CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION: MAPPING THE VOICE

Throughout America, from north to south, the dominant culture acknowledges Indians as objects of study, but denies them as subjects of history. The Indians have folklore, not culture, they practice superstitions, not religions, they speak dialects, not languages, they make crafts, not arts. (Eduardo Galeano, cited in Allen 1989)

"Minorities" are the creations of power politics. They are cultural not numerical inferiors. Colonial powers define the world according to their best interests; not lights, their canonical judgements of literature, humanity and civilization are grounded in dominance, not in superior morality or knowledge. Colonial writing, therefore, is an instrument of the colonizing process, not objective disinterested reportage. In such circumstances, the history of the colonization and conquest of the Americas remains a hegemonic monologue, incomplete, self-serving and suspect. (Axtell 1992:310)

Native writing has begun to emerge as a distinct genre in the twenty first century with the publication of the works of writers of various tribal affiliations all over North America. The attitude of the mainstream culture towards Natives has always been, and continues to be, patronizing, negative and stereotypical. Perceived as objects of history, the Natives have functioned as the stereotyped other whose presence is necessary in the European's assertion of selfhood on the American soil. Ever since the contact, the Natives have been perceived as objects of curiosities-political, social and anthropological as numerous white narratives testify. As Galeano aptly points out, the dominant culture has always attempted to deny them as subjects of history.

To be erased from history by the voice of the dominant culture, to be objectified through Hollywood stereotypes and white narratives which foster negative representations - this has been the predicament of Natives in North America. The image
of the Indian disseminated through white movies, narratives and representations has always been objectified and hence ahistorical. Colonial writing has exercised semiotic control over the Native, who was a constant source of semiotic reproduction, as Terry Goldie a Native critic argues. The Native man has been represented as ‘primitive’, ‘savage’, ‘stupid’, ‘wagonburner’, ‘lazy’ and ‘drunk’ whereas the Native woman is the ‘squaw’ or ‘the exotic other’, the presence that would lead the white man into the realms of exotic sensuality, into an assertion of his colonial self. If the Native man has been marginalized, erased or othered in white narratives/histories and films, the Native woman has been doubly so. As victims of patriarchy and internalized oppression, Native women have always existed outside history, or in its fissures as feminists would argue. In the light of the above statements, it would be interesting to look at Native women’s writing in North America and its emergence as writings of resistance.

In this chapter, an attempt will be made to trace the trajectory of Native writing/voice from the told-to-the-person narratives to the told-to-the-page-narratives. In providing a brief overview of the history of Native writing, the Chapter will also contextualize the contemporary Native women’s texts selected for study. The characteristic features of Native writing as a genre in tune with the Native world view and spirituality and its deviations from Western generic patterns will also be discussed briefly. This will be followed by a description of the Native women’s texts selected for study, the criteria involved in the selection of the texts and the relevance of the present study. A brief appraisal of the semiotic reproductions of the Natives in White narratives/movies will also form part of the purview of this chapter. The resume of the ensuing chapters, the nature of critical intervention in those chapters and the scope of the study will be discussed before the conclusion of this chapter.

From Told to-the-Person to Told-to-the-Page: Native Voice: A Trajectory

The history of American literature began with the Native peoples who had, as anthropologists and historians would point out, migrated to North America over twenty-eight thousand years ago and not with the advent of Europeans to the continent as
western historians argue. N Scott Momanday, a Kiowa writer, remarks “American literature begins with the first human perception of the American landscape expressed and preserved in language” (Cited in Ruoff 1990:1). The earliest human perceptions of the Native were preserved through the Native Oral traditions of various tribes in different languages. Ruoff points out that at the time of contact, the native peoples of North America were divided into more than three hundred cultural groups and spoke two hundred different languages, plus many dialects derived from seven basic language families. By 1940, 149 of these languages were still in use and Native Americans practiced many religions and customs (Ruoff 1990:1). The various rites and customs of Native religions were preserved and transmitted through Oral tradition/through stories. The written North American Native literature began only in the early twentieth century.

American Indian Oral literatures were mostly transmitted orally from one generation to another. But some tribes had managed to record their literatures. A La Vonne Brown Ruoff in American Indian Literatures: An Introduction, Bibliographic Review and Selected Bibliography (1990) identifies the presence of such recorded literature amongst the Ojibwa, Quiche Maya of Guatemala highlands and others.

The Ojibwa, for example, used pictographic symbols to preserve their Mide (Grand Medicine) rituals on birchbark scrolls and other materials; other tribes such as those on the Plains and Northwest coasts, also kept pictographic accounts. One of the few tribes to record their literature in books was the Quiche Maya of the Guatemala highlands, who preserved the origin of their culture in a work called Popol Vuh or Council Book. Their scribes continued to create books before the arrival of western Europeans who subsequently burned hundreds of hieroglyphic columns. According to Dennis Tedlock, only four have survived, three in Europe and one recently discovered in Guatemala (Popol Vuh 23-27) (Ruoff 1990:11).

The earliest instance of the collection of oral literatures of Native America begins in Mesoamerica in the books of the Maya Fray Bernardino de Sahagun had included considerable Spanish translations of Native literature in his history of New Spain. The
initial collections of Native literature were sporadic and rather unsystematic. The systematic collection of the oral literature of what is now the United States, was as Ruoff points out, stimulated by the publication of Henry Rowe Schoolcraft’s *Algic Researches* (1839), which focussed on Ojibway culture and literature. This resulted in the interest in and subsequent publication of life histories and autobiographies and generated further anthropological and linguistic studies. The pioneers in this field were John Wesley Powell and Frantz Boas. Powell and Boas are credited by scholars with having initiated the ethno-linguistic approach. Most of the tribal narratives collected by the anthropologists and ethno-linguists from the tribal members or sources were later translated, edited and published. Often these indicate the editorial mediation of the collectors which was often based on Western parameters/paradigms.

Critics and scholars have identified two types of Indian texts. told-to-the-person-narratives, and the told-to-the-page narratives. What are commonly termed Indian Autobiographies fall into the first category, so do the songs and stories collected by anthropologists like Frantz Boas, Dell Hymes, Dennis Tedlock, Karl Kroeber, Jarold V. Ramsey, Allen Dundis and others.

Kathleen Mullen Sands in *American Indian Autobiography* (1983) outlines the problems of white editorship in the Oral narratives collected by anthropologists, missionaries and white historians:

The narrator – editor relationship has been the basis of collecting, preserving and publishing American Indian personal narratives from the beginning. Disadvantages in the collaboration between Indian and White are perhaps most evident in eighteenth and nineteenth century autobiographies, but they cannot be overlooked even in contemporary works, because of their comprehensive influence on the narration of the life story. Unfortunately, many earlier collected narratives are badly marred by the bias of the collectors or by their lack of information about the tribal cultures. Many early collectors were missionaries who purposely collected life stories from Christian Indians who fit the missionaries’ notions of a “good” Indian because they had given up many tribal
traditions in favor of white practices. Other narratives, clearly warped by the collector's obvious romantic stereotyping, depict Indians as "noble savages". Still other stories, collected by deterministic historians, military men or antiquarians attracted to and interested in Indian life, suffer from a lack of understanding of the Indian ways or a misguided notion that they were preserving portraits of what they assumed were vanishing Americans (Sands 1983 56-57).

Sands further points out that the authenticity such of personal narratives and collections is often questionable and that the editorial practices often indicate prejudices, misrepresentation and lack of professionalism. Sands seems to be foregrounding the problematic of told-to-the person narrative resultant of the ambivalent nature of Native-White collaborations and editorship. This is true in the case of Canada too, as Penny Petrone observes in her book *Native Literature in Canada: From the Oral Tradition to the Present* (1990).

The printed collection of Canadian Oral Narratives began when the Jesuit missionaries in seventeenth century published in the *Jesuit Relations*, the recorded oral traditions of the natives east of Georgian Bay. Henry Rowe Schoolcraft's work *Algonquin Researches*, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, served to further the interest aroused in Native narratives. In 1894, Silas Rand published the *Legends of the Micmacs*. Yet another pioneer in the field of collection of Oral literatures in Canada was Reverend Adrian G. Morice. William Jones, an American Indian, between 1903 and 1905, translated into English Ojibway narratives that he had collected west and north of Lake in North America Superior for the Carnegie Foundation in North America.

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1 The well meaning interpretation of non-native led to words and phrases being mistranslated, lost, substituted or deliberately distorted to fit some preconceived image or ethos of the times. For instance, the French missionaries exaggerated the Christian piety of the natives, and the French soldier-iconoclast, Baron de La Hontan, conveyed an ant clerical bias. Nineteenth-century pioneers in Indian studies from Henry Rowe-Schoolcraft to Silas Rand reshaped the stories and songs they recorded to suit the sentimental and romantic style popular in their day. To the non-Indian mind Indian tales are baffling in their intricacies, inconsistencies, and leaps of logic, creating difficulties and frustration in trying to understand them. For example, the Reverent Silas Rand (1810–89) a Baptist missionary among the Micmacs of Nova Scotia, for forty years collected recorded and translated narratives, but in one of his lectures he dismissed them with the casual comment: "Now what sense or meaning there maybe at the bottom of all this nonsense, I leave to the speculation of the others" (Petrone 1990. 6 – 11)
Many anthropologists were involved in collecting tribal songs, ceremonial and ritual dramas, while yet others believed in collecting life histories or autobiographical accounts in order to study the Native customs and practices. The autobiographical accounts of native women are significant in this respect. Late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw an increasing interest and desire in recording life stories, especially those of Native Women. Gretchen Bataille remarks on the significance of Native Women's autobiographical accounts and their thematic difference from those of their male counterparts.

Interestingly, the women whose lives were recorded during that period were not princesses, but the mothers and wives of tribesmen. Their stories differ from that of their male contemporaries in that they tell, not of war exploits, but of the gathering of the herbs. They speak of preparing food rather than of hunting buffalo. They tell of raising children rather than racing horses. These differences reflect the division of roles in the cultures. More important than any other feature of these stories is the extent to which they reflect the relations between women and men within a tribe (Bataille 1983-87).

Native writers like Paula Gunn Allen and others contend that the concept of an individual's life story/autobiography was quite alien to many tribes, which emphasized the communal rather than the individual. This often perplexed white translators and editors who often thought that many incidents believed to be of significance by Native women as relevant in an individual's narration of her life story. Nancy Lurie's translation and recording of Mountain Wolf Woman: Sister of Crashing Thunder, The Autobiography of a Winnebago Indian (1961) is cited in Bataille as a case in point where the narrator gave the translator the kind of version the latter had wanted.

Elsie C. Parsons' The American Indian Life, a collection of twenty-four vignettes composed by anthropologists based on their research, Truman

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2 Amongst the prominent Indian autobiographies by men that were recorded are Black Elk Speaks (1932) by Black Elk (Sioux), collected and translated by John G. Neihardt; Black Hawk, an Autobiography by Black Hawk (Sauk) in collaboration with Antoine LeClaire and John B. Paterson; The Autobiography of a Winnebago Indian (1926) by Sam Blowsnake, collected by Paul Radin; and The Warrior Who Killed Custer, The Personal Narrative of Chief Joseph White Bull (1968) by Chief Joseph White Bull, edited by James H. Howard.
Michaelson's *The Autobiography of a Fox Indian Woman*, *The Narrative of an Arapaho woman*, and *The Narrative of a Southern Cheyenne Woman*. Maria Chona's *The Autobiography of a Papago Woman*, recorded and published by Ruth Underhill in 1936, Elizabeth Colson's, *Autobiographies of Three Pomo Women* gathered in 1940s, but published in 1974—all these Indian Autobiographies indicate the trajectory of presence of the Native women as selves/subjects of their narratives. In spite of the mutations, interpolations, misrepresentations and other hazards of white editorship/mediation, these stories provide information about the roles of women in tribal societies, which, contrary to popular white beliefs, were hardly subservient or inferior.

The transition from the told-to-the-person narratives to told-to-the-page narratives (from life stories and stories of Indian-White collaborations to narratives directly written by the Natives themselves) marked a significant change in the process of the dissemination of Native voice. The Indians, who at the turn of the twentieth century, educated in white schools, especially those from the plains and far west, started writing their own stories in English. A La Vonne Brown Ruoff notes that the publication of written Indian autobiographies preceded that of oral life histories. The first autobiography to be published was *A Son of the Forest* (1829) by William Apes, a Pequot Indian, who later become a Methodist convert. Apes's narrative charts his suffering as a child due to his alcoholic grand parents, his conversion to Christianity and his perilous journey to salvation, fall from grace, and subsequent rededication to Christianity (Ruoff 1990:53). George Copway, another Chippewa convert to Methodism, wrote *The Life, History and Travels of Kah-ge-ga-gah bowh* (1847), which was a blend of myth, history and personal experience and proved to be a model for subsequent autobiographies by Indians. The most influential and widely read Indian autobiographer during the early twentieth century, in Ruoff's view, was Charles Eastman (Ohiyesa) a Sioux Indian doctor who wrote *Wigwam Evenings* (1909), *Indian Boyhood* (1902) and *From the Deep Woods to

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3 Gretchen Batlle remarks

All these women's lives come to us through at least one intermediary, often several. These stories provide little specific information about the role of Indian women, but careful reading suggest that their role was neither subservient nor inferior. These women emphasize the roles of both males and females, the familial relationships, the material culture, above all, a regret for the changes from the old ways (1983 91)
Civilization (1916) Ruoff remarks: “In all his works, Eastman attempted to serve as a bridge between Indian and White cultures – to reveal to his white audience the worldviews, customs, literature and history of the Indians so that non-Indian Americans might appreciate and emulate native American virtues” (Ruoff 1990 57) Luther Standing Bear, A Sioux Indian, inspired by Eastman’s autobiographies wrote My people, the Sioux (1928) and Land of the Spotted Eagle (1953). Standing Bear’s narratives deal with his experiences at Carlyle Indian School, his enunciation of Sioux beliefs, customs and life, and criticism of white treatment of Indians Francis La Flesche (Omaha) a Plains Indian to become the first Indian anthropologist, wrote The Middle Five, Indian School boys of the Omaha Tribe (1900), a work acknowledged by scholars and critics as one of the finest autobiographies of the period.

Twentieth century also saw some excellent pieces of written literary autobiographies. John Joseph Mathews’ Talking to the Moon (1945); N Scott Momaday’s Way to the Rainy Mountain (1969) which traces the author’s Kiowa heritage and search for his tribal roots and The Names (1976) which makes use of the stream of consciousness narrative and is a more conventional autobiography, William Least Heat Moon’s Blue Highways (1982) and Gerald Vizenor’s Interior Landscapes (1990) are some of the most prominent contemporary autobiographies.

Samson Occom, a Mohegan Indian, was the first author to publish in English. He was a Presbyterian missionary and his Sermon Preached at the Execution of Moses Paul, an Indian (1772) became the first Indian best seller Ruoff points out that the first novel by an Indian author in the nineteenth century was John Rollin Ridge’s (a Cherokee Indian’s) Life and Adventures of Joaquin Murieta (1854) Ridge’s mixed blood protagonist Murieta is depicted as a good man driven to crime after he is victimized by the white miners The 1930’s saw the emergence of two American Indian novelists whose works became immensely popular during their times - John Joseph Mathews and D’Arcy Mc-Nickle. Matthew’s first book Wah’Kon-Tah (1932) is a fictional account that portrays the Osage tribe’s determination to retain its traditional ways in the onslaught of white man’s culture His next novel Sun Down (1934) depicts the trajectory of a young
jazz-age Osage, the effects of reservation policy, land allotment and the Oklahoma oil boom on the Osage culture. McNickle's *Surrounded* (1936) is acknowledged by critics as the most polished novel by an Indian writer. The novel enunciates a mixed blood's search for his place and emphasizes the importance of oral traditions in the cultural survival of the tribe. His next two novels *Runner in the Sun* (1954) and *Wind from an Enemy Sky* (1978) emphasize the clash between two cultures – Native and White, and the Native peoples’ attempts to retain their traditional ethos and ways of life.

The 1960s was a significant period in the American History. It saw the rise of Black Power Movement and the genesis of Red Power and American Indian Movements. Significantly the Native fiction of the period reflected spirit of the age. This period, often termed the American Indian Renaissance, saw the works of the Kiowa/Pueblo writer N Scott Momaday, which exerted a tremendous influence on his contemporary as well as the subsequent generation of writers. Momaday’s *House Made of Dawn* (1968), which charts the mixed blood protagonist’s quest for a sense of place, community and self/identity received tremendous critical acclaim and even won the Pulitzer prize. His other novels, *Way to Rainy Mountain* (1969) and *The Ancient Child* (1989), which reflected his tribal moorings and ethos, were also equally popular.

The other prominent male authors who gained considerable recognition in the 70’s and 80’s were James Welch, a Blackfeet/Gros Ventros Writer and Gerald Vizenor, an Objibway writer. The quest motif is employed by Welch (as Momaday does in *House Made of Dawn*) in *Winter in the Blood* (1974). *The Death of Jim Loney* (1979) deals with the protagonist’s attempt to organize his life, his past and relationships and in its plot structure bears a strong resemblance to Welch’s earlier novel. His next work of fiction *Fool’s Crow* (1986) is a historical novel which charts the impact of white settlement on a Montana band of Black Feet in 1870, it gives a moving account of the tribal life during the period. The myths and ceremonies of Blackfeet Oral tradition punctuate Welch’s narrative on Blackfeet history. Gerald Vizenor is more acclaimed for his non-fictional works and his criticism on American Indian novels. *Narrative Chance: Post Modern Discourse on Native American Indian Literature* (1993). His non fictional works *The*
Everlasting Sky (1972) and The People Named Chippewa (1984) deal with the myths, (hi)stories and cultural ethos of the Turtle Mountain Chippewa. His novels Darkness in St. Louis Bearheart (1978) and Grieaver: An American Monkey King in China (1987) (which won the 1986 Fiction collective Illinois State University Award and the 1987 American Book award for fiction) deal with the trickster/culture hero motif. In fact, trickster is a pervading presence in all his creative and critical works.

The contemporary Native American male authors, who have managed to carve a niche for themselves in the scenario of Native literature in North America, include Michael Dorris (A Yellow Raft on Blue Water (1987), Martin Cruz Smith (Night Wing (1977), Gorky Park (1981), Stallion Gate (1986) Polar Star (1989)), Thomas King (Medicine River (1990) and Sherman Alexie (The Indian Killer). Many anthologists like Gerry Hobson, Clifford E. Trafzer, Thomas King and others have come up with anthologies of short fiction by Native authors from different parts of Canada and America.4

The trajectory of Native Women’s voice in North America can be traced back, as pointed out earlier in this chapter, to the told-to-the-person narratives of the eighteenth and late nineteenth centuries. Rayna Green maps the course of Native women’s stories in her “Introduction” to the anthology of Native women’s Poetry and Fiction:

Whether it comes directly from the story teller’s mouth and she writes it down or someone writes it for her, the story has to be told. Sometimes she hears or dreams something and makes a story out of it. That’s the way it often happens. Before European writing, there were voices to sing and speak, dances to make real the stories that the people told or to honor the retelling a new... And others might get the story as the women weave it into the rug. They’d have to remember what their duties were towards the people because the rug told them every time they looked at it. Whichever way it was the story got told, the way it gets told now. The old ways of speaking aren’t gone. They’ve changed of course...
to remember.... They kept them even when no one asked to hear them – even when the white eyes came and asked only the men what they knew . Thus the women have always kept the stories, in clay or reeds, in wool or cotton, in grass or paint, or words to songs. Somewhere they began to keep them in ink and paper (and eventually in electronic impulses transferred to paper from magnetic tape) (Green 1984.3-4)

The-told-to-the page narratives or stories told directly through ink and paper saw Native Women attempting to take the process and responsibility of dissemination of their stories, themselves. Sarah Winnemucca Hopkins’ Life among the Putes. Their Wrongs and Claims (1883), was a remarkable pioneering attempt in this field, despite the white editorship of Mrs. Horace Mann. Hopkins’ narrative, an imaginative personal and tribal history, chronicles the Native – White relations during the period 1844 – 1883. Another significant autobiographical work during the nineteenth century was Zitkala-Sa’s (Gertrude Bonin) collection of essays, American Indian Stories (1921). She was a Sioux woman who took an active role in the society of American Indians, and the National Council for American Indians (which she founded) and a zealous advocate of Indian rights. Emily Pauline Johnson, a Canadian Mohawk writer, who had won critical accolades for her poetry and performance of her poetry in Canada, United States and England was one of the first Indian women to publish her short fiction. Mocassin Maker (1913), a collection of short stories about Indian and non-Indian women in Canada focusses on the problems of mixed blood women, their relationships with white men and their search for identity and was a trend-setter for the later fictions, based on the same theme. The Shagganappi (1913) is a collection of stories for boys Johnson’s works, as Ruoff points out in her book on American Indian literatures, serve as a transition between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Cogewea, The Half-Blood (1927) authored by Mourning Dove (Humishuma/Christine Quintasket Colville) is generally heralded by Native scholars and critics as the first novel by an American Indian woman. The novel harps on the identity problem of the mixed blood woman protagonist and the importance of oral tradition in
the Native woman's life. It incorporates Okanagan history, oral stories, spiritual practices and contemporary realities.\footnote{Paula Gunn Allen explicates how the novel is classic of its types: It is an Indian novel, that is, it is a long story, composed of a number of short stories. It is also part of the Chipmunk cycle (Cogewea means “chipmunk”) which is in turn part of the Old Woman}

Maria Campbell, a Canadian Metis writer, published her autobiography _Half-Breed_ (1973), perceived generally as the decade's most acclaimed Native autobiography. Campbell poignantly traces her childhood in a close-knit Metis community, her attempt to save her siblings from being taken away by the welfare people after her mother's death, her failure to do so and subsequent plunge into the darkness of alcohol, drugs and prostitution from which she manages to come out with the help of her friends, her own remarkable will power and the hovering spirit of her grandmother Cheechum, to find her true identity as a Metis woman. Campbell's autobiography seems to have influenced Native writers like Beatrice Culleton, Lee Maracle and others.

Leslie Silko's _Ceremony_ (1977) is often perceived as a landmark work as far as Native women writing in North America is concerned. Silko is a Laguna Pueblo writer, who weaves the myths and legends of Pueblo Oral tradition into her narrative of Tayo's (World War II Veteran's) quest for his communal identity. Tayo, the half-breed protagonist, experiences fragmentation of self due to his experiences in the war, his sense of liminality due to his mixed parentage; and his healing involves his participation in rituals and ceremonies during which he encounters various emanations of the Feminine principle/Laguna Creatrix in his life, who help him remember the stories, complete his ceremony and eventually return to his Pueblo community. Silko's _Storyteller_ (1981) also deals with Laguna Pueblo themes. It includes several short stories, poetry and autobiographical commentary. Her most recent novel is entitled _Almanac of the Dead_.

Paula Gunn Allen, another Pueblo writer, too, employs the Laguna creation stories and myths in her fiction. Allen makes use of the ritual quest (like Momaday Welch, Silko and others), from a feminine perspective in her novel _The Woman Who_

Louise Erdrich, an Ojibwa (Chippewa), is another prolific writer who has won critical acclaim for her tetralogy Love Medicine (1984), which won the Critics Circle Award, Beet Queen (1986), Tracks (1988) and The Bingo Palace (1995) which deal with the life of people in and around the Turtle Mountain Chippewa reservation in North Dakota, “weave an intricate web of relationships among the members of individual families and family groups of Indians, mixed bloods and whites” (Ruoff 1990:85). Ruoff points out that the novels were published in reverse order of their internal chronology and use multiple narrators who tell parts of the story, structured in episodes set in particular years or months. Tracks, published after the other two novels, however, is the earliest in terms of plot and internal chronology and deals with the Chippewa life during 1912 – 1924 in the aftermath of the Allotment Act. It deals with the protagonist Fleur Pillager’s attempts to hold on to her allotted tract of land despite hostile weather conditions and government policies. Tracks has a bipolar narrative, with the narrative voice being split between the two narrators, Nanapush and Pauline. The Beet Queen covers the period 1932 – 1972 and is set in the off-reservation town of Argus, when the area around Argus changed from wheat to sugar – beet farming. Most of the characters in this novel are non-Indians. Love Medicine, the first novel to be published and which covers the period 1934 – 1983, humorously portrays the families of Nector Kaspaw, Lulu and Marie Lazare, who

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6 In fact, Allen’s critical works cited above contribute significantly to framework some of the chapters in the present study, especially Chapter II and Chapter V.
make their appearance in Tracks too. The Bingo Palace (1995) traces the trajectory of the descendants of the two clans - Nanapush/Pillager on the one hand, and Kaspaw/Lazare on the other in a series of interconnecting stories which explores continuity and connection in relationships between the characters. This novel is the last one in Erdrich’s tetralogy and covers the period from 1972 to the present. Erdrich has published two collections of poems Jack light (1984) and Baptism of Desire (1989). She has also published a book entitled Blue Jay’s Dance: A Birth Year (1996) and The Crown Of Columbus (1995) jointly authored with her husband collaborator Michael Dorris.

Beatrice Culleton’s April Raintree (1984) (initially published as In Search of April Raintree in 1982) probably is a work, which highlights the pathos of Metis life in Canada. Based on the author’s experiences of foster homes, alcoholism, poverty and death of siblings, the novel maps the story of two Metis sisters, April and Cheryl and their poignant search for identity. Culleton charts the systemic oppression resultant of colonialism and racism and the havoc created by these in Metis lives. Culleton wrote a novel for children, after her first book, entitled The Spirit of the White Bison (1985), an animal autobiography which, in the person of the white bison, narrates with much historical detail, about the discrimination of the buffalo on the Plains.

Jeanettee Armstrong’s, (an Okanagan Indian writer) novel Slash (1985), another significant work as far as Native writing in Canada is concerned, deals with the Native politics and Native – White relations during 1960s and 70s in Canada. Armstrong’s novel maps the protagonist Slash Kelashket’s search for his communal self through phases of alcoholism, drug addiction, imprisonment, violence, political activism and ultimately to his realization that solution to the Indian problems lies in the traditional medicine ways of the Okanagan people and his recognition of his androgynous tribal self. Slash is a historical fiction situated in the project of Native resistance in Canada.

Lee Maracle’s I Am Woman (1988), a collection of autobiographical essays, articulates the systemic oppression resultant of colonialism on the Metis, especially women, in Canada. Maracle’s autobiographical narrative is vastly different from Maria
Campbell's *Half breed*, in that it is a conglomeration of voices which merge into the communal voice of the author. Maracle's autobiography which is more theoretical and fictional as the author herself puts it, emphasizes the need for revisionary history from the Native perspective. In charting the trajectory of Metissage in Canada, Maracle's book also enunciates the need for decolonization/narrative Maracle had published another work entitled *Bobby Lee: The Indian Rebel* before the publication of *I Am woman*.

The other significant North American works by Native women that have won considerable recognition include Linda Hogan's (Chickassaw) *Mean Spirit* (1990) which describes the effects of the oil boom of the 1920s on an Oklahoma Indian community and *That Horse* (1985) a collection of Short stories, Janet Campbell Hale’s (a Coeur d’Alene/Kootenai Indian) *The Jailing of Cecelia Capture* (1985), *Owl’s Song* (1974), *Blood Lines: Odyssey of a Native Daughter* (1994); Ruby Slipperjack’s (Metis, Canadian) *Honor the Sun* (1987) and *Silent Words* (1992), Joan Crate’s (Metis Canadian) *Breathing water* (1990), Beth Brants’ (Metis, Canadian) *Mohawk Trail* (1985) and so on.

The considerable amount of Native women’s writing that has been emerging in the recent times indicates the fact that the Native women have taken the responsibility of representing themselves through their narratives, freeing themselves from the semiotic control imposed by the colonizers.

**Native Writing: Aesthetics, World View, Narrative Patterns:**

In the previous section, an attempt has been made to chart the course of Native voice especially women’s voice from told-to-the person narratives to told-to-the-page narratives. It would be highly worthwhile now to look at the major themes, characteristic traits, and narrative patterns in Native works which do not conform to the Western notions of genre and often employ narrative forms which violate the conventional Western generic patterns.

Paula Gunn Allen in her “Introduction” to the anthology of Native Women writing, *Spider Woman’s Granddaughters* (1989) elucidates the differences between
Native and Western aesthetics which occur due to the differences in the world views of the two cultures. Allen mentions that the Natives do not believe in genres prescribed in/by the western tradition. Native Stories are “cyclical” and often mix poetry and prose in their narrative structure. The European tradition, on the other hand, believes in the purity of genres. Inter-mixing of genres like the intermingling of races, classes or genders is vehemently discouraged by the critics and scholars who rigidly insist on generic classification. The European tradition also disdains mixing levels of diction, tends to be purist in its approach and often attempts to classify writing according to the norms formulated by Aristotle. The European values of individualism permeate their notions of the protagonist (“a single individual who wreaks his will upon one or more hapless groups”) and plot structure (which reflect the conflict, crisis and resolution in the protagonist’s life).

Allen maps the Native tradition which is contrapuntally opposed to the Western one in its world view, aesthetics, plot structures, themes and in its holistic outlook:

Novels are long stories that weave a number of elements into a coherent whole and in their combining, make significance of human and non human life. Traditional Native novels are identified as “cycles” referring to a number of stories that cluster around a more or less central theme and often feature particular characters and events. Indian ethos is neither individualistic nor conflict centred, and the unifying structures that make the oral traditional coherent are less a matter of character, time and setting than the coherence of common understanding derived from the ritual tradition that members of a tribal unit share (Allen 1983 4 – 6).

The Native narratives incorporate elements of ritual and ceremonial traditions of particular tribes where the communal experience of the tribe rather than individual experiences is foregrounded. In fact, individualism is often portrayed as a negative trait.

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7 Allen cites the Yellow Woman stories and other stories of Keres Pueblo as examples for traditional Native narratives or “cycles”
Native narratives reflect the tribal worldview which is based on kinship ties between human beings as well as between human and non-human worlds. All beings in this universe are perceived as vital, intelligent and self-aware and the Native aesthetic position involves honoring the propriety and kinship ties in this cyclical universe. Allen elucidates this:

Right relationship, or right kinship is fundamental to Native aesthetics. Right relationship is dictated by custom within a given tribal or cultural group but everywhere it is characterized by considerations of proportion, harmony balance and communality. ... Tribal art of all kinds embodies the principle of kinship rendering the beautiful in terms of connectedness of elements in harmonious, balanced, respectful proportion of each and any to all-in-All. For Indians, relationships are based on commonalties of consciousness, reflected in thought and behavior, blood is only a reflection of that central definitive bond. Indian aesthetics are spiritual at base – harmony, balance, relationship and dignity are its informing principles (Allen 1983: 9 – 10).

The themes that frequently occur in Native women’s stories include cultural and political enslavement resultant of colonialism, in its various forms – jails, boarding schools, reservation experiences, abduction, war and so on. Allen identifies the underlying theme in most of the stories, as forced separation, signifying the loss of self and loss of personal meaning. “Separation as loss (rather than a saturation and liberation) is a theme found all over Native America in both pre-contact and modern forms, and is particularly central to Native women’s stories in both their told-to-the people and told-to-the-page modes” (Allen 1983: 8).

All the texts selected for analysis in the present study deal with the theme of separation and loss of self/identity in one way or the other. The texts selected include Leslie Marmon Silko’s Ceremony (1977), Paula Gunn Allen’s The Woman Who Owned the Shadows (1983), Louise Erdrich’s Tracks (1988), (Native American), Jeanette

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8 Tribal kinship consists not only of human beings but also the supernaturals, spirit people, animal people of all varieties, the thunders, snows, rains, rivers, lakes, hills, mountains, fire, water and plants (Allen 1983:10)
Armstrong's *Slash* (1985) and Beatrice Culleton’s *April Raintree* (1985), Lee maracle’s *I Am Woman* (1988) (Native Canadian) The texts selected represent a cross section of contemporary Native women’s fiction in United States and Canada and echo the historical/narrative concerns of Native Women in North America Although most of the North American tribes do not recognize boundaries or appellations of nationality imposed by the colonizer/mainstream culture, for the sake of convenience in textual analysis (since the texts reflect the specific colonial milieu in which they were created), I have tried to club the Native American texts together on the one hand, and the Native Canadian texts on the other The Tribal affiliations of the authors as well as the recognition accorded by various Native critics and scholars for the texts have also been taken into account in the process of selection of material for the present study Leslie Silko and Paula Gunn Allen are Laguna Pueblo writers and they employ the Laguna Oral tradition in their fiction Louise Erdrich is a Turtle Mountain Chippewa who employs the culture hero/trickster motif in her text. All the Native American texts employ myths and legends from the respective Oral traditions as the Grand narrative for the contemporary stories In the Native Canadian texts, on the other hand, there is no overt reference to any specific oral tradition Lee Maracle and Beatrice Culleton are Metis and Jeanette Armstrong is an Okanagan full blood *Ceremony* and *The Woman Who Owned the Shadow* are fictions, which make use of the quest motif. So do *April Raintree* and *Slash* which employ the first person confessional mode. *Tracks* has a bi-polar narrative and *I Am Woman* is an auto biographical work.

In the present study, the emphasis is on the construction of history through fiction in the post modern milieu Mikhail Bakhtin’s concept of ‘polyphony’ is employed to decode the expressed/suppressed historical concerns of Native writers – Silko, Allen, Erdrich, Culleton, Armstrong and Maracle. Polyphony here refers to the polarized/polemicized voices in their texts i.e., the historical/narrative concerns in their fiction The various voices in the text – traditionalist, assimilationist/white, and the textual polemics and Native woman’s voice will be analyzed in detail in the four core chapters The study is divided into six chapters in the manner of traditional oral narratives where the four parts/chapters represent the four cardinal directions and the introduction
and conclusion represent the directions above and below. The chapterization is done in a cyclical manner with narrative threads weaving and interweaving, intended to suggest the cyclical view of the universe that Natives believe in. In the four core chapters, there is bound to be a disparity in the analysis of texts, more space will be devoted to the American texts due to their structural/thematic density.

The theoretical framework for the present study includes the works of Paula Gunn Allen, Arnold Krupat, Lee Maracle, Julia V. Emberley and other critics and scholars on Native studies. The overall skeleton as far as the present study goes is provided by the concepts of Mikhail Bakhtin. Bakhtinian framework is used in identifying the various voices in the text and in the chapterization. The four core chapters have different theoretical frames. The second chapter employs the works of Native critics like Paula Gunn Allen, Rayna Green, William Bevis and others. The third chapter relies on the colonial critics Frantz Fanon, Homi Bhabha and colonial narratives of Lord Gray, the Missionary narratives, government policies/documents and so on. The fourth chapter which identifies the polemics and construction of history makes use of the theories of Bakhtin, Hayden White, Julia V. Emberley, Barbara Godard, Linda Hutecheon and others in its re-enunciation of the problematic of history in the post modern milieu. The post colonial theories enunciated by Ashcroft, Gareth and Tiffin in their works, Homi Bhabha’s concepts of interstitial space and hybridity, Paula Gunn Allen’s term cosmogyny, Bakhtinian concept of mediation and Arnold Krupat’s notion of the Synecdochic self punctuate the processes and problematic of construction of identity(narratives) by Native Women in the fifth chapter. The critical insights from the works of Trinh T. Minh-ha, Julia Emberley, and others will be employed in a significant manner in enunciating the concerns of identity and representation in this chapter. In selecting the theoretical framework, utmost care has been taken not to impose White/European theories which will affect violence on the Native texts, their concerns or worldviews. In the next few lines, a brief appraisal of the semiotic reproductions of the Native in white narratives and movies will be provided in order to facilitate a better understanding of the concerns put forth at the beginning of this chapter.
Mainstream Perspectives on Native ‘Other’: -

The mainstream culture, ever since contact, has constructed Native to suit its own ends. The popular Westerns – novels and movies, often perpetrate the dictum ‘The only Good Indian is a Dead Indian’, a view corroborated by the early settler’s narratives. The Natives have been the victims of fantasies of wish fulfillment for the settler often reflected in their representations as the vanishing race found in the works of popular Western writers like Louis L’Amour, Zane Grey and others and even in books by classical American writers like James Fenimore Cooper. Popular American movies like The Riders of the Lost Arc, A Man Called Horse, The Last of the Mohicans disseminate the image of the vanishing Native, or the savage exotic other.

Natives have functioned as a source of fantasy for many North American writers like Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (“Song of Hiawatha”), Mark Twain, Walt Whitman, Margaret Atwood, Dougless Barbar, Leonard Cohen, Marian Engel, Robert Kroetsch, Margaret Laurence, Timothy Findley, David Williams and many others. Margery Fee explains the complicated thought process behind such representations of Natives in white narratives.

A complicated process, simultaneously a confession and a denial of guilt – an identification and a usurpation – ensue when white writers choose Native people as literary material. The moral unease that marks many contemporary texts is illustrated by Andrew Susnaki’s comment on this difficulty. Susnaki feels “a vaguely divided... guilt for what happened to the Indian... and guilt (also) because to feel this guilt is a betrayal of what you ethnically are – the son of a homesteader and his wife, who must be rightfully honored in one’s own mythology” (Fee 1987:15).

Terry Goldie has identified two major stereotypes in his analysis of the image of indigene in white narratives – Fear and temptation – the male native as the ferocious warrior and the native woman as the representative of earthly sensuality that would lead the white man to realms of sensual ecstasy and both these images are perceived as necessary in the settlers attempts to go native.
Karl May's stories have managed to create a romantic stereotype of the Indian as 'Noble Savage' particularly in Germany. The ever increasing German scholarship in Native Studies indicate an unconscious desire/identification with the romantic stereotype probably Native has thus functioned in one way or other as a fetish in White narratives. Margarite Fee elucidates the functional importance of Native characters in white fictions.

Typically, a white speaker or main character is confused and impelled by a strong desire to know about the past personal, familial, native, or national. The confusion is resolved through the relationship with an object, image, plant, animal or person associated with Native people. Occasionally, the relationship is with a real native person. The resolution is often a quasi-mystical vision of, or identification with, Natives, although occasionally it simply takes the form of psychological or creative break through. Initially, the subject is approached rationally, even forensically, but the conclusion is poetic, emotional often and rather mystical. The movement from observer to participant, outsider to insider, immigrant to "native", historian to mythmaker is often commented on specifically. This pattern may be so ubiquitous because it allows for the fulfilment of several ideological functions simultaneously. First, it focuses on the identity quest of the bourgeois individual so crucial to western literature. It allows for the white "literary land claim," analogous to the historical territorial take – over usually implicit or explicit in the text. And it allows for a therapeutic meditation on the evil of technology and the good of a life close to nature, the latter offering a temporary inoculation against the former (Fee 1987 16 – 17).

This is true in the case of all the authors mentioned in this section earlier, right from Cooper’s Leather Stocking Tales to the contemporary white novels with Indian themes.⁹

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⁹ A La Vonne Brown Ruoff furnishes the details of the works that deal with the Image of Indian in his Bibliographic Review on Native Writing. Due to constraints of space, the present mapping of the theme is rather sketchy and provides only certain common patterns in works by white authors.
Narrative Threads: A Resume

The previous section has briefly outlined the mainstream perceptions on the Natives that recur in white narratives. The Natives have, as pointed out by Galeno, been always regarded as objects of history. In the present study, an attempt is being made to analyze the historical/narrative concerns of Native women in/through their fictions.

The trajectory of Native voice from told-to-the-person to told-to-the-page narratives, the characteristics features of Native writing as a genre, the description of the texts selected for study, the criteria for selection of the texts and a brief appraisal of the semiotic reproductions of the Natives have formed the purview of Chapter I, Introduction: Mapping the Voice.

Chapter II: Voice of Tradition: Grandmothers'/Grandfather's Lineage analyzes tradition as a presence in the Native Women's texts. It elucidates the importance of Native Oral tradition/religion as the grand narrative for contemporary Native Women's stories; the relevance of myths, legends and lores in structuring their world view and the presence of grandmother/grandfather as the source of stories, in transmitting history as memory. The chapter which employs the Oral tradition approach will enunciate how the voice of tradition or traditionalism as a Native perspective polemicizes issues like (hi)story telling while positing Orality as remembered history. The chapter will emphasize the presence of Grandmother/tradition in all the texts and chart the differences between the American and Canadian Native texts.

Chapter III: The White/Assimilationist Voice: The Civilizing Argument traces the trajectory of colonial discourse, its presence as white/assimilationist voice in Native texts under study. The white world view; the genesis of the civilizing argument through missionary narratives and government documents, the colonizer's attempts to negate/erase Native cultures/identities through semiotic control by way of stereotypification and white education system which foster colonial binaries and the presence of civilizing argument as assimilationist voices in the texts will form the
purview of this chapter. The chapter employs the theories of Frantz Fanon and Homi Bhabha to elucidate the ambivalence of the colonial narratives/discourse.

Chapter IV: **Polemics of Voices: Historical/Narrative Tones** will map the processes of construction of revisionary/alternate histories by Native Women in/through their stories. The chapter while elucidating the problematic of historical construction in the post modern milieu will highlight the polemics in the historical and narrative tones in the texts, the processes of mediation/negotiation/translation and the trajectory of a feminine alternate/revisionary history and its inscription as her stories after a brief elucidation of the similarities in of historical and fictional narratives.

Chapter V: **Her/My Voice: Interstitial Space, Hybridity and Native Women's Stories** will discuss the texts/stories from a post colonial theoretical terrain, keeping in view their hybridity in occupying an interstitial space, the role of story telling in effecting decolonization; the process of mediation, the presence of what Arnold Krupat Calls "Synecdochic Self" in both American and Canadian texts and the location of the Native woman writer's voice in the collective women's voice. The Chapter which deals with the process of identity/voice construction in a specific female context will conclude with a reiteration of the role of writing in controlling the image making process and the power of words/narrative in effecting decolonization.

Chapter VI: **Summing Up: Weaving the Voice**, which employs the analogy of weaving, will thread the various voices in the texts. The chapter while providing a review of the previous chapters will stress the emergence of Native women writing as a genre, the cyclical worldview which characterizes Native narratives and the rationale behind the present study. Further areas in Native Writings that require-in-depth interrogation and the nature of interventions required in these areas will also be briefly outlined.