Chapter I

Introduction

The basic pattern in the first half of the Twentieth Century for Native studies in Canada was that scholars went up to Canada from the U.S. to work on occasional research projects in Canada and then published most of their results in the U.S. Canada within the sphere of American anthropology at the time so that, for example, George Dawson of the Geological Survey of Canada was on the original executive of the American Anthropological Association. The American Museum of Natural History in New York funded the Jesup Expedition at the turn of century which brought about two dozen anthropologists over several years to study the British Columbia coast Indians. Of course, many of those scholars were still close to their European heritage. Franz Boas, who worked among the Inuit and the Kwakiutl, was German and most of his students who worked in Canada were also Germans, such as Edward Sapir the linguist who directed anthropology at the Geological Survey of Canada, Alfred L. Kroeber who did research among the Gros Ventres, and Robert H. Lowie who published on the Assiniboin and required his graduate students at Berkeley to be able to read German.

In an earlier time Aurel Krause did research on the B.C. coast in 1880 with the support from the Bremen (Germany) Geographical
Society and published a monograph on the Tlingit. The French heritage was strong among several early ethnologists: the explorer Gabriel Sagard who described the Huron; Lucien Adam who researched the Cree and Ojibwa languages; the missionary Emile Petitot who worked among the Chipewyan, Hare, Inuit, and Kutchin; the missionary Adrien Morrice who did ethnography, history, and linguistics among the Dene, particularly the Carrier; and Marius Barbeau, born in Quebec, studied the classics, attended Oxford, and worked out of the National Museum on the Haida, Huron, Iroquois, and other cultures. There are also a few cases of researchers who have come from Europe to work in Canada, but have kept up their old contacts and sometimes published in Europe. Ludger Muller-Wille in Geography at McGill, for example, has articles in both the German volumes on Ethnicity in Canada and North American Studies. Ted Brasser, of the Museum of Man in Ottawa, originally came from Leiden, Netherlands. Now the Europeans are organizing an occasional conference on American Indian studies in Europe. A by-product of one of these conferences is an anthology published in English called North American Indian Studies: European Contributions, organized and edited by Pieter Hovens (1981) of The Hague, Netherlands.

Geographical zone to which many of these people immigrated is the area where Indian-White relations are the worst: Minnesota and
North and South Dakota in the U.S. and the adjoining Canadian provinces to the north of Saskatchewan and Manitoba.

The Inuit population in Canada has grown rapidly over the past few decades. The estimated 28,000 Inuit today number more than triple their 1950 population. Inuktut is still the language of the Arctic settlements and is being taught to children in the schools. Two written forms of Inuktut, one based on syllabics and the other using the Roman alphabet, were introduced by the missionaries and are still in widespread use. (McMillan 272)

While investigating the study of the impact of colonization on the traditional roles and status of Native women in Canada, one is immediately struck by the scarcity of material available, and the diverse interpretations of it. Considerable controversy exists with regard to the position of Native women in pre-contact societies, the nature and effect of White influence, and the evolution of Native women's roles over time. Yet the possibility of reconstructing traditional Native social organizations is limited by two considerations: the rapid cultural and economic disruption of Native societies due to trade and colonization, and the patriarchal, ethnocentric biases of early observers.

To understand Native women's changing roles, one should deconstruct the male-centred, Euro-Canadian interpretation of history, clearing the ground for a perspective that begins from the standpoint of
Native women. Native ways of life were influenced by the White man even before the fur traders and missionaries arrived to record them. The replacement of stone, bone and antler tools by ironware affected a revolution in the economic life of the Atlantic tribes, and disrupted the balance of power.

Native culture and Native society were in a state of distress and disintegration by the time they were first described. Early accounts of the position of Indian women in their cultures were written by fur traders and missionaries, and they speak as much about the ideological perspectives of the authors as they do about the subject at hand. Unfortunately, Native women have left no written accounts of their status and the impact of colonization on their lives. One can, however, examine their status and changing roles in the myths, oral history, and materials written from the viewpoint of contemporary Native women. The position of women in Eskimo culture is a controversial issue for present day Inuit women. Some accounts of westward expansion manage to achieve a strange mixture of sexism and jingoism.

The Canadian government's policy toward Aboriginal people has followed the dual goal of protection and assimilation. This means that aboriginals would be protected against negative aspects of Canadian society while at the same time exposed to the White social components which would allow them to take on the values and norms of Canadian society and result in their assimilation. However, over the past half
century, Aboriginal people have become more "Pan-Indian", more nationalist and more militaristic in their quest for finding their niche in Canadian society. The central component of this movement has been sovereignty recognition by Canadians and ultimately the recognition of an Aboriginal nation state.

As we conclude the 20th century, the Aboriginal people find themselves in the midst of a struggle to determine their own fate, to establish self government in order to achieve their own goals and objectives and to develop a more positive identity and self esteem.

At Canada’s birth, the British North American Act (now known as the Constitution Act, 1867) assigned the federal government responsibility for ‘Indians, and Lands reserved for Indians.’ Treated as wards of federal government, Indians were placed under separate legislation (the Indian Act, 1876), which put them in a different legal category from all other Canadians. Later, as Canada’s attention finally turned to its vast northern regions, the Inuits were also recognized as falling directly under federal jurisdiction. Two other categories, the Métis and “non-status Indians,” consist of individuals who consider themselves to be Canadian natives but lack any recognition as such by the federal government. Consequently, they have been denied
special rights and receive most services from the provinces in the same manner as other Canadians. (McMillan 287)

The past failure of the federal government to design and enforce an Aboriginal policy which provides for self-government and the general enhancement of Aboriginal quality of life reflects a hidden agenda. This unspoken agenda includes the attenuation of Aboriginal rights, particularly in the area of self-government, as well as continued control over their destiny. As Kulschyski (1994) points out, Canadian law has acted as a vehicle of tantalization for Aboriginal people. Moreover, politicians have argued that any self-government by Aboriginals must be based upon the principle of delegated authority or legislative authority, either of which can unilaterally be withdrawn by the Crown. Nevertheless, the federal government established a Royal Commission on Aboriginal People to give them direction as to how best the Aboriginal people can be integrated into Canadian society as we enter the 21st century. The Royal Commission is to be the crowning achievement of the federal government's current Aboriginal policy and provide the context and "will" to create a structure which would integrate Aboriginals into Canadian society, establish a basis for Aboriginal self-government and allow them to achieve a quality of life equal to other Canadians.

The problems facing aboriginal peoples in Canada are very serious. Over the years, many individuals, groups and state agencies
have attempted to come to terms with them. They have offered various analyses of what they see as the main problem, its causes and possible solutions. One recent attempt in this direction was the Report of the Special Committee on Indian Self-Government in Canada. Commonly known as the Penner Report, the document represents a significant advance over previous attempts to deal with problems facing aboriginal peoples.

Although Canada is one of the world's most secure and prosperous countries, its Indigenous peoples who make up nearly 3 percent of its population and who form the numerical majority in the northern half of its territory are significantly disadvantaged.

Canada’s Native history goes back to that earliest encounter between the Europeans and the indigenous peoples of the Americas, an encounter that was repeated throughout the New World. In Canada, it was an encounter first between the French and the indigenous or Native people, then between the English and the Native people. It was an encounter which has ramified throughout our history, and the consequences of which are felt today. In Canada the metropolis' requirements for energy and resources are bringing industrial activity to communities which may not be prepared to cope with the impact. These communities are usually Native communities. These are not simply clashes between industry and Indians, but rather they are clashes between the Native people and the dominant society.
The recent clashes of culture and values that have occurred in Canada between the dominant society and the Native peoples have forced reconsideration by Canadians of the assumptions by which they live and of the means by which they hope to prosper in future. With the advance of industry to the frontier at a time when indigenous peoples’ ideas of self-determination are emerging in contemporary forms, these age-old questions of the relationship between dominant societies cast in the European mould and indigenous peoples confront us again.

The Dene, the Métis and the Inuit are advancing proposals for two new political units in the Northwest Territories. Their proposals related to aboriginal representations in new political institutions and aboriginal rights in all spheres are still inaccessible. Whatever their outcome be, they are evidence of a renewed determination and a new capacity on the part of Native peoples to establish a distinct and contemporary place for themselves in Canadian life.

The Native people are now a political force to be reckoned with in the North and in the country. The emergence of Native claims should not surprise anyone. After years of poor achievement in schools, after years of living on the fringe of an economy that has no place for them as workers or consumers, and without the political power to change these things, the Native people have now decided that they want to substitute self-determination for enforced dependency. The White’s tendency to dismiss Native culture has led them to dismiss the notion of
Native claims. There, certainly, must be a change in attitude toward Native history, Native culture and Native rights.

Native claims, whether founded on aboriginal rights or treaty rights, begin with the land; but they do not end there. They extend to renewable and nonrenewable resources, education, health and social services, public order and the future shape and composition of political institutions. The proposals that Native people are making are far-reaching. They should not, however, be regarded as a threat to established institutions, but as an opportunity to affirm the commitment to the human rights of indigenous minorities. Settlement of their claims ought to offer the Native people a whole range of opportunities: the strengthening of the hunting, fishing and trapping economy where that is appropriate; the development of the local logging and lumbering industry; development of the fishing industry and of recreation and conservation.

In British Columbia a shift in governmental attitudes and policies can be observed within the last decade. Sometimes concessions have been made, agreements reached, even changes in governmental arrangements decided upon, which profoundly affect Native communities and which serve the same purposes as Native claims. In 1975, the Government of British Columbia agreed that the Nishga Indians of the Nass Valley were entitled to their own school district. Formerly, they had been included in the Terrace School District. As a
minority within that district they had little or no control over the schooling of their children. Now that a new district consisting of their four villages along the Nass has been carved out of the Terrace district, they can adopt their own curriculum, hire their own teachers, etc. They have begun to implement a bilingual, bicultural programme in the schools.

In this way they are able to ensure that their children grow up knowing about their own people and their own past as well as knowing all that they need to know in order to function in the dominant society. Earlier this year the Province of British Columbia awarded a tree farm licence to the Stuart-Trembleur band in northern British Columbia. In the past, tree farm licences have been granted only to forest companies. The licence gives to the licensee the right to cut timber within the licensed area, to saw it and to sell it; the licensee is responsible for fire control and is obliged to re-plant the forest on a perpetual yield basis, etc. The Stuart-Trembleur licence, the first of its kind, gives the band an expanded resource base, and the opportunity to develop its own resources and to provide employment for band members.

A few assumptions addressing the Native-White conflict in Canada should be detailed to begin with. Canada is a multinational state founded on an historical interrelationship among Anglophone, Francophone and First Nations populations. These may, in their diversity, be acceptably referred to as founding nations. This fact explains why Canadians regard their country as a multinational state, as
opposed to simply a multicultural one. Past negotiations in relation to treaties and other agreements among these three groups have not led to a situation wherein Anglophones or Francophones have sincerely attempted to create an “equal-status within Canada” relationship with the First Nations. As witnessed by most scholars, the history of these relations did not create conditions conducive to mutual trust between the Aboriginal and Francophone/Anglophone peoples. It would not be inappropriate to suggest that, to a significant degree, it created a situation of mutual distrust. Also axiomatic is the assumption that First Nations were not sufficiently historically engaged in the constitutional process as to see the evolution of this process so as equivalent to the evolution of a social contract with Aboriginal Canadians, as did Francophones and Anglophones.

In the context of the above assumptions, and at the risk of oversimplification, for purposes of international human rights law, the following questions concerning Aboriginal Canadians can be succinctly posed: A) what are the present day human rights of Aboriginal Canadians, given that in the past they suffered from attempts at genocide, ethnocide, segregation and institutionalized racism. B) What rights do Aboriginal Canadians enjoy, given that their exclusion from full participation in the early Canadian constitutional processes has created a present day situation wherein, they find themselves grossly unequal and disadvantaged in most societal sectors. It appears that, a significant
extent, the social contract that exists between Aboriginal and other Canadians may be impaired or uncertain.

The response of international human rights law to similar situations has been reparations, such as compensation, restitution and restoration, special rights, and special measures (popularly known as affirmative action). Initially, these remedies came into existence not because they were prescribed in international human rights law, but because in the search for solutions to similar ethnic conflicts, states have, found that only such approaches are serviceable. This leads one to suggest that international law results from international customs, state practices and international consensus, not vice versa. Thus, before adducing the international legal basis for the Aboriginal Canadian human right to affirmative action it is practicable to denote important reasons why, apart from these being rights in international law and serviceable for conflict resolution, Canada and Canadians would want to see such rights recognized for Aboriginal Canadians.

The Canadian government, however, always favours the constitutional domestic route. This imperative of submitting the Aboriginal treaties to exclusively constitutional interpretation without appropriate international legal considerations, limits the usefulness of such treaties for dealing with many of the present day socio-economic and political difficulties arising from the government's past gross violations of Aboriginal human rights.
Next and perhaps most important, is the sanctity of democracy and the democratic process in Canadian society. Canadian institutions, culture and governmental instruments view the democratic concept as the ideal framework for conflict resolution especially for maximizing individual freedom, economic developmental potential and fundamental equality. This means that above all, Canadians wish Canada to remain, for all practical purposes, a democratic state. Moreover, it is far from certain that, given its socio-political institutional history and its present political organization, Canada could, without democracy, create mechanisms for resolving conflicts to the degree necessary to remain one state or two associated states.

Cultural integrity implicit in ethnic identity includes and transcends distinctive food, dress, music, ceremonies and festivities. It is a way of life emanating from an entire history which permeates the consciousness of its members. The claim, therefore, that a group can retain its ethnic identity and still participate to the full in national life, is a spurious one. Not only is it vague- full participation and ethnic identity are defined- it is also a false statement. (Itwarz 16) Therefore, regardless of whether an uninformed backlash against human rights for Aboriginal Canadians may exist, it appears that there is a possibility of seriously damaging the democratic conflict resolution model because the Aboriginal Canadian question is unlikely to the
Whites. The democratic model and Canadian national security interests are probably mutually interdependent. However, because Aboriginal Canadians are national minorities, nations/peoples within the state, the question of minority/Aboriginal rights emerges along with the question of individual rights: the question of the rights of peoples as well as that of individuals. Thus, to meet this challenge in multinational Canada, pluralistic democracy must emerge along with majority democracy. Given the already significant backlash under the banner of majority democracy, it may be only through education and political mobilization for pluralistic democracy that the Canadian democratic ideal and confidence in these ideals will not fall victim to government/Aboriginal conflict resolution efforts.

Canadian arguments for coexistence and national policies that take into account its own multicultural diversity may be translated into arguments of feminism, for the power politics of imperialism and of gender have much in common. The nature of power relationships between the sexes and the social and literary consequences of this have been brought to public attention by the feminist movement, though the long history of such relationships has already been written into women’s literature preceding the last twenty five years. Contemporary Canadian women writers are aware of themselves as inheritors of a female literary tradition which includes both European and Canadian
predecessors. Women’s writing has always been characterized by the urge to challenge the up-growing anti-feministic work.

The Canadian women’s fictions are in no sense theoretical statements about feminism, though they are all written out of a conviction of the worth of women and the necessity for women to be critically conscious of their own roles in conventional social structures. Novels and short stories do what theory cannot do, for they deal with particulars of individual experience, problematizing theoretical issues by writing in the instabilities which are the very conditions of knowing.

Many of these women’s stories about the lives of girls and women between the 1950s and the 1980s are concerned with exploration and survival, crossing boundaries, challenging limits and glimpsing new prospects. Such a description makes them sound like stories of male heroism. The main reason for this difference is that heroism is redefined in these fictions, for these are stories about inner adventures which are often invisible to other people. Many of these novels have women writers as protagonists engaged in a struggle with language and inherited literary conventions to find more adequate ways of telling about women’s experiences, fighting their way out of silence to project more authentic images of how women feel and what they do.

In the novels female encounters with high politics are never portrayed naturally developing ones.... Women come into
contact with the state abruptly, when something out of the ordinary occurs or in times of crisis. None of the Characters initially seeks out high politics on her own volition. Many, like Atwood’s Rennie and Marshall’s Ursa, do their best to avoid them. Only a minority directly choose political action themselves; most have politics thrust upon them. (Brownley 47)

To read Canadian women’s fiction of the past twenty years is to become aware of how a cultural map of Canadianness exceeds geographical limits, for national boundaries have to be extended at least imaginatively to accommodate the recognition of Canadians’ multicultural inheritance. In an analogous way, traditional structures of patriarchal authority are shown to be in need of revision if women’s alternative views are to be taken into account. The patterns of resistance that emerge to externally imposed systems of classification and definition are both characteristically Canadian and characteristically feminine. The rehabilitation of the feminine is an important feature of Canadian women writers’ sense of their relation to literary tradition.

While a proliferation of texts by Native authors and the increasing attention their works receive from non-Native academia and the critics may indicate that Native literature is on its way to becoming established in the mainstream, the appropriation issue and the Oka confrontation clearly
demonstrate that there are fundamental rifts between First Nations people and non-Native people in Canada. (Lutz 1)

Women are deeply implicated in the existing structures of the social world as mothers, daughters, lovers and wives, so that it is a paradox of most women’s position that any search for new ways of reconstructing their lives and their stories has to acknowledge their genuine need for affective relations and responsibilities at the same time, as they register resistance to such constraints. Women’s fiction is insistently double in the recognition of contradictions within the self and the perceptions of incongruity between social surfaces and what is hidden beneath them. It is interesting to find gothic fantasy, that old devious literature of female dread and desire, surviving in the fiction of Atwood, Munro and Hebert, updated certainly but still retaining its original charge of mystery and malignancy. In all these stories there is an intricate balance between the urge for self-discovery and women’s self-doubts, between the celebration of new freedoms and a sense of precariousness. Where such tensions form not only the material but also the method of story-telling, woman’s narratives are seen to share many of the characteristic features of modernist and postmodernist writing as it has developed since the 1920s.

In these mixed fictions realism is often disrupted by fantasy, and fragmentation and multiplicity coexist with moments of vision and order. They all have their moments of unity where the protagonist feels in
serene possession of herself, though such unity quickly disintegrates into ambiguity and contradiction. However, such holistic moments are always written in, so generating the energy for the protagonist to go on celebrating the triumph of the female imagination through art.

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In the 1970s Native authors began writing down their own histories and expressing their views on Canadian society. But even seminal books like Harold Cardinal’s *The Unjust Society* (1969), Maria Campbell’s *Halfbreed* (1973), or Howard Adams *Prison of Grass* (1975) were not considered as a part of Canadian Literature in the mainstream. Native women writers seriously scrutinized and finally fought the non-Native editing of First Nations literature.

We could simply say that Native literature is literature produced by Natives. This is a competent enough definition in that it covers both contemporary written literature and
oral tribal literature, and, at the same time, insists that Native literature is literature produced by Natives and not by non-Natives, recognizing that being Native is a matter of race rather than something more transitory such as nationality. (King 10)

In the 1980s Native women in Canada began writing themselves into Canadian letters. Beatrice Culleton’s *In Search of April Raintree* (1983), Jeannette Armstrong’s *Slash* (1985), Ruby Slipper Jack’s *Honour the Sun* (1987), and Joan Crate’s *Breathing Water* (1989) are the first novels by a new generation of authors addressing the lives of Métis and Indian people in Canada today.

In their novels Atwood, Marshall, Gordimer, and Drabble are not very sanguine about the three narratives of contemporary feminist theorists. They reverse theoretical valorization of the Outsider Narrative, largely ignore the Coalition Narrative, and smash the Salvation Narrative of Politics. (Brownley 64)

The Outsider Narrative exists in hard and soft versions. Hard versions would include most gender-separatist politics. In soft versions isolation is primarily psychological. A variation of the soft version occurs in the widespread emphasis of contemporary theorists on self-reflexive politics. A combination of consciousness-raising and social activism,
self-reflective-politics focus on taking political action while simultaneously interrogating all such actions. Among other things it addresses feminist difficulties with reform politics. In whatever version, the Outsider Narrative has been a major influence on feminist theory in almost every area.

The present research project aims at analyzing the problems faced by Native and non-Native women in the contextual world. The feminine self is an enigma to the male gender. Positively; it is clear that the male personae elapse the feministic expression in their diction. According to them, it is an abuse to think of portraying the male arrogance towards the female. The women writers bring out the shameful, brutal activities of the men in their writings. The root cause of the women's power is assumed in the writers' aspiration towards womanhood. It is elite to elucidate womanhood in an effusive way in the hands of a woman writer, as they plead towards the self challengingly. However, the way of writing differs, as they reflect their personal self in many aspects. The mere admiration of women's writings tempt the women to have an awareness of the injustice done to them by the male dominated society and literature.

The male writers can create female characters, feministic expression, in an elusive way. The feminine self is misjudged or biased in the hands of a male writer. The egoist impudence conceals the feministic interpretation in a male author. Such readings are often anti-
woman. Today the leading role played by the women in the literacy world is assumed by their active writing. Feminism is sporadic and even erratic when exposed by a male persona. Male criteria are invalid according to feminists. Divergences between male writer and a female writer can create a partial fulfillment in the work.

Mere subjectivism, in the works of the female writers devoid their self more effectively, than what can be produced by male authors. This is because they merge the writings and the personal self together. The criteria, that identity and even gender are socially constructed phenomena and so a difference must be deciphered in them is another feminist position. This research attempts to chart the Canadian women writers’ perception of the woman as the self to provide the socio political climate that supported certain perception and to point out the discrepancy between the ideology of the women writers and the reality of the vast majority of women.

The present researcher compares the works of the Native writers, Maria Campbell and Jeannette Armstrong with those of the Non-Native writers, Margaret Atwood and Alice Munro. Maria Campbell was born in a Métis community in northern Saskatchewan in April, 1940. The proceedings of her life from early childhood to adulthood have been described in her autobiography Halfbreed (1973). It became the smash hit and still is the most important and seminal book authored by a Native person from Canada. Jeannette Armstrong, the first Native
American woman novelist, was born in the Okanagan Reserve near Penticton, British Columbia. Her novels *Slash* and *Whispering in Shadows* are taken up for discussion in this thesis.

Margaret Atwood is a fiction writer, poet, critic, cartoonist, editor, children’s book author, lecturer, teacher and an active participant in literary organizations. Central among her wide-ranging interests is a fascination for storytelling. Her fictions simultaneously tell stories and comment metafictively on the narrative process, engaging readers with a provocative series of questions. Her novels *Surfacing* and *Lady Oracle* are focused in this doctoral thesis work as there are solid illustrations in these two.

For most readers today, Margaret Atwood no longer needs an introduction. A Canadian writer of novels, short fiction, poems, and essays, she is one of the foremost writers in the world. Her works are taught in nearly every English department and in many women’s studies, Canadian studies, postcolonial studies, and even economics, political science, communications, sociology, business, and other courses around the world. (Wilson 11)

Canadian writer Alice Munro was born in 1931 and grew up in Wingham, South West Ontario and has been writing short fiction since 1950. Her works comprise collections of short stories, and one,
published as a novel, is actually a set of inter-linked stories which falls between the two genres. Her accessible, moving stories are set in her native Canada, in small, provincial towns like the one in which she grew up, and explore human relationships through ordinary everyday events. Although not necessarily directly autobiographical, they reflect the author's own life experiences, are concerned with women's lives. Her *Dance Happy Shades, Lives of Girls and Women* and *The View from Castle Rock* are interpreted in this dissertation.

It is the special nature of Alice Munro's genius that her readers find aspects of even their most private selves in her fiction, along with all the appropriate social cues that might connect them on a more surface level. She is a subtle and sophisticated stylist: her spare lucid prose leads directly into the narrative reality. (Moss 56)

The present research work analyzes the works of the authors from a social and feministic angle. The researcher proposes to bring out the intense sufferings of the Native women as depicted in the literature, as against the little miseries of the majority women. As Armstrong says, “it’s not dependent on sex, men and women. But currently women, womankind, I guess, has been promoting that thinking”
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