presenting 'facts' of ones life to context casteism (in India) and racism (in Australia).

The White settlers of Australia have used Aboriginal people as slave, indentured labourers; teenager girls have been used as maidservants. In order to teach the captured black people a lesson, the white people and stationmasters subjected them to torture. They were beaten to death, particularly in prisons; women were brazenly raped by station owners and masters; pregnant women suffered abortions from being assigned extremely difficult tasks; children were separated from mothers, wives from husbands, and their families were destroyed. There are hair-raising accounts of these
tortures and excesses found in *Binging Them Home*. Dalits too have been tortured for a very long time. Dalits have remained outcast and the Hindu Varna system imposed slavery on them, such was the condition of the outcast communities that they had neither a village nor a home. The Adivasis have been pushed into forests and caves. Needless to say that God did not ordain the slavery of Dalits and Australian Aboriginals. Human beings created it. Having imposed slavery on Aboriginals and Dalits, White and savarna societies forcibly extracted labour from them. Whites assigned separate educational institutions, separate eating places, separate spaces in trains and buses, and separate residential areas to Australian Aboriginals. Untouchables, too, were kept outside the village. Arrangements were made for them to have separate settlements, separate river banks and separate cremation grounds. Since Shudras were denied any right to education by the Hindu caste system, the question of separate educational institutions did not arise. Later, during the British days, when they did begin to receive education, as Omprakash Valmiki states, they had to sit in a separate corner or outside the threshold of the classroom. Actual descriptions of this arrangement can be found in Valmiki’s *Joothan* and Sharan Kumar Limbale’s *Akkarmashi*.

Though Dalit movements and Aboriginal movements have proceeded along different paths and taken different turnings, both movements are struggles for human rights and against exploitation. Aboriginal people in Australia and Dalits in India have both experienced inhuman degradation; their struggle is against it. Despite differences of country, region, conditions, society and language, the similarity in the life experience of the two communities derives from the fact that both were targets of excess, injustice and slavery — their experience of pain is of a world-scale. There are similarities in the feelings of ownership, entitlement and superiority demonstrated by White and savarna

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societies, on the one hand, and of revolt against racism by Aboriginals and caste discrimination by Dalits, on the other hand. Because of these similarities Dalit writers and Aboriginal writers see the pain of each other as their own, which they have communicated and expressed through their literatures.

Moreover, another commonality between the two writings under consideration is the realm of first means of expression of literature which is result of spiritual creations meaning spiritual in form. Colin Johnson rightly puts:

*Before the Europeans brought a system of writing to Australia, all literature was oral — that is, a spoken on memorised literature. Religious traditions and beliefs, legends and historical events which were considered important, were handed down from generation to generation, usually in the form of verse*\(^{30}\). He further maintains that there were, *the so-called letter sticks and some types of bark paintings — a form of pictorial writing which could be read off by someone with a knowledge of the symbol system. When the Europeans arrived with their system of writing, Aboriginal literature began to change from an oral to a written one.*\(^{31}\)

Another Aboriginal writer Jack Davis points out:

> our medium has been stone, hair, wood, the walls of caves; and the flat surface of rock has been the canvas of our ancestors. Hair string manipulated by fingers can tell a myriad of stories and the land was our drawing board.... with the coming of the white man, the fabric which made


\(^{31}\) Ibid., P.22.
cannot express their experiences. Dalit critics argue that it is difficult to accept that non-Dalit writers will be able to communicate the Dalit experience with the same intensity as Dalit writers. In addition, Dalit and Australian Aboriginal literatures have been accused of obscenity. However, Aboriginal and Dalit writers have responded to the criticisms levelled against them. Neither has ever supported obscenity. These writers believe that people must understand the shameful and inhuman life that was imposed on Dalit and Aboriginal peoples.

Dalit and Aboriginal literatures are also discussed as vehicles for revolution, change, conscious-raising, struggle social commitment because these literatures view literature as a form of movement for social liberation and most importantly these literatures have approval of revolt. Thus both Aboriginal and Dalit literatures view themselves as movements for human liberation. On the whole, it is quite right to say that these subaltern literatures i.e. Dalit and Aboriginal literature, in both countries are still not recognized full-fledged 'national' literatures though these are fields of rich academic possibilities by the world academia. It is a common fact that most of the Dalit and Aboriginal texts are being made accessible in English discourse through translation and these subaltern voices are still variously mediated, appropriated, co-opted, accommodated and commodified and majority of their predicaments find greater publicity when mediated, represented or incorporated in the texts of mainstream writers as Dalit and Aboriginal literatures have not yet produced sufficient number of internationally acclaimed writers.

As far as dissimilarities between Dalit writings and Aboriginal writings are concerned, Aboriginal autobiographies can be viewed as a dialogue between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people (white people) about the history of injustices that Aboriginal people have experienced fighting against racial discrimination where as Dalit autobiographies contest both the basis of caste discrimination as well as the institutional claim that caste no longer functions as
up the delicate pattern of Aboriginal existence was soon destroyed.\textsuperscript{32}

To put it another way, Aboriginal literature in its initial phase, undoubtedly, took the form of folk literature. The spiritual creations of Aboriginal and the tone of Aboriginal literature — expressing pain and arousing feelings of pity — is perceptible in the early phase of Dalit literature present in the abhang of Dalit sants. The beginning phase of Dalit literature is replete with poetry, folk theatre- and folk art.

Furthermore, another significant converging issue appears towards these writings' objections to the writings of white and savarna writers. Both Aboriginal and Dalit critics have made the same objection:

\begin{quote}
The portrayal of us bears no resemblance to us. The picture that you have drawn of us is repulsive and distorted. You do not have the capability to create a sharp and combative image of us.\textsuperscript{33}
\end{quote}

Aboriginal critics have argued that White portrayal of Blackfellows Aboriginals in their literature has been distorted and full of contradictions. They have been represented in such a way that their inner core would appear as black as their skin colour. Much in the same way Dalit critics have argued that savarna writers have not portrayed Dalits accurately either. Savarna Writers have been accused of portraying Dalits in their literature based on their own imagination. Due to the absence of the authentic experience of Dalit life, these works are lifeless, shallow and distorted. They fail to bring out the extreme self-consciousness and fighting instincts of Dalits. Aboriginal and Dalit writers hold that their experience inspires them to write. This complies that other writers

\textsuperscript{32} Davis, Jack. 1985. 'Aboriginal Writing: a personal view'. In Jack Davis and Bob Hodge. eds. \textit{Aboriginal Writing Today}. Canberra ; Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, P.11

a social force in modern India. There are differences of country, region, conditions, society and language found in both writings. If the Dalits are the protagonists of India's boycotted society, the Aboriginals are the protagonists of Australian society. The Aboriginals have been degraded by White society and their differences are mainly based on colour and blood, and the Dalits have been degraded by savarna society whose differences are based on 'caste'. White children could feed at a Black woman's breast. But even the touch and shadow of the Dalits were considered untouchable by the touchables. White the Blacks and Whites belong to different racial groups, the Dalits and savarnas do not. The cause of the Aboriginal's slavery was economic. The cause of the Dalit's untouchability is social. Aboriginal peoples perform labour, but their labour is not considered undignified. Dalits do the lowest types of work, and their work is considered undignified. White Aboriginal people can not hide their colour of their skin, untouchables can hide their caste.

In Australia, Aboriginal people were given subhuman treatment because of their colour. In the case of Dalits, this was not so. It was because Dalits are 'untouchable' that they are subjected to discrimination and humiliation by savarnas. That is, Dalits' predicament is much worse than that of the Aboriginal people.

Australian Aboriginal literature protests against the two centuries of colonial rule, loss of indigenous rights, culture, languages and identity. It tries to reconstruct the identity and history of the aborigines from an Aboriginal perspective and deconstruct the same that have been created by the whites. The stolen generation, which was one of the atrocious consequences of colonialism, is the crucial theme of Aboriginal literature given the fact that most aboriginal writing is autobiographical and most aboriginal writers were stolen children. They were stolen from their people and culture in the name of education and etiquette and trained to become good domestic servants in white households. Most of the autobiographies under consideration depict how the Aboriginal women writers given testimony to being removed from theirs.
mothers, parents or homes through 'compulsion' or 'duress' by the station-
owners for whom they worked. The argument put forth by the station owners or
managers was that the children would be taken to get education, but to the
dismay of the girls they found they were being used as 'slave' labour. Many
examples of this could be found in My Place and Wandering Girl which have
already been cited above in the related chapters 3 & 4.

Another major issue of Aboriginal Movement as well as aboriginal-
literature is the issue of half-castes, who were born out of the relationship
between white men and aboriginal women, sometimes vice-versa, but
considered illegitimate for most of them were born outside the wed-lock. They
were neither accepted by the whites nor admitted by the blacks and were
removed by the government saying that since they have white blood, aboriginal
mothers are not eligible to look after them and that they can be trained to
become civilised beings. Sally Morgan, Glenyse Ward and even Ruley
Langford explain how the Aboriginal Affairs representatives had come to "look
for the half-caste kids". Their mothers would tell them to 'stay in the bunk
house all day'. Their mothers' words were that if the 'scouts' come in the
bunkhouse "get under the bed don't talk, and just keep quiet". The children
were never caught during these official visits. Glenyse Ward, Daisy Corunna
and others too, all bear witness to the experience of girls who were sent out to
work as domestic servants. All recount the hard physical work, the racist
insults, and the wages that they never received. Glenyse Ward particularly
recalls how she was forced to work as domestic servants. Langford Ginibi tells
a story, "Mary from the Dairy", about a young girl who was fostered out to a
'white' family\(^{34}\). Mary did the housework and looked after the gardens; she
stayed with the family for 29 years. Ruby relates: 'Mary was the 'Facky Jacky'
for them\(^{35}\). She recounts that Mary received a government pension, which was
paid into her foster 'mother's' account. The point Ruby makes in the story is

\(^{35}\) Ibid. 55.
that Mary “had nothing to show for twenty nine years of servitude, only the glad-bags and the old suitcase.”

All the Australian autobiographies under consideration are a witnessing to the lack of human rights, specifically, the lack of sexual rights Aboriginal women had in relation to non-Aboriginal men, sexual violation, in many cases, was perpetrated by station owners and males in households where Aboriginal women were domestic servants. It can be argued that the contributing factors to the position of Aboriginal women in the community were both the colonial ‘racist’ beliefs and the denial of citizenship, which meant one’s human rights could be infringed upon. Without citizenship and knowledge of their legal rights Aboriginal women had no protection in the eyes of the law. In the *Bringing Them Home* report, generations of Aboriginal women who were sent to Cootamundra Girls’ Home in New South Wales until it closed in 1969, are shown to have suffered the fate of separation that affected their mothers: “many girls became pregnant in domestic service, only to have their children in turn removed and institutionalised.” 37 In most of the Australian autobiographies under consideration at least one of the women in the family was either raped, sexually violated, or harassed by a non-Aboriginal man she worked for, or did not know.

Aboriginal women’s writing is also a ‘witnessing’ to the rights or lack of rights, citizenship given to the Aboriginal peoples living in a liberal society. What many of the autobiographies reveal is that without citizenship many Aboriginal people were denied the basic legal and health rights. Interestingly, Anglo-Australians born in Australia, who were the descendants of Anglo-settlers, were automatically granted citizenship at birth, yet Aboriginal-Australians who were indigenous to the country had to apply for citizenship in order to access rights automatically bestowed on Anglo-individuals. For

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36 Ibid. 56.
37 See for example, Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC), 44.
Aboriginal-Australians, even after the 1960s primary goods available to others were denied to them which reveals how the identity of Indigenous peoples had already been judged as 'inferior' to non-Aboriginal people.

Dalit autobiographies, on the contrary, bear little resemblance to Aboriginal autobiographies in terms of the issues taken up by them concerning racism or racial discrimination the reason being that Dalit autobiographies are fighting against the denial of humanity in terms of casteism. Dalit—autobiographies reveal mainly two objectives in their writings: One is to contest the basis of caste discrimination and the other is to expose the reality behind the institutional narrative that caste no longer functions as a significant force in the public sphere of modern India. In other words, that untouchability was abolished by the Constitution of India in 1950, and consequently, there is no longer caste-based discrimination in government jobs, public schools, transportation, villages etc. Thus, Dalit autobiographies constitute a challenge to this institutional narrative by presenting what they claim are 'factual' experiences of untouchability from the writer's own life. In the autobiographical form, these 'facts' become uncontestable truth, since no one knows more about an individual's life experiences than the individual himself.

To sum up, on balance, at heart it is the 'truths' of Aboriginal and Dalit writers' experiences that engage the readers of these autobiographies. It is not the 'truths', or the legitimated speaking positions as recorded in the history books, or the newspaper reports that the readers of these autobiographies search for. It is the 'truths' revealed in the speaking positions of those who have been treated as invisible, or who have been silenced by the dominant voices. In the writings by Dalit and Aboriginal man/women, it is the 'petite narratives' of the life story that are a 'witnessing' of other experiences rather than the legitimated histories.