CHAPTER III

CULTURAL ANALYSIS
In the animal kingdom, the rule is, eat or be eaten; in the human kingdom, define or be defined.

Thomas S. Szasz, The Second Sin
(a) **MAPPING DIFFERENCES:**

Decolonization has not managed to put an end to the hegemony based on cultural superiority. In fact, it has taken a new and subtler shape in the terminology of "Cultural Difference". But what is the function of this difference? Is it, according respect to a different culture as promised by the Multiculturalism policy? Does the difference imply inferiority measured against the standards? It is a debatable issue. When one talks of cultural difference, one can see it the way Said E. Edward points in *Culture and Imperialism*, where the difference of the minorities is an essentially inferior one by the western standards. One can also see it the other way, where the minorities write back to map their differences, to represent their cultures on the mosaic, asserting their differences and asking for their evaluation by their own standards. Jean Burnet sums it up as follows:

Multiculturalism within a bilingual framework can work if it is interpreted as is intended — that is, as encouraging those members of ethnic groups who want to do so to maintain a proud sense of the contribution of their own group to
Canadian society. Interpreted in this way, it becomes something very North American: voluntary marginal differentiation among peoples who are equal participants in the society. If it is interpreted in a second way -- as enabling various peoples to transfer foreign cultures and language as living wholes into a new place and time -- multiculturalism is doomed.¹

In this section, let us analyze what leading theorists of post-colonialism such as Homi K. Bhabha, Edward E. Said or Gayatri C. Spivak would call "Cultural Colonialism". In the keen observation of Paul Michael Lutzeler, as in the discourse on multi-culture, so also in the post-colonial discourse it is above all the so called hyphenated intellectuals; the African-Americans; Japanese-Canadians, Asian-Australians, Jewish-American who are involved where the hyphen demonstrates the duality or the fusion of their identity, the crossing of their identity perspectives² suggesting thereby that they are not pure Canadians. So there is certainly a nexus between multiculturalism and post-colonial discourse proven by the fact that
the debate on multi-culturalism is conducted mainly in those industrial countries which were at one time colonial countries themselves; the U.S., Canada, Australia.

Having explored the political and economic ramifications of multi-culturalism in the previous chapter, this chapter devotes itself to its cultural analysis bearing in mind the fact that cultural differences do have political and socio-economic consequences. Put in another way, the formulation of political and economic powers and the hegemonic discourse rests upon cultural difference.

The history of Canada is a federated histories of multi-cultures and the policy of multiculturalism embraces all cultural differences in its set-up. But how well the differences are celebrated can be investigated from the select texts. Each of the selected texts, Kogawa's Obasan, Culleton's In Search Of April Raintree, Vassanji's No New Land, Ondaatje's Running In The Family, throw a flood of light on the cultural differences in Canada. Each one bears witness to the uneven forces of multiculturalism. Each one attempts to question its validity. Above all, they all offer a critique to the
egalitarian promises of the policy of multiculturalism because in a bid to allow freedom to various ethnicities, multiculturalism reconstituted the discourse of cultural difference. In precept, the policy of multiculturalism should eradicate all forms of oppression based on cultural differences. However, in reality, from the reading of the texts it is investigated that in the process it may re-articulate the colonizer's signification of the colonized in which the latter's 'othered' cultural identity is inscribed. In Canada, while the natives are placed at the lowest rung of the social structure of Canada, the immigrants remain hyphenated. We have seen in Chapter I, that racism in Canada is not a myth but a viable reality. While Chapter I revealed political discrimination based on racism, this section exposes cultural discrimination. In this context, it would be worth quoting the twin principles of Unity and Diversity which are given global recognition in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (hereafter referred to as U.D.H.R.) under the International Bill of Human Rights (1978). Article 7 of the U.D.H.R. speaks of global unity of humankind.

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with
reason and conscience and should act towards one
another in a spirit of brotherhood.³

Article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political
Rights addresses the cultural diversity of humankind.

In those states in which ethnic, religious or
linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging
to such minorities shall not be denied the
right, in community with other members of their
group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess
and practice their own religion, or to use their
own language.⁴

In the sharp interpretation of Evelyn kallen, the fact that the
cultural rights of minorities, rather than the cultural rights
of members of all ethnocultural collectivities are singled out
in this covenant reflects the global reality of dominant status,
i.e., that the cultural rights of dominant ethnic groups tend to
be entrenched in all human societies at the state level.⁵

Moreover, according to the aforementioned Article 27, an
agreement of non-interference with the legitimate cultural
activities of the minorities does not oblige the state to take
positive measures to protect minority ethnocultures nor does it
imply the recognition of the right to self-determination of minorities. Though Article 1 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights provide the right for self-determination, how much liberty the minorities enjoy is a debatable issue.

Abundance of reports and research on White Racism in Canada is available. Infact, "Paki-bashing" has become a widespread sport among teenagers in Ontario. A feature article in Macleans magazine entitled "Racism You Can't Argue with the Facts", reports incidents which occurred in Vancouver. The houses of the minorities get vandalized, temples desecrated and children beaten on school grounds. A mutual antagonism is seen in placards used by the whites such as "Keep Canada Green; Paint a Paki" and a retaliation to this slogan as "Death to Racists; Self-defense is the only way" or "Unite in Action against Racist and Fascist Violence" (Globe and Mail 1981 1 10). Needless to repeat, the construction of racism and the disadvantaged position of the non-whites is the inevitable outcome of long-term oppression. As Evelyn Kallen puts it,

Racism is not a function of racial differences
per se; rather it is a function of the way in which alleged or perceived racial or cultural differences are manipulated by members of one human population so as to deny fundamental human rights to members of other populations. 8

Being hyper-conscious of cultural differences creates immense xenophobia. In fact, Obasan is a recreation not only of the political harassment of the Nissei, but more the vindication of the Japanese cultural discrimination through the many letters of Aunt Emily Kato. The sixty pages manuscript of Aunt Emily contained a prominent statement underlined and circled which read: "I am a Canadian" (Obasan, p.1), which is contradicted by Aunt Emily’s admittance: "I have to admit it", she said, "but for all we hear about the states, Canada’s capacity for racism seem even worse" (Obasan, p.33). Kogawa describes Jap-bashing in Obasan just as Vassanji gives an instance of Paki-bashing in No New Land. The case of doubly marginalized Métis women is best exemplified in Culleton’s In Search Of April Raintree. The sad truth about such differences is that the ‘othered’ man is goaded, baited and victimized for the prime crime of his skin for skin is constituted as both an index of identity and
difference thus making possible the experience of those of 'other skin' as "our others of kin". In Obasan the Japanese are incited with challenges as "Fight, Jap. fight" (Obasan, p.153) or "C'mon ya gimpy Jap!" (Obasan, p.153). The problem of racial differences pervades the entire text of No New Land. Nanji, the professor, ponders over how the white people prefer standing than sitting next to him.

Racism, the word kept intruding in his mind and he kept pushing it back. On what basis racism? It could be my face, dark, brooding, scowling, catered. Perhaps I look like a bum. Professor Nanji? What we have become: suspecting racism, but never certain, touchy as a raw wound, blaming innocent people and letting the guilty walk snugly away because you can never be quick enough with a reply.

(No New Land, p.93)

Once when Nanji was on his way to New York, his name was punched into a computer by an U.S. Immigration Officer. He was, it was discovered an "undesirable immigrant" obviously since he was culturally different. From the subtle experience of racial
discrimination, the very next moment he was an eye-witness to real violent act of Paki-bashing. The three louts, having smelled blood started baiting the bystanders with taunts and sarcasm until they victimized Esmail, shouting "Paki-paki-paki" (No New Land, p.96). "They leered, they jeered, crowding in on him in front, behind him the subway tracks" (No New Land, p.96) and then punched Esmail in the stomach and all this, for mere sport. One is left wondering where from have these kids learned their hatred.

As discussed in the previous chapter, another subtle incident of racism is seen in the false accusation of rape charged against Nurdin Lalani by a Portuguese woman. The first step in the deconstruction of the colonial discourse lies in recognizing the differential discourse of cultural imperialism. Xenophobia per se is a two way process. Esmail's attack arouses a massive rally organized by the South-Asians with slogans as: ESMAIL WE ARE WITH YOU, NO TO APARTHEID, LET MY PEOPLE COME (No New Land, p.110). It is rather humorous to recall how Ramesh goads Nurdin to taste pork sausages. When Nurdin pretends to be shocked, Ramesh comforts him.
See you're the same... I am supposed to think you're dirty. You think they are dirty. Who is right? Superstitious, all... Eat pig and become a beast. Slowly the beastial traits - cruelty and promiscuity, in one word godlessness - overcame you. And you became, morally, like them. The Canadians.

(No New Land, p.127)

In yet another humorous account, Jamal describes to Nanji how his friend Karsam after having slept with a white woman peed on her because she dared to ask him "why do you Pakis come to this country? (No New Land, p.105) And Jamal vindictively tells Nanji how Karsam replied to her "this is what we Pakis are going to do to you" (No New Land, p.106).

Likewise, Culleton's In Search Of April Raintree is replete with ironic racist discourse. As we have seen in the previous chapter, the case of the Natives is worse than that of the immigrants. The autobiographies of the two sisters April and Cheryl Raintree are case histories of brutal discrimination. However much they tried to break free from the shackles of the "native girls' syndrome" they were thrown back into it since the
whiteman refuses to respect the Métis way of life. As children the white skinned group snubbed them and called them names. Eventually they are given to the Welfare State. April's entire childhood is a long history of harassment "I know you half-breeds, you love to wallow in filth" (In Search of April Raintree, p.39) or "I heard you half-breeds were dirty but now I can see that its true" (In Search of April Raintree, p.41). To add insult to injury, she is always referred to as the "squaw" or "Ape, the bitch" (In Search of April Raintree, p.50) only because she is considered culturally inferior. At school, no children spoke to her. She was told she would have to earn their respect when the truth was she was constantly victimized and subject to bullying and false accusations, even sexual accusations. Some of these accusations, however, April was too young to understand their implications. April represents the silenced body of the colonized, defenseless against the native syndrome.

Next comes the accusations that everyone in the world is against you... And when you go on your own, you get pregnant right away... So you'll start with alcohol and drugs. From there, you
get into shop lifting and prostitution and in and out of jails... You'll end up like your parents, living off society.

(In Search of April Raintree, p.67)

The worst of all is the rape of April. April is treated like a rag more so because she is a "squaw", a victim of being a native. However, experience has taught her not to expect too much even from the police. "When the R.C.M.P. came, I expected that they would insinuate I had somehow provoked the rape... What would I and other "squaws" get out of my going to court?"

(In Search of April Raintree, pp.147-153). The greatest shock comes when April realizes that her sister, after dedicating her life to restore the native dignity turns to be a prostitute. Furthermore, April is given the knowledge that their mother, jumped off the Louis Bridge and committed suicide. The novel ends with Cherly's suicide. The fact is, there aren't many choices for the half-breeds in the hegemonic society. When Cheryl dies, April ransacks her diary. Cheryl has written:

What if I do find our parents? Sometimes I can't help it, I feel like April does, I despise these people, these gutter creatures. They are
losers. But, there is a reason why they are the way they are. Everything they once had has been taken from them.

(In Search of April Raintree, pp. 215-216)

They are caught up in the trap since society never gives them a chance. Rather, it seems complacent in relegating them to the background of the Universal white power. The fact that some people in positions of power consider themselves the sign of the Universal, necessitates that it constructs its racial and colonized others to maintain its centrality. Then not only is discrimination a cultural construct but discrimination becomes the structure of culture. Most cultural historians emphasize the inseparable connection between the colonial conquests and the present day racism. Canada claims to be a tolerant society with its multi-cultural policy. But, the paradox of this policy is, it creates separate cultures and ethnic identities in trying to preserve social harmony. This can possibly lead to social fragmentation and inter-racial tension. The multicultural policy then, while being defensive against racial accusations maintains social power relations where the racial minorities are seen as fundamentally different. They are seen as possessing
folk art and exotic cultures which are appealing to the occidental taste largely because of their novelty but more so because they fit into the stereotypes of what the western power defines minority culture and art to be. When the third worldists migrate, they carry residues of their ancient culture and art which is encouraged by the art galleries patronized by the art circle of Canada and incorporated into the technological culture of the modern world. The funny part of the situation is that the third world culture has to be re-discovered and recognized by the dominant group. "[The white men] look upon these figures with the eye of an anatomist, dissect them as it were, and rearrange the parts to suit the shape of the object that they are decorating" (CRSA 31:4 November 1994 p.370). In other words, they must suit the taste of the canon. Thus, the ethnocentric standards separate the dominant culture from the folk novelties of racial minorities and the outcome of such differentiation indicates not only the unequal status and the power of racial groups, but also the way in which racial inequality in arts is institutionalized. Needless to say, they use differential artistic stands in evaluating the folkloric arts and not the relative aestheticism of the ancestral cultures.
from which they supposedly have evolved.

In a multi-cultural society such as Canada, the adoption of differential policies by the state towards dominant arts and minority cultures means that the infrastructural conditions for the development of art and culture are not the same for majority Canadians and visible minorities... Undoubtedly, occidental art has received a vote of confidence from the Canadian Council through the funding of art projects and art organizations. 9

It is sad to note that though the Canadian Government has funded a public display of ethnic arts and cultures among visible minorities, it fosters public display of folkloric diversities but not necessarily the artistic creativity of minorities. In the observation of Peter S. Li,

The consequence of cultural hegemony in Canada is that racial minorities have not only to accommodate to the artistic and aesthetic standards legitimized in the dominant culture, but also to attune their own culture to an
articulation in accordance with the taste and choice of the dominant group. ¹⁰

As has been said earlier, the basis of their official financial support and their public endorsement is cultural novelty and ethnic exoticism, but not necessarily aesthetic value. This seems to enter the phase of re-colonization. By extension, what then is the position of Third World cultures and arts in the global village? In the opinion of Aijaz Ahmad,

By far the greater part of the archive through which knowledge about the so-called Third World is generated in the metropolises has traditionally been, and continues to be, assembled within the metropolitan institutions of research and explication, which are characteristically administered and occupied by overwhelming western personnel. Non-western individuals have also been employed in these same institutions - more and more so during the more recent, post-colonial period, although still almost always in subordinate position. The archive itself is dispersed through myra...
academic disciplines and genres of writing... A particularly large mechanism in the assembly of this archive has been the institutionalized symbiosis between the western scholar and the local informant.  

This is the paradox of internationalism in the age of late capitalism. It creates writers like Rohinton Mistry who gives a fossilized picture of the miniscule society of the Parsees in Bombay in books as *Such A Long Journey* or *Tales From Pheroshah Baq*, the realities of which are far removed from the contemporary realities of the Parsee society. This is undoubtedly the seductive winning of the assent of the colonized. According to Gayatri Spivak, certain kind of writers... try to dominate, transform and exterminate improper "objects" awakened in the place of the abject. The Third World cultural differences turn to be museumized.

(b) EXPERIENCING THE UNFAMILIAR: THE QUESTION OF CULTURE SHOCK AND CULTURE ADAPTATION:

What happens to an immigrant when he enters an unfamiliar
ground or what happens to a native when he is uprooted from his cultural anchorage and given an alternative culture is described by such terms as acculturation, intercultural adjustment, immigrant experience, cross-culture encounters. All the selected novels depict the experience of encountering a differing mode of living. Culture adaptation is a process which begins with culture shock. Culture shock can be said to be precipitated by the anxiety that results from losing all familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse. As David Carroll suggests, "the ideology of the self is evident in the dogmatic cultural typology" and an abrupt removal from it would naturally cause deracination.

The following poem 'Tara's Mother-in-law' by Uma Parmeswaran illustrates the point:

What kind of place you've brought me to, son?
Where the windows are always closed.
And the front door it is always locked?
And no rangoli designs on parch steps,
To say, please come in?
How can you expect Lakshmi to come, son?
You think she'll care to enter
Where the same air goes round and round?
She "the lotus-sealed consort, of him who reposes
On the primeval ocean of milk?"
You think they'll bless this food, three days old
You store in cans and ice-cupboard?
Son, son, it gives me great joy to see you so well settled, children and wife and all.
Though my hairs do stand on end
When your wife holds hands with men
And you with other men's wives.
But I am glad, son, I really am.
That you are settled good good.
And thought to bring me all the way.
To see this lovely house and car and all.
But, I cannot breathe this stale-air with yesterday's cooking smells going round and round.
Son, cooking is an everyday thing.
Not a Sunday work alone.

- 124 -
And son, cooking should smell good.
The heaping aromas of turmeric and green coriander, and mustard seeds popped in hot oil...
Open the windows, son,
And let me go back to sun and air and sweat and even flies and all.
But not this, not this. 14

The geographical boundaries determine the cultural boundaries. Tara's mother-in-law is experiencing a terrible culture shock while Tara and her family has already adjusted to the new situation. The process of acculturation becomes more dramatic since assimilation is clouded. New citizens may reasonably be expected to embrace the culture and language of the hostland. If not, they are the losers themselves. Yet their attempt is further complicated by the multi-cultural ambivalence where the immigrants may see it as an invitation to live in Canada as permanent ethnics. Anyone taking the extreme stance of fostering in the new land nothing but the old culture can find it self-defeating since it can put them out of step in time. This creates a pull on both the sides.

- 125 -
Nativization <-- Immigrant/Native ---> Assimilation

The result is a sense of alienation so much a part of the marginalized psyche. It is dramatically illustrated in the poet's evocation of the Canadian ethics, its geography, climate and cityscape image, a sense of desolation perceived even more sharply when juxtaposed against the home environment. Himani Bannerjee's poems provide an "inscape" for her state of terror and fragmentation. Acculturation to her seems both impossible and undesirable. It would only mean the weakness that surrenders to the world of comfortable conformity. In her poem, "Apart-hate", she says:

In this white land
Where I wander with scape-goats
There are laws
Apart-hate

In this whiteland
Rocks blackhands gold and diamond
Blood oozes from the mouth
Apart-hate
In this whiteland
Chinese coolies, black slaves, Indian indentures
Immigration—head tax, virginity tests...

For a person of such intense and burning sensibility, the question of "where is home" will forever remain unanswered. A psyche that feels this fierce compulsion to peep deep into the ideological assumptions of society cannot ever belong to the mainstream. In Himani Bannerjee's case, she has the courage to remain always and forever an immigrant. Also prominent in the poetry of some of these poets is their reaction to the ugly fact of racism. Lakshmi Gill's "letter to a Prospective Immigrant" reads:

And what about that tired myth: Canada the Cold? Not a myth, I assure you. Don't come naked. In ten years your proud figure will bend like nature hunched under coal. Here the body must deny nature. Stay virginal or abort, no womb issues... of your soul, beware. They deal with devil commerce prompt in the ruthless ascent of defenses, seal themselves in brass towers. Oh, are they lonely afterwards!
Friends scattered all over the forest, bushed like the poet said. 16

To read the mind of the marginalized is to plunge into the vortex of cultural alienation; of the widely political and the intensely personal; of the landscape of Canada and the mindscape of imprisoned creatures. It reflects the desolation of the marginalized psyche. The immigrants, by and large, find the Canadian environment icy and hostile primarily because they are immigrants and experience the bitter stings of racism and secondly because they belong to social, often linguistic, and usually religious minorities. This painful alienation forms the daily reality of the immigrants/natives which shape their lives, politics and art.

For example, Vassanji's protagonist jostles between the sexual desire inflamed by an "easy" culture and memories of his father's puritanical attitude to sexuality. The peep-show excites him.

He had never seen anything like this, not in ads, not in movies, nor even the girlie magazines of his youth. Sex scenes beyond his wildest dreams: dirty depraved exciting — how
much the flesh was capable of! It was enough to destabilize you forever, question all the inhibitions and prohibitions of childhood and youth - do this, don't do that.

(No New Land, p.145)

At the same time, the photograph of his stern father with the fez on his head acts as a reminder of the past culture and values. Infact the novel presents a very mundane extemporary immigrant family of the Lalanis but from the ninth page onwards flashes back into memories, since as Vassanji puts it,

We are but creatures of our origins, and however stalwarthy we march forward, paving new roads, sacking new worlds, the ghosts from our pasts stand not far behind and are not easily shaken off. An account of Nurdin's Lalani's predicaments must therefore go back in time and begin at a different place.

(No New Land, p.9)

This dualism of world views characterises the typical immigrant psyche. Most writers take a voyage into the past so as to come back to the present situation more realistically and "wholly".
No New Land flashes back to the very first time the Lalanis set foot in Canada. They are immediately invited to a party by John McCormack. It was a party of all races arranged in a large lobby brilliantly illuminated by a central chandelier and numerous wall lights. "This is what I call Posht" (No New Land, p.52) exclaims Roshan. They are next treated to a fashion show with the caption "The Complete Canadian Male or Female" (No New Land, p.55). "Shameless bitches" (No New Land, p.55), Nurdin heard a voice say through clenched teeth as the models traipsed in on high heels, wearing roguishly girlish smiles on their faces, to show the latest in inner comfort. "This is the kind of thing we have to steer our kids from" (No New Land, p.55). Zera said, "Precisely, sister", said Roshan. "We have something to give to this country. Morals, I say" (No New Land, p.56). Vassanji brings out the humour of clash in world views when Roshan thinks the fashion to be a procession of naked women. But at the same time Canada is alluring with its "dazzle and sparkle" that's seen as far away as Asia and Africa in the bosoms of bourgeois homes where they dream of foreign goods and emigration. It's certainly a land of plenty where everything is available: "chhapatis and rice, meat curries cooked the Goan,
Madrasi, Hyderabadi, Gujarathi and Punjabi ways, channa the Carribean way, fou-fou the West African way" (No New Land, p.165), a veritable mix of multicultural cuisine. The new world view is all the time juxtaposed with the old one.

No New Land is more a matter-of-fact novel. Eventually Lalani learns adjustment to the new situation when finally the missionary cuts off the final fearful link to his father, when putting on his own head the red fez of Haji Lalani, the Missionary removes the hat from his head, it becomes lifeless. This action of the Missionary removes the last weakness in Nurdin and he feels released from his father’s old ideals of morality, from his past and becomes a new man. “In one stroke the photograph on the wall had lost all potency, its once accusing eyes were now blank, its expression dumb. Suddenly, they were here, in the modern world, laughing at the past” (No New Land, p.197). However, it does certainly not mean the past has no relevance. In fact the concluding lines of the novel is, "And with the past before you, all around you, you take on the future more evenly matched" (No New Land, p.207).

On the other hand, Culleton’s In Search of April Raintree, - 131 -
represents failure of adaptation precisely because adaptation is made extremely difficult. The culture clash in Culleton's *In Search Of April Raintree* is found in the process of marginalization, in the refusal to respect the Métis tradition. The novel struggles to keep events from sinking into oblivion. The novel opens thus:

MEMORIES: some memories are elusive, fleeting, like a butterfly that touches down and is free until it is caught. Others are haunting. You'd rather forget but they won't be forgotten. And some are always there. No matter where you are, they are there too. I always felt most of my memories were better avoided but now I think its best to go back in my life before I go forward.

*(In Search of April Raintree, p.9)*

If the act of writing is "shedding off the neurosis" then the relief could best be achieved in the act of writing off the wounds from one's psyche. In *In Search of April Raintree* we witness April's disgust at the white people: "All these people lived for one or two things: money and power. They are hypocrites, all of them. Charming to each other when they were
face to face, but get them into separate rooms and their tongues could cut like knives. They were such superficial people (In Search of April Raintree, p.123) or notice Mrs. Rodcliff’s contempt for April. "That's the trouble with mixed races, you never know how they're going to turn out. And I would dread being grandmother to a bunch of little half-breeds!" (In Search of April Raintree, p.126). Here is a clash between two heterogeneous or incommensurable cultures where no one rule can be involved in terms of which to pass judgement, since judgement belongs to that particular culture of Canada and Canadians where the Métis are recognizably different. The Métis/half-breed are texted in the privileged authorized public spaces. It is in that site both Cheryl and April get texted in a schizoid manner as individuals. April imposes her own neo-colonial project of attempted assimilation of the self through the visible sign of skin colour on white, civilized Canada, thus giving rise to a schism on the under-privileged of which is Cheryl; “black hair, dark brown eyes which turned black when angry, and brown skin” (In Search of April Raintree, pp.9-10). Yet they as Métis get doubly texted as Cheryl sums up,

New houses yeah, but cheaply made, no plumbing,
no lever system. Besides, those housing programs were thought up by Indian Affairs which means only Treaty Indians get any of the supposed benefit out of them. Non-Status Indians and Métis get welfare and that's it.

(In Search of April Raintree, p. 174)

Henry Raintree and Alice, the parents, are survivors uprooted from the unremembered, untexted erased part of the prairie Métis, of the buffalo hunt, and the victims of progress brought in by the confederation. They are reduced to mere commodities in the post modern state, a result of the triumph of capitalism. The Métis as a people lost their entire way of life. Bereft of dignity, they are recognized by their own progeny — who live inscribed — as a picture of waste, living or drinking and wavering. Alice avoids shopping to avoid the taunts. The nation is a closed system "The key to the problem lies in the concept of marginality." 17 April's attempt at consciously getting superscribed by the Whiteman's code signified by cleanliness and a sense of propriety at the early stages of her life and than through marriage and an implicit adherence to the mainstream code in adult life are all doomed to fail because of

- 134 -
a "non-status" existence. In *In Search of April Raintree* even more than a culture clash we see more of systematic culture negation. In the park scene on p.15, Culleton creates a confrontation between the brown skins and the white skins. The mixed blood are not even worthy opponents. They are silenced. If they dare, the result is either a rape as in the case of April Raintree or suicide as in the instance of Cheryl Raintree. The implication is that the Métis are reduced to a dependency on a world which offers them no chance of survival with dignity as their skills are made redundant. They are forced into a grave of orienting in a landscape of western culture, which manages to keep them strictly at the periphery.

When Cheryl presents April with a book on Louis Reil, the later crinkles her nose in distaste. For her, Reil "was a rebel who had been hanged for treason, worse he had been a crazy half-breed" (*In Search of April Raintree*, p.44). She had been taught to see him as an aberration and somebody to be despised and disowned as savage. She has been taught to be glad that no one learns of her heritage. Cheryl dialysis Reil for her, "He's a Métis like us... It means we're part Indian and part white. I wish we were whole Indians" (*In Search of April Raintree*, p.45).
But Cheryl the social worker learns tragically that she cannot ever be a "whole Indian" even as her sister learns regretfully that she can never be a "white". They can never assimilate. Assimilation is only a promise made by Imperialism to keep the enemy at bay. For all her efforts, April is finally mistaken for her brown skinned sister by the rapists. The act of raping and finally excreting on the female body between pages 140 to 145 reveal the hidden agenda of denying the Métis their dignity. It is a violent erasure of the myth of affected assimilation which April entertains. The fate of the rebelling spirit in such a world is as Cheryl writes in her diary:

I wake up. I am lying on the sidewalk. My legs are sprawled out in front of me. I notice the garbage cans and garbage bags on either side of me. "Hello there!" I says to them. "I've come home at long, long...".

I chuckle to myself. I think in the morning the garbage men will take us all away, me and my friends. I giggle I try to get up. I can't. So I stay put.

Every once in a while a chuckle to myself.

- 136 -
I hum a tuneless song.

*(In Search of April Raintree, pp.225-226)*

With all her dreams gone Cheryl has but, to commit suicide.

According to historians, several characteristics of Métis life in the early nineteenth century stood out. They are described as a closely knit people, bound by pride of their race. They were independent and self-reliant. As fur traders they were literally born to the trade and skillful as woodsmen. However, the new cultures of the prairies boasted of industry and agriculture, virtually making the fur trade an historical relic. On the plains the Métis were superb buffalo hunters who had mastered the art of running the buffalo. Stan Dodman a teacher in a native school expresses the inner turmoil and uncertainty of the Métis culture clash. He writes in ‘Urban Halfbreed’:

I dream of buffalo that I’ve never seen,
I dream of places where I’ve never been;
I dream of customs that I’ve never known,
And dream of going where the spirit is flown.

I long for traits that I’ll never run,
I long for a hunt in the autumn sun;
I long for way that is no more,
Just here about concrete and smoke...

I remember Isadore their first victim,
And then Gabriel, the warrior grim;
I remember Louis, on a scaffold high,
For his people was unafraid to die!
Though a century has passed this way,
I'll never forget the glorious day;
So Metis warriors, do not despair,
You are not lost, for your children care. 18

Likewise, the Japanese-Canadians as reflected in Kogawa's Obasan
brought with them an oriental pattern of living and tried to
establish in this alien country a well-knit family network. The
Japanese culture is based on a very strong sense of unity and
closeness within the family. The adult Naomi recalls a happy
and secure childhood as she looks at an old, yellowed family
photograph, spanning three generations and comprising both the
maternal and paternal sides of her family. The picture is a
telling commentary on the strong ties that bound the family
together from both sides. "The fibres of our lives were an
impenetrable mesh", reflects Naomi (Obasan, p. 20). But presently, the metaphor drawn from fishing and the sea takes on sad connotations. "If we were knit into a blanket once its become badly moth-eaten with time. We are now no more than a few tangled skeins - the remains of what might once have been a fisherman's net" (Obasan, p. 21). Family life, so valued by these people of oriental origin was violently disrupted. Forcing herself to read her Aunt Emily's letters and diaries of the period, Naomi relives all the old nightmares of thirty years ago.

Obasan traces the neat breaking up of families. Naomi's paternal grandparents are thrown arbitrarily into prison where they eventually die. Naomi's mother and maternal grandmother who had gone to Japan, cannot return. Her father is packed off to a labour camp. Aunt Emily and Naomi's maternal grandfather are allowed to proceed to Toronto. But Naomi, her brother Stephen, Ojisan and Obasan, Naomi's paternal uncle and aunt are shunted off to the ghost-town of Slocan. This cruel dismemberment of Naomi's family was typical of what was happening to hundreds of Japanese-Canadian families. The Japanese-Canadians went through a shattering drama.
Though Ondaatje does not situate his novel, *Running In The Family* in Canada, it speaks of the East/West encounter in the author's homeland Sri Lanka. The process of acculturation is aptly seen in the Eurasian behaviour in *Running In The Family*. It is an accurate picture of "the first stage of a post-colonial Sri Lankan culture, the later stages of which can be seen in the increasingly consumer oriented and westernizing contemporary Sri Lanka under capitalism." The text interplays between ethnicity, nationality and imperialised modes of self-understanding. However, unlike all the other three texts discussed, it does not engage in a neat exploration of the process of marginalization within a dominant culture. What Ondaatje has achieved is going beyond the complexity of post-colonial situation. Ondaatje has been criticized for misrepresenting culture, for not portraying East/West dualism. But confusion itself makes up the post-colonial sensibility. In returning to his country of birth, Ondaatje discovers that either "We own the country we grow up in, or we are aliens and invaders" (*Running In The Family*, p.81). He refers to his country as Ceylon - and posits himself as both "the foreigner" and "the prodigal who hates the foreigner's" (*Running In The
Family, p. 79) delineating the love-hate relationships between the colonizer/colonized. The immigrant writer Ondaatjee recognizes the tenousness of his relationship to his homeland and simultaneously to the host land. He is rather foot loose. He cannot even claim cultural allegiance to his home land since "everyone was vaguely related and had Sinhalese, Tamil, Dutch, British and Burgher blood in them going back many generations" (Running In The Family, p. 41). So we cannot have any specificities of any one culture in his novel because here 'everyone was vaguely related' (Running In The Family, p. 41) and seems caught between a universalist mode of representation.

However, it certainly does not imply that Ondaatjee is ignorant about cultural history. The culture clash is certainly implied in the novel. It tells us that there was a large social gap between the circle of family and friends on one hand, the Europeans and English on the other who "never grew ancient here, who stepped in and admired the landscape, disliked the "inquisitive natives" and left" (Running In The Family, p. 80). He further writes "The English were seen as transients, snobs and racists, and were quite separate from those who had
intermarried and who lived here permanently" (Running In The Family, p.41) - Ondaatjee, elsewhere in the text, implies that his ancestors "ignored" -the indigenous people of the nation (Running In The Family, p.87). He belongs to too many cultures and yet lives only on the margins. This is the predicament of a migrant person. More so in case of Ondaatjee whose 'homeland' identity itself is so very multicultural and which has to be further adapted to the even more multicultural new Canadian situation. The poet's attempt to assert the indigenous sources of his poetry is a simultaneous awareness both of the metropolitan history that is narrated and of those other histories against which and together with which the dominating discourse acts. Running In The Family reveals itself as an exploration of the clash between cultural syncretism and the desire for a precolonial language. It must be recalled, after Sri Lanka's independence in 1948, and after Sinhalo was declared the official language of the nation in 1956, the community became increasingly alienated as the nation attempted to revert to precolonial values. A group such as the Burghers who had cut off from the indigenous population by ethnicity and culture and who had cultivated an association with the ruling power found
themselves in a tenuous position. Ondaatjee suggests the unsustainability of the syncretic model in a multiethnic culture even while celebrating that model.

As Ajay Heble suggests, Running In The Family is lodged in the complex interplay between their points of orientation, the syncretism of Ondaatjee's forebear, the excerpt from a poem by Wikkramasinha and the poems that Ondaatjee fashions in response. Wikkramasinha's "Don't Talk To Me About Matisse" raises important questions about the politics of cultural representation. The poem offers a critique not only of European representations of non-western culture but also of a Government that is perceived to have ruthlessly suppressed the spirit of a potential revolution: "to our remote/villages the painters came, and our whitewashed/mud/huts were splattered with gunfire" (Running In The Family, p.86). Painting becomes a metaphor for the murder of indigenous way of life. In response to Wikkramasinha's poetry, Ondaatjee creates a poem such as "High Flowers" which recasts modes of relation between differing but overlapping cultural topographies.
THE NEW IMMIGRANT IDENTITY AND CULTURAL REPRESENTATION:

The migrating writer caught between two or more separate cultures, lives on a borderland existence. He carries his essential strangeness within him. The non-belonging, the deepseated dispossession creates a new kind of identity. This identity has either refused or been refused the conventional realities of social order. However, as Richard Stamelman in his essay, "The Strangeness of the Other and the Otherness of the stranger" suggests, the stranger's exiled condition ironically assumes him his freedom. The stranger is the unseizable other, the stranger floats away like a cloud. He refuses to be appropriated in a world of knowable and therefore possesable things. "Through the paradoxical absence and presence of the stranger, his proximity and distance, his difference and heterogeneity, and above all the exteriority of his being, [he participates]... in a more absolute and transcendental humanity." This transcendental humanity has an overflowing effect on the creative personality. In the act of writing such writers prefer the surrealistic irrationality. They reject decorative language and instead prefer poetic economy in keeping with the new life of lack, absence. It is highly self-reflexive
and reflects an aphoristic density of the writer's identity. He is the marginal, literally eccentric being. As a stranger, he is forced by the centrifugal power of history to occupy the periphery. "The writer is the stranger par excellence. Forbidden residence every where, he takes up refuge in the book, from which the word will expel him", 23 because the act of writing is an act of liberation. The post-modern multicultural writer confer to uncertainties and haziness.

In line with the feminists, he rejects linearity, rejects 'fixation' and adopts undefinable, and unseizable cosmic vision. The travel has provided him this vision. This opening-up to uncertainties and the willingness to explore the thoughts and feelings that come with the foreign experience provide the basis for the post-colonial view. His unseizableness in the hegemonic discourse is an act of rebellion and non-conformism to the racialized nation states, where participation in or exclusion from various sectors of national life - the economy, politics, education, recreation of the arts, depend on the racial identity. In the Canadian context, the hyphenated labels: the Japanese-Canadians, the African-Canadians, the Jewish-Canadians
denote an ethnic identity which denies them active participation in the nation. So, when one poses the question to an immigrant, why the need to reclaim the past? The answer is certainly not a simplistic one such as to reclaim or reassert the lost glory of the past. The immigrant is attempting to map his 'difference' on the Canadian mosaic and by extension, the Third World writer at large, on the global front. Therefore articulating 'differences' is impending on such writers who are the custodians and saviours of their ethnic history. They become folk-historians. And doubleness of identity, of culture, of loyalties, often of language - is the basis of the experience of immigration in general, for anyone, anywhere.

The drive towards self-definition within a new cultural context necessitates cultural representation. In the Canadian context, finding a piece for oneself on the cultural mosaic, particularly relevant in the attraction of the word 'multiculturalism'.

When each writer tries to find a chunk for himself on the Canadian mosaic, what he in fact does is to present the case of his ethnic culture on the mosaic. The policy of
multiculturalism makes inevitable the quest for cultural representation. Cultural representation may have dual purposes; to find familiar grounds for the writer's alienated psyche, but more vehemently to defend, to reinforce the quintessential elements of his own culture. The minorities would feel the need more compelling lest their cultural identities pale into oblivion. It is veritably in this sense that multi-culturalism becomes excitingly colourful. However, in their ardent fervour, the writers many a times tend to exaggerate or fossilize their cultural histories. A writer such as Ondaatjee cannot even locate precisely his precise culture because his relationship to his motherland is tenous. Moreover, he is a product of too many cultures.

Each of the texts overtly or covertly represent its respective culture. As Said E. Edward clearly states, "The Orient and the Occident are facts produced by human beings and as such must be studied as components of the social, and not the divine or natural order." The scientific discipline in the West beginning in the early twentieth century specialized in the study of various Oriental cultures and traditions thereby creating the Orientalists and the Orientals, and by extension,
will include not only the East but all those races of Western origin which are deemed inferior.

As Said puts it,

(The ethnic writers) take for their point of departure the right of formerly un- or misrepresented human groups to speak for and represent themselves in domains defined, politically and intellectually, as normally excluding them, usurping their signifying and representing functions overriding their historical reality. 25

From the foregoing discussion, we see that the challenge to the native is to deconstruct Orientalism and rewrite, re-present his culture on its own terms, and to evaluate it by its own scales.

While Kogawa's Obasan tells of the dislocation of Japanese cultural values in the new and hostile land, Culleton's In Search of April Raintree directly pits the native values against those of the colonial powers. Vassanji's No New Land while making sensitive but humorous comparisons, represents his
Ondaatje takes a voyage home to Sri Lanka to collect the reminiscences of his Eurasian culture. While each of the texts deal with its theme in its own distinctive manner, all are highly conscious of the need for cultural representation. Each one is engaged in retrieving its repressed and marginalized culture. In case of immigrant writers, cultural representation is not simplistically asserting the antagonism of the colonizer and the colonized but rather, enacting the sublation of that antagonism in the transcending achievement of representation, especially when justness is offered by the policy of multiculturalism.

Symbolically, multiculturalism is often about nostalgia and a feeling of belonging to a group. The one hope for preserving traditions is to re-create it. According to Peter Li, an essential feature of culture is that through symbolic manifestation in art, but also in religion and rituals, the philosophical and artistic meaning of existence that the present day life of a people, its past and its mythologies, is infused into their experiences.26 Beatrice Culleton's In Search of
April Raintree reminds the reader of the rich cultural history of the Métis who are basically a mix of the French and the native Crée women, having a culture which is a mixture of European and native cultures and ancestry. The native culture is basically folk culture and the native cultural history is recorded only when the Hudson Bay fur-trading company established itself in their land. According to the documentation of John W. Friesen, basically, in the early part of the nineteenth century, the Métis people could be categorized to three kinds of life styles. There were those who secured employment with the fur-trading companies as clerks, interpreters and packers. The second type were people who managed small plots of ground as farms or gardens with some livestocks as an adjunct means of support. Portions of the race were devoted to hunting the buffalo and to commercial freighting. Therefore, the third type made their living as hunters and trappers. The real problem started when in 1821, the two rival fur-trading companies, the Hudson’s Bay company and the North West Company merged. But Charles II of England granted the Hudson Bay Company vast area of land. This made the North West Company incite the Métis against Hudson Bay as
usurpers of their land. Simultaneously, the newspaper called the "The Nor'Wester" repudiated the role of the Hudson Bay Company as a form of government suggesting that its authority should be transferred to the new Canadian government. The Métis responded to the situation by declaring self government. The Métis uprising was headed by their leader Louis Riel. The figure of Riel Louis looms large in Métis culture and represented with much gusto in In Search of April Raintree. Cheryl Raintree desperately trying to find her cultural anchorage is always digging into the history of Louis Riel. For Christmas, Cheryl presents her sister April with a book on Louis Riel. In her many letters to April, Cheryl writes:

...The Metis hunters, equipped with buffalo guns, used one method known as 'running the buffalo'. This was perhaps the most dangerous way but definitely the most exciting. Men on horseback would ride through the stampeding herd, shooting prime animals.... The hunt required steady nerves, much skill and expertise in horsemanship and marks manship.

(In Search of April Raintree, p.75)
In the course of the text, Culleton brings out the many aspects of the Métis culture. The two sisters participate in Indian Pow Wow dancing competition. After April's rape, the two sisters try to find familiar anchorage. They leave for the Rosean Reservation where there was a camping area set aside for the likes of them. And as the narrator describes,

Men, women and children were in traditional tribal costumes. Somewhere in the background, drums could be heard, sounding the heartbeat of the people. Teepees had been set up and Indian women in buckskin dresses now tended to fires, making bannock for curious onlookers.... That night, we sat, Indian style, around a bonfire, listening to the chanting and tales of Indian singers. Cheryl told me that was probably how it had felt on those long-ago buffalo hunts. I was impressed by all the sights and sounds. It went deeper than just hearing and seeing, I felt good. I felt alive.

(In Search of April Raintree, p.166)

Towards the end of the novel, the Métis sense of warmth and
concern for fellow beings is highlighted in the way Nancy and Nancy's mother protect not only Cheryl's son but even her typewriter despite their poverty. "And the way they talked about her, like they really did love her. They give out such a family feeling (In Search of April Raintree, p.211).

The community feeling and strong family ties are equally reflected in Kogawa's Obasan. The Issei, the first generation, brought with them into Canada the Oriental pattern of living and continued into the new country their powerful tradition of familial ties so very sacrosanct to the Japanese. In fact, Obasan shows how the two families of Kato and Nakane struggle to maintain a very cohesive, well-knit family network against the face of the government's policy of ruthlessly splitting up the families. Family life so cherished by the Japanese was mercilessly disrupted. Kogawa emphasizes the sense of unity and closeness that the families shared with one another. The adult Naomi Nakane recalls a secure and happy childhood as she looks at the old yellow family photograph spanning three generations and comprising both her maternal and paternal families which is a telling commentary on the ties that bind together very strongly the two families. "The fibres of our lives were an
unpenetrable mesh" reflects Naomi (Obasan, p.20). Naomi nostalgically looks back into the past:

Grandma Kato is in the bath tub with me. The water is so hot the skin reddens instantly. When I lift my foot up it looks as though I am wearing red socks.

"Samui, Samui", she says jokingly. "Cold, cold". The hot-water tap is on full blast.

"Atsui", I screech. The comic books are right. We yell words like that. She urges me down deeper into the liquid furnace and I go into the midst of the flames, obedient as Abednego, for to, Grandma is an angel of the Lord and stands seven before me in the midst of the fibre and has no hurt.

(Obasan, p.48)

The cultural pattern of the Japanese minority is exposed most compassionately by the powerful voice of the author who has taken upon herself the task of reaffirming the dignity of her race. The richness and civility of the Japanese culture is highlighted in the memories of Naomi. "If I search the caverns
of my mind, I come to a collage of images - sombre paintings, a fireplace and a metal clock with a heavy key like a small metal bird that fits in my palm" (Obasan, p.50).

An instance of the tenacity and gentleness of the community is seen in the manner in which even the ghost town of Slocan takes on so rapidly a new Japanese identity. Here it is, for instance - that Naomi's uncle builds in their weed - choked surroundings a miniature garden, knowing how well Naomi used to love the one in his beautiful old home near the sea. Here in Slocan, new community baths are set-up in the true Japanese tradition. There is chatter and soothing relaxation to be found at these baths and the warmth that is generated is not merely physical and Naomi thinks: "We are one flesh, one family, washing each other or so submerged in the hot water, half asleep half awake" (Obasan, p.160). Kogawa also reminds the reader that the Japanese were traditionally skilled farmers and fishermen. Steven, for example, cannot adjust to the inhuman working conditions and finds his flutes cracked when he used to be so adept at music in the joy and laughter. The memory of Naomi recalls:
The music room beside the living room is full of windows and plants and a round goldfish with two goldfish. A piano, a violin, a stringed instrument that is half constructed a peceolo and a shakuhachi with its eerie' wail are in this room. My father plays every instrument by ear. My mother and Stephen play the piano.

(Obasan, p.51)

What also abides with Naomi is the memory of the courage and faith the Issei had shown. The resilience, quiet resignation, maintaining dignity in the face of adversity seems to be all a part of the race. For instance, on the eve of the enforced departure from Slocan and from one another, families and friends pray. The priest prays that they love their neighbour, that the Lord might protect all the Christian Kings. He speaks of how Christ took bread the same night that He was betrayed. The scene conveys the implicit faith that these simple people have in their Christian God which helps them survive. The hope and faith of the community against the frigidity of the surrounding, is voiced in tune of the Issei present at the prayer meeting "There's a time for crying... Someday the time for laughter
Ondaatjee’s *Running In The Family* poses a challenge to cultural positioning since he belongs to too many cultures. He is unable to declare any allegiance to one particular culture and, is caught up in an Universalistic mode of representation ("Everyone was vaguely related ...”). His non-specific referentiality, his unbelonging through excess, may be a strategy to challenge appropriation. As Heble observes, Ondaatjee’s excess is, after the fashion of magic realism, emblematic of a mode of representation that characterizes much post-colonial writing.28

Homi K. Bhabha argues that magic realism is "the literacy language of the emergent post-colonial world."29 Stephen Slemon suggests that magic realism is predicated on a kind of eccentricity, on a "uniqueness or difference from mainstream culture"30 arguing that the characteristic maneuver of magic realist fiction is that its two separate narrative modes (roughly speaking, realism and fantasy) never manage to arrange themselves into any kind of hierarchy. This has strong destabilizing effect contesting the Imperial centre. At one
moment the text gives us full details and specificities: the dialogue between Lalla and Judge E.W. Jayawardene, for example, "is still in the judicial records in the Bullers Road Court Museum" (Running In The family, p.116) or "At that time Doris Gratiaen and Dorthy Clomenti - Smith would perform radical dances in private, ...In a year or so they would perform in public. There is a reference to them in Rex Daniel's journals" (Running In The Family, p.33). Even more significant is the manner in which a chapter begins with dates: "April 11, 1932" (Running In The Family, p.36). Such details are betrayed the very next moment by fantasy.

About six months before I was born, my mother observed a pair of Kabarogoyas "in copula" at Pelmadulla - A reference is made to this sighting in a coloured Atlas of some vertebrates from Ceylon, Vol.2, a National Museums publication. It is my first memory.

(Running In The Family, p.75)

Fantasy and illusions of reality are intermingled. In the chapter Kegalle (ii) the dead father is supposed to come back home in the form of a grey cobra which breaks up the
historicity. Or in the Monsoon Notebook (iii) the author says "Midnights and noon and dawn and dusk are the hours of danger, susceptibility to the "grahayas" -- planetary spirits of malignant native". The reader is at a fix to gauge whether it is really the culture of Sri Lanka or the author's fantasies. The final delusion comes at the end page of the text when the author asserts "while all these names may give an aura of authenticity, I must confess that the book is not a history but a potrait or gesture... in Sri Lanka a well told lie is worth a thousand facts" (Running In The Family, p.206). What me get in Running In The Family is an imaginative retelling of Ceylon's cultural story: Glimpses into and a potrait of its culture rather than a neat construction in the fashion of Western knowledge. It is of course to undermine the representational legitimacy. Nonetheless we do get a "potrait" if not a just representation of the community. Running In The Family is a picture of post colonial Sri Lankan culture heavily dosed with westernizing influences. "Everyone was vaguely related and had Sinhalese, Tamil, Dutch, British and Burgher blood in them" (Running In The Family, p.41). Though the focus is on Eurasian
culture represented by the Burgher family, Ondaatjee makes it clear "The English are seen as transients, snobs and racists, and were quite separated from those who had inter married and who lived here permanently" (Running In The Family, p.41). Ondaatjee tells us there was a large gap between family and friends and Europeans of Ceylon unlike those who "never grew ancient here, who stepped in and admired the landscape, disliked the inquisitive natives and left (Running In The Family, p.86). The community to which the family belonged did settle permanently in Ceylon. What is particularly interesting is that despite describing this hybrid community in terms of its separateness from the colonizing power -- "The English were seen as transients, snobs and racists" (Running In The Family, p.41), elsewhere he says his ancestors ignored the indigenous people of the nation (Running In The Family, p.87). The cultural syncretism gives power to the text. Although there is excess of belongingness to too many cultures, we are given glimpses into the life-style:

From ten until noon we sit talking and drinking ice-cold palmyrah toddy from a bottle we have filled in the village. This is a drink which
smells of raw rubber and is the juice drained from the flower of a coconut.

(Running In The Family, p.26)

This is juxtaposed with pure Eurasian influence:

Doris Gratiaen and Dorothy Clement - Smith ...both women about twenty two and were greatly influenced by rumours of the dancing of Isador Duncan. In a year or so they would perform in public. There is a reference to them in Rex Daniel's journals.

(Running In The Family, p.33)

The entire chapter 'Historical Relations' describes the Eurasian nature of the Ondaatjee family, the era of grandparents. Philip Ondaatjee was supposed to have the greatest collection of wine glasses in the Orient" (Running In The Family, p.41). The Eurasian theme is repeated in "Flaming Youth", "Casually dressed couples, coated in a thin feline of sweat, swirled under the moon to "Lio Rita" by John Bowles on the gramophone" (Running In The Family, p.46).

Ondaatjee's family is positioned in terms of both the colonizing power and the indigenous populations. While Takdasa
Wikramasinha’s poem shows resistance to the colonizing powers, the narrator’s poem 'High Flowers' which follows, tells us that his forebears ignored the indigenous woman. The very next poem after 'Colombo' called 'Women like you' sings praises to the native women and the following poem 'The Cinnamon peeler's Wife' recuperates nostalgically the native Sinhalese Wikramasinha’s poem which reads thus:

Don't talk to me about Matisse... The European style of 1900, the tradition of the studio... Talk to me instead of the culture generally how the murders were sustained by the beauty robbed of savages: to our remote villages the painters came, and on white washed mud-huts were splattered with gunfire.

(Running In The Family, p.86)

Whereas 'High Flowers' reads thus:

The slow moving of her cotton in the heat.

...the women my ancestors ignored sits at the doorway chopping coconut cleaning rice.

- 162 -
...from his darkness among highflowers
to this room contained by mud walls.
...in the high trees above her
shadows eliminate.

The path he moves along.

(Running In The Family, p.89)

The answer is, the cultural allegiances of the author are rather too many. In showing feelings, the author has been considerably honest.

Vassanji's *No New Land* does not make a hyperconscious effort to reclaim the past. Infact it tries to shed off the cultural baggage. However in the process, the South - Asian minority would find a considerable representation of itself in the course of the novel mainly through the two culture clashes. To show the culture clash, necessitates the delineation of the cultures in question. The very beginning of the text speaks of Fatima, the author's daughter whose aim is to "Become rich" (*No New Land*, p.4). As the author suggests, "growing up meant - making it big in the competitive world. But to Zera Lalani of the old school, any education was a way out, a way up and influenced by the missionary who was her guide in spiritual as
well as practical matters. Nurdin Lalani tussles with the new
culture eating pork and going for peep shows. Infact the
cultural baggage is carried from India, to Africa in the person
of Haji Lalani, Nurdin's father. The moral severity of his
father made Nurdin meek but in Canada he is carried away with
the changes. Though many times in the text Vassanji suggests
that ethnicity is jealously guarded, he also suggests that the
winds of change is like a hurricane.

One envies these children, these darlings of
their mothers, objects of immigrant sacrifice
and labour, ... Take this girl in hijab, standing
in the elevator, head covered, ankles covered, a
beautiful angular face, long body, who could
have come straight from northern Pakistan. But
when she opens her mouth, out flows impeccable
Toronto English... discussing what? -- last
night's hockey game. In her arms... is a heavy
book... She's on her way to Quran class...
What will she remember when she is twenty,
thirty, what will she write?

(No New Land, pp.63-64)

- 164 -
The protagonist himself makes a final decision. The Missionary does not consider him guilty in the false charges of rape and cuts off the clouds of doubt and uncertainties, when putting on his own head the red fez of Haji Lalani, with a heavy laugh he asks Nurdin "does it still, frighten you so?" (No New Land, p.196). His action removes the last weakness from Nurdin, releases him from old ideals of morality and from his cultural past.

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