

CHAPTER - 5

MULTICULTURAL AMERICA AS A SAFE SPACE: OTHER DEFINITIONS OF COMMUNITY AND FAMILY WITHIN AMERICA IN FOREST CARTER'S *THE EDUCATION OF LITTLE TREE* AND ERICA JONG'S *OF BLESSED MEMORY*

Once a people are victims, they have to struggle hard to politicize themselves and to be able to break the cycle; to be able to somehow, as they say today, to empower themselves once again, to get back their health and their wholeness. It is made doubly hard by the fact that it was close to us, but we have to pull together the energy to get whole.¹

—Linda Hogan

...immigrants are going to be the new elite in this country. That's because they bear no burden of guilt. Their forefathers didn't steal any Native American land and they never owned slaves. They have perfectly clear consciences.²

— Anne Tyler

In Chapter 4, I have observed how hybrid identities and the shifting paradigm of community defined a New Black Aesthetic in the 90s and were echoed in the Black literature of the millennium. Blacks striving to create their own safe spaces were able to do so within their families and communities. Nevertheless, the pattern of exclusion inherent in the apparently democratic ideal of the American Dream delayed the process of self-actualization for the Black community. It has also been observed how faith in the democratic ideals of America has led to disillusionment and has also caused considerable anguish as Black individuals (especially men) could not benefit from the ideology of 'life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness'³ as promised in the Declaration of Independence. The Blacks had to evolve their own survival strategies which consisted of :— (a) cultural retrieval of their heritage through creative endeavours, (b) healing the wounds and the fractures within the family and (c) constructing individual identities as African Americans. Allegiance to their mythic

past and history, therefore, gained precedence over belief in the protestant, work-ethic oriented ideology of the American Dream. Moreover, the Black American community, because of its reliance on its own history and tribal origin, as well as its willingness to invest in the ethics of care rather than the ethics of material success, was able to re-imagine 'family' and 'community' as safe spaces. It was thus possible for the African Americans to counteract the individualistic excesses of the American Puritan legacy.

Call Jillson has noted in *Pursuing the American Dream: Opportunity and Exclusion over Four Centuries*⁴ that opportunity and exclusion have always constituted the twin facets of the American Dream.⁵ Even though the founding fathers had imagined America to be the city upon the hill, certain issues still remained which belied this ideal of the nation and were especially evident in American policies regarding race and immigration. From the 1970s onwards, the American nation has displayed a culturally pluralistic character. As noted in the last chapter, even Black artists have expanded the Duboisian trope of double consciousness to the New Black Aesthetic to include hybrid identities (which have become an integral part of being an American at the turn of the new millennium). In this multicultural climate, as Bernard Bell has pointed out, the Blacks have become 'agents for change in the identity formation of ethnic Americans'.⁶ Like the Blacks, other ethnic minorities when they articulate their concerns, try to balance assimilation with a staunch ethnic pride, although the three functions (listed above) of cultural retrieval, healing and individual identity formation proceed in different ways. Patricia Hills Collins concludes in *Black Feminist Thought* that individual Black women's stories of survival in Black communities can evolve a dynamic discourse, and pave the way for activism aimed at resolving gender as well as other inequities which all minority groups are subject to.⁷

In this brief chapter I will try to illustrate with examples from Native American and Jewish American literatures their parallel concern with themes of family and community, which often echoes the issues raised in Black American literature, although their responses to the problems may be very different. By entering into such a comparative analysis, I hope to highlight the possibilities of evolving a 'deep, horizontal comradeship'⁸ between groups in a nation. I also wish to examine whether any cultural interaction can exist between these communities, and a mutually beneficial discourse, involving the survival strategies of each, can be adopted by others in the space that multicultural America offers.

Native American Literature :

Native American literature has the same thematic concerns of trying to preserve one's ethnic identity and bear witness to the past and a troubled history that we come across in Black literature. Richard Fleck has noted in his introduction to *Critical Perspectives on Native American Fiction*⁹ the distinctive trope of 'homing in'¹⁰, as developed in Native American literature in opposition to the trope of 'leaving home' that one finds in American mainstream literature. He describes the American Adamic tradition in the following manner:

The individual advances, sometimes at all cost, with little or no regard for family, society, past or place...Movement, isolation, personal and forbidden knowledge, fresh beginnings; the basic ingredients of the American Adam have dominated our art, even if many of our artists are dissenters from mainstream myths of success...In marked contrast, most Native American novels are not 'eccentric', centrifugal, diverging, expanding, but 'in centric', centripetal, converging, contracting. The hero comes home...coming home, staying put, contrasting even what we call 'regressing' to a place, it is a primary mode of knowledge and a primary good.¹¹

Fleck's critique of the characteristic features of American literature, including the protagonists desire to 'advance', can be compared to Morrison's comments on the stereotype of the 'free man'¹² in Black literature, who, according to Morrison, is an extension of the Ulysses hero with his insatiable desire to travel or leave home. The homing in trope is a device to counteract 'the frontier thesis' of Frederick Jackson Turner. 'The Frontier Thesis was put forward by Frederic Jackson Turner who argued that the frontier is seen as the most important single factor in creating a distinctive American character in terms of fashioning individualism ...self-reliance'.¹³ The Frontier Thesis figures prominently in the ideology of success through personal enterprise as enshrined in the American Dream. 'Coming home', for the Native Americans, is an attempt to affirm their culture. Moreover, it functions as a sign of renewed dedication to the family and community.

Joy Harjo, a prominent Native American poet, has described her writing as a means of survival. She remarks in an interview:

I don't believe I would be alive today if it hadn't been for writing. Writing helped me give voice, to turn around a terrible silence that was killing me. And on a larger level, if we, as Indian people...keep silent, then we will disappear at this level of reality.¹⁴

Thus the articulation of one's own identity is as urgent in the Native American community as in Black literature. The allegiance to the tribe and the documentation of survival at personal and communal levels is as important for Native American writers as for Morrison, Walker or Wright. Forest Carter's *The Education of Little Tree*¹⁵ (1976) has just such an agenda as Little Tree falls back upon his Indian ancestry to define himself. The novel combines the coming-of-age narrative with the 'homing in' trope to document the trials of growing up as an Indian boy with a mixed heritage. If the novel is seen as a 'coming of age' narrative, Carter's Little Tree shows amazing

survival skills compared to Toni Morrison's Pecola in *The Bluest Eye*, another novel which was published in the 70s. Perhaps this becomes possible because of the total harmony of gender relations in Little Tree's grandparents' family where he grows up.

Forest Carter's representation of the Native American family and community projects both as safe spaces. There is a relation of harmony between the Native American man and the Native American woman which helps Little Tree to find his identity more easily than a Black child. Although Little Tree grows up in a reservation, he does not encounter the kind of alienation that Pecola is subjected to in Morrison's novel. Paula Gunn Allen has analysed the difference in the Native American male and female writers' perspective as stemming from the traditions of sex-segregated tribes. She remarks:

So many rituals and parts in ritual are gender specific. So if you're drawing from ritual or from the oral tradition or from folklore, the women are going to draw from one set of symbols and narrative structures and the men are going to draw from another one...The women's sphere is not confined simply to babies and menstruation . It's many, many, many things: agriculture, building houses as well as keeping them, creativity in every conceivable respect you can think of, intellectualism, philosophy. But it will be different from the men's way of doing those things....You'll notice some similarities—they are both spiritual, they are both very inclined to use a lot of, let's call it, natural imagery...They are inclined to speak about the family and about the tribe and about Indian people. So they'll do those things in common.¹⁶

As discussed in chapter 3, chapter 4 and in the introduction to this chapter, Patricia Hill Collins has remarked in *Black Feminist Thought* that Black women, if they articulate their stories of survival, can bring about an activism aimed at rectifying gender inequities and healing the community from within. As I have tried to show throughout this thesis, the fictional narratives of Black women writers foregrounding strong female protagonists like Janie (in *Their Eyes were Watching God*), Merle (in *The Chosen Place, the Timeless People*) and Mama Day (in *Mama Day*) are some of

the best examples of stories stressing survival by resisting white oppression and sexism in Black communities, while staying rooted in their domestic ground. Black male writers have always been aware of the social position of Black men as inferior to white men and have therefore worked at creating protagonists in imitation of solitary American heroes. Thus Richard (in *Black Boy*), Kunta (in *Roots*) and Fonny (in *If Beale Street Could Talk*) are all very self-conscious about their individual identities as Black men. They urged the need to rectify models of Black manhood in the social sphere without bothering about the domestic sphere or the healing that is required in the family (at least till the 80s).

In the Native American context, as Gunn Allen's remark ascertains, male and female writers have different sensibilities but their common commitment to the issues of family and tribe make their stories inclusive, rather than sexist or separatist in the way that the stories of Black male or female writers might be). Thus a child like Little Tree can create his survival strategies by remaining rooted in his own family, as both male and female presence are equally visible and palpable in the Native American context. At the beginning of the novel Little Tree learns about the importance of love and understanding in the Indian way.¹⁷ Little Tree describes how his grandparents always affirmed their love towards each other by declaring 'I kin ye'.¹⁸ 'Kin' in the Native American context means understanding. In fact, Little Tree elucidates this further by showing how Indians extended this concept to embrace the meaning of 'kinfolks'. Little Tree remarks:

Grandpa and Granma had an understanding, and so they had a love. Granma said the understanding run deeper as the years went by and she reckined it would get beyond anything mortal folks could think upon or explain. And so they called it 'kin'. Granpa said back before his time "kinfolks" meant any folks that you understood and had an understanding with, so it meant 'loved folks'. But people got selfish, and brought it down to mean just blood relatives, but that actually it was never meant to mean that.¹⁹

Little Tree's remark reveals the potential of Native American culture to prioritize love and understanding in heterosexual relationships. Its emphasis on the importance of kinfolk can be compared to the network of relationships (other than biological) which are subsumed in the category of the Black spirit family. However, the sense of 'kin' as synonymous to understanding equips the Native American better than Blacks to recognize individual needs within the family. Consequently, there are less dysfunctional families arising out of strained intra-familial relationships.

bell hooks concept of 'feminist masculinity'²⁰ can be better realized by the Native American men because of their ability to connect with the women on an emotional level. Also the 'ethics of care-giving',²¹ an integral part of Black Feminist Epistemology, are practiced equally by Native American men and women. The 'love and trouble'²² motif in Black women's blues music does not figure in the Native American context. Black women have maintained the 'love and trouble' tradition due to their belief that the search for a Black man whom they can love would inevitably lead them to trouble. The Black man's anxiety over the dominant role Black women play in the family, to the extent that the men are always marginalized, also does not appear in the Native American context. Since their homes are safer spaces compared to Black families and the world outside, men and women of Native American descent can actually engage in recreating mythic structures, a task which was carried out predominantly by women artists in Black American culture, as Deborah E. Mc Dowell suggests.²³

Little Tree's knowledge of his race and ancestry is initiated by both of his grandparents. He comes to know about the 'Trail of Tears', an event as momentous in Native American history as the Middle Passage in the lives of the Blacks, and this

knowledge reinforces the resilience of his Cherokee spirit. The government soldiers, according to Little Tree, could not steal the 'soul' of the Cherokee:

The soldiers said the wagons would carry the dead, but the Cherokee would not put his dead in the wagons. He carried them. Walking. The little boy carried his dead baby sister, and slept by her at night on the ground. He lifted her in his arms in the morning, and carried her. The husband carried his dead wife. The sons carried his dead mother, his father...They carried them in their arms. And walked. And they did not turn their heads to look at the soldiers, nor to look at the people who lined the sides of the Trail to watch them pass. Some of the people cried. But the Cherokee did not cry...And so they called it the Trail of Tears. Not because the Cherokee cried; for he did not. They called it the Trail of Tears for it sounds romantic and speaks of the sorrow of those who stood by the Trail. A death march is not romantic.²⁴

This passage shows that the Native American continues to relive the emotional scars in the collective racial memory just like the Black man or woman. But it is also a proof of the resilience of the people, and Little Tree's frequent references to the strength of the soul of the Cherokee attest to the precedence of the spiritual over the physical in the 'Indian Way'. It may be concluded that the affirmation of the spiritual aspect is something which makes the Native American community better suited to undertake the task of healing from within.

Deborah E Mc Dowell's example of Black women writers/artists creating their own mythic structures and using language in their distinct way can be extended to the Native American culture.²⁵ In the case of the Native American writers (committed to bear witness), 'reinscription' followed a process of 'reclaim[ing], renam[ing] and reinhabit[ing] the land both literally and metaphorically.'²⁶ In this process of reinscribing the tribal identity and creating new mythic structures, the Native American people have observed their allegiance to the land, as that is the space from which the stories spring. And this concept of the land is far removed from the concept

of America as a city on the hill as imagined by the Puritan founding fathers. Linda Hogan has explained this relationship between Native American stories and the land to which they belong. In an interview with Marilyn Kallet she observes:

We're all affected by place whether we realize it or not. For one thing, all our stories—creation stories, myths, oral traditions—are, in part, about storied land. Stories live in the land. They 'take place' in context with all the rest...For indigenous people, the link between the person and the land is a connecting point, not only with ordinary, daily life, but with the cosmos. It is about relationship. And relationship is the most central part of our lives, our being, not only relationship with other people, but with all things.²⁷

This kinship with the land and its particular geography is evident in Little Tree's education. His growing familiarity with the Appalachian trail, his ability to communicate through the Dog star and to describe the 'talking leaves' of Oak Tree, connect him to the land and exhibit the process of *reinscription and reclaiming of identity* by establishing a relationship with the land and thereby understanding its stories. William Bevis has observed:

Lacking respect for their own civilization, when European whites have imagined a beatific union of 'man and nature' they assumed that the union would look not 'human' but 'natural'; therefore, they perceived the Indians as living in a 'primitive' union of man and nature that was the antithesis of civilization. However, respecting civilization as they knew it, when Native Americans imagined man and nature joined, they assumed the combination would be 'human', 'civilized'. Thus, the variety of personality, motivation, purpose, politics, and conversation familiar to human civilization is found throughout Indian nature... 'Mother Earth' is not wild. Nature is part of the tribe.²⁸

Although the 'homing in' trope is pervasive in Native American writers, as the most significant way in which their civilization recognizes the man-nature relationship, one can conclude that their acknowledgement of 'Mother Earth' enables them to extend the concept of 'home' and 'community' beyond their particular tribe. In fact, Native American literature would perfectly fulfill the requirements of ecocriticism which 'tries to expose culture as an amalgam of cultural products

inspired and connected with the human relationship to the nature world.²⁹ The Native Americans' connectedness to Nature is as significant as the Black people's dependence upon brotherhoods and sisterhoods, for it gives them a sense of communion and bonding enabling them to create a 'circle of love',³⁰ if we choose to use bell hooks' phrase.

According to Patricia Hill Collins, the hegemonic domain of power with its ability to shape consciousness may also create an area of resistance. She describes how Black women's struggle for self-definition has provided a resistance to hegemonic power. The process of subverting hegemonic power can take place in families, communities, schools or religious institutions. In the Native American context, a similar process of questioning the hegemony of the dominant ideology takes place in their recreation of stories of nature and the inextricable connections between land and people. Thus the importance of Native American rites, rituals and folklore cannot be denied, since they provide the sites for reinscribing the identity of the tribe as well as for empowerment by overthrowing the hegemonic domain of power. An example from the novel I have selected will help to establish this point.

Towards the end of the novel Little Tree's growing alienation from his white friends in the foster home makes him pine for his native home. When he escapes from the foster home with his grandfather, he takes off his shoes on his trek up the Appalachians, just to feel the 'trail' beneath his feet. Little Tree's return home to the 'Indian Way' is Carter's way of showing his merging with his preferred community and family. He becomes a figure of resistance against the white civilization of his foster home by returning to his Indian 'home', which shows that the Native American individual is capable of successfully counteracting the hegemonic domain of power.

Also, Carter's conclusion in which Little Tree becomes modestly successful as a bookkeeper (after learning figures from his grandmother) is an attempt to affirm the wisdom of the Native Indian ways that can create their own version of the American Dream, without clamouring for all its prerequisite conditions or the super benefits to be attained after fulfillment.

In the preceding chapters, I have delineated the manner in which African American writers (both men and women) have tried to negotiate their American identity in a racially oppressive society. From the time of their migration to the North after the depression of the 1930s to the Black Power Movements of the 1960s, Black male writers were comfortable with the genre of the protest novel which was 'social document' fiction for them. African American women writers, on the other hand, wrote about home, community and the domestic sphere and outlined more subtle methods of resistance. A very good example would be Alice Walker's essay 'In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens', where she affirms that her maternal ancestors kept their heritage alive by practicing diverse arts such as quilting, gardening, root-working etc. African American women writers retain the same spiritual connection with their ancestors as every act of writing becomes a form of bearing witness, or, to use Morrison's phrase, 'fiction for the tribe'.³¹ It is necessary in order to instill a sense of positive self identity in the future generations who will encounter the values of a white-patriarchal-racist society and be confused by them. As I have tried to show in the previous chapters, ideals such as 'feminist masculinity' and 'communion' in a family—concepts propagated by the Black cultural critic bell hooks—have been emulated more successfully by the Black women writers as compared to their male counterparts.

Gender disparity in the Native American literary context is not as prominent as in the African American literary discourse. However, belief in the spiritual aspect of nature and the myth of 'Mother Earth' is a proof of the ecofeminist perspective of Native American literature. Ecofeminism asserts that reverence for nature and environment is a distinct 'feminine principle' which Western colonialism has undermined. Mary Mellor³² has pointed out:

There have been many feminist critiques of the Western concept of the 'human' as representing white, bourgeois, male interests, values and experience. The case made by both ecocentrists and ecofeminists is that the Western model of modernity based on this 'human' is achieved at the expense of both women and nature. Western notions of self-determination and autonomy have at their centre the idea of the transcendence of the natural world. Biology (bodies) and the ecosystem (nature) are external to the social.³³

By affirming an almost ecofeminist perspective Native American writing (by both men and women writers) has been able to resist the dominant patriarchal ideology, articulate its distinct ethnic voice as well as reinscribe the Native Americans in a community that can share the values of movements resistant to patriarchy across cultures. Therefore, it can even be suggested that the womanist perspective of African American women writers resonates in Native American fiction, as the writers try to heal the tribe from within.

Native American fiction, with its ability to incorporate nature as a part of social existence, shows the same humanitarian concern as the womanism of African American literary discourse. Like the African American writers, Native Americans can now create their own version of a non-white New Aesthetic in keeping with the hybrid nature of multicultural America. Linda Hogan actually affirms such an idea when she speaks of a sense of home expanding from her immediate home Oklahoma to embrace a global community. She remarks:

Home was always, in my heart, Oklahoma... But I am thinking that home is larger than this. As the earth has grown smaller and we know its fragility, it is important for us now *to expand our view of home to a larger space* [italics mine], a global community, and to think of land, ocean, mountains, desert, as home. And we need to extend our sense of community to include animals and other forms of life.³⁴

Hogan's concepts of 'home' and 'global community' are especially relevant as they anticipate the non-traditional families and communities of contemporary American culture. Incidentally, Alice Walker's theory of Black womanist activism is also rooted in such a description of man and nature relationship. Although Walker specifically talks about healing the race of Black people, her evolved, womanist characters are mostly women (e.g. Shug and Celie in *The Color Purple*). It is only in her later work, *By the Light Of My Father's Smile*,³⁵ that we see her applying the womanist aesthetics with regard to a man. Thus, in the introduction to her anthology *Belief in the Love of the World*, she remarks:

My activism—cultural, political, spiritual—is rooted in my love of nature and my delight in human beings...Because...people...standing side by side, have expressed who they really are, and that ultimately they believe in the love of the world and each other enough to be that—which is the foundation of activism.³⁶

The 'homing in' metaphor, along with a belief in nature, has helped the Native Americans to evolve their own brand of activism, which in turn promotes empowerment. These aspects of their civilization have helped them to define themselves in such a way that their spiritual relationship with nature does not limit them to a utopian community. With its close alliance to nature and relatively egalitarian gender relationships, Native American civilization is perhaps best equipped to propagate this kind of activism based on love. As bell hooks observes, the work of love in any given community should be done by men as well as women.³⁷

The pull of myth/history has been strong enough for Native Americans to make them minimize the importance of the material aspect of the American Dream. In their narratives of 'bearing witness' they prioritize the survival strategies in ways that are very similar to those in African American women's writing, but the vehement rhetoric of protest, and the abundance of militant heroes that we see in Black male writers is not to be seen here. Gerald Vizenor has written about the narrative methods adopted by Native American writers, which helped them to overcome white policies of exclusion and suppression. He refers to a note of 'tragic wisdom' in Native American fiction that is born out of 'tribal power'³⁸, defining tribal power as a voice that affirms 'survival over dominance'³⁹ and denies 'victimization'.⁴⁰ Little Tree's repeated references to his ability to use his spirit mind over his body mind in moments of physical pain show a wisdom and a willingness to survive. Written in the 70s, *The Education of Little Tree* is a novel which does show that the survival mechanism of the Native American community is much better suited to a child's development than in a Black community, as we see, for example, in *The Bluest Eye*.

Just as the African American heritage has evolved a New Black Aesthetic to counteract conservative American nation-building strategies, so the Native American writers have drawn from their tribal stories to devise strategies of survival which also function as effective tools of resistance. Little Tree's overcoming of pain by remembering his grandfather's insistence on the superior power of the Cherokee 'spirit mind' is one such example.

Another landmark Native American text *Ceremony* (1977),⁴¹ written around the same time by Leslie Marmon Silko, documents the power of indigenous stories and rituals to heal individuals who come back physically injured and emotionally

battered after a war. In this novel, the protagonist Tayo does not live in a secluded Appalachian environment as Little Tree does. He comes back from the Second World War battling alcoholism and suffering from shell-shock. In the post-nuclear world, his journey towards healing is much more complicated than Little Tree's. He learns to see the flaws in the Indian school where he was asked to emulate white standards of conduct and learn about the world through the Eurocentric concept of science. Coming back from the war, Tayo re-learns the ancient Laguna stories which help him to evaluate the worth of his Native American culture and ultimately lead to his healing. As the comments of Richard Fleck (quoted above) and Linda Hogan (also quoted above) reveal, the Native Americans see nature as a part of their community. Tayo, with the help of the shaman Betonie, creates his own ceremony of healing that borrows liberally from his tribal rituals but is not an exact duplication of such ceremonies. The medicine man Ku'oosh tells him that indigenous rites would not be effective in the twentieth century reality. Thus Silko shows us that tribal ancestry, coupled with the individual's real experiences, can create new ceremonies of regeneration and healing. Like Tayo, the Native Americans have been successful in preserving their ethnic heritage and have used the tragic wisdom (if we use Vizenor's phrase) acquired through their survival in modern America, to create a 'safe space' for themselves.

The Education of Little Tree and *Ceremony* make it clear that the burden of healing lies with an individual who can take the help of tribal stories and the community, but recent novels like *Reservation Blues* (1995)⁴² by Sherman Alexie document the fact that survival for a Native American in most cases does not entail the realization of the American Dream of success. Alexie traces the development of a Native American band that dreams of success, is lured by a contract deal but is unable

to clinch it. Some of the band members commit suicide while the survivors are alienated from their tribes, because most of the tribesmen believe that they have compromised their tribal culture by forming a band and selling their heritage for commercial success. Alexie's novel demonstrates (like Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*) that even if a writer tries to assert survivance over dominance, he almost always ends up telling stories in which Native Americans are victims of the American Dream.

Jewish American Dreams in the American Soil:

When we move to Jewish American literature from Native American literature the obvious difference is that the former group has been much more successful in imbibing the American Dream of material success. In fact, the pioneer Jewish American novelists, Malamud and Bellow, were the first to articulate the twin themes of being immigrants with a distinct ethnic sensibility and the need to be assimilated as Americans----themes that have now become characteristic of all immigrant literature. Although the Jews had to face anti-semitic hatred, they did not have to endure a prolonged history of suffering and oppression as the Blacks and the Native Americans did. But the Jews did have certain characteristics in common with the African American community and there are also definite points of correspondence in their histories as Americans. Eric J. Sundquist observes:

Separated by color and religion, hardly insignificant considerations in a predominantly 'white', Protestant nation, Jews and Blacks once found that their day-to-day communal experiences were as intimately connected as their histories were distinct. Those among them who made common cause in the face of anti-Semitism and racism, as well as many commentators since, have described Jews and Blacks as 'friends', 'partners' and most often as 'allies', as in references to Black-Jewish alliance...Thrust into overlapping physical and cultural

spaces by their respective histories of racial violence and migration—African Americans in flight from southern segregation, Jews in flight from European and Russian persecution—they met as 'strangers' in the Promised Land of America, principally northern, urban America.⁴³

However, their apparent understanding of each other's identity as victims of oppression lasted only for a short while, since the Jews were able to negotiate their people-hood and overcome their immigrant status much faster than the African Americans. The Blacks continued to remain 'Negroes', still trying to come to terms with their 'double consciousness' and the 'two warring ideals in one dark body', to use the Duboisian image from 'The Souls of Black Folk.'⁴⁴ Sundquist points out the essential difference in their American identities:

For Jews, even those whose spiritual home was forever in Palestine (and later Israel), their new nation would in a generation or two become a homeland, a new Zion, with relative ease. For Blacks, torn from an African homeland, their new nation, even after being their home for decade upon decade, was still not Zion...Jews could not be 'melted' into quite the same American shape as other European ethnics, but the rapidity of their acculturation stood in stark contrast to that of Blacks, who had long made essential contributions to American economic, cultural, and religious life while continuing to face discrimination at every turn.⁴⁵

Perhaps this pace of acculturation for the Jews was facilitated by the fact that the Jewish community could identify more readily with the materialist aspect of the American Dream. The Puritan founders of the New World had placed an emphasis on diligent resourcefulness and work; the American Dream of the twentieth century showed distinct traces of these Puritan ideals, especially in its myth of success. Even while they lived in Europe the Jews had been a financially successful community, and their accumulation of wealth was largely responsible for their unpopularity with the Christians. Campbell and Kean observe that Jewish American narratives articulated their idea of America as a promised land by telling 'stories of hard-work, suffering, promise and achievement'.⁴⁶ America could become a safe space for the Jewish

immigrant community, since the ideals enshrined in the American Dream were the ones with which the Jews were already familiar. This did not, however, mean that they became complacent about preserving their own heritage.

Jewish American novels, like Cynthia Ozick's *The Shawl* (1980),⁴⁷ have tried to bear witness to the difficulties of negotiating the Jewish identity in America, and such works have routinely revisited the painful memories of the Holocaust days. Perhaps Jewish novelists have done so in an attempt to 'bear witness to what is'. This is the phrase that Morrison used when asked by Bill Moyers⁴⁸ as to what was the primary function of the novel. A novel, according to Morrison, should stretch the boundaries and recapture everything— 'the fear of collapse, of meaninglessness, of disorder, of anarchy'.⁴⁹ She clarifies that the novelist who does this sees things better and feels enhanced. However, Erica Jong's *Of Blessed Memory*⁵⁰ (1997) moves away from such recollections and deliberately tries to construct Jewish American history as a history of survivors, minus the victimization and death. She uses family memoirs to reinforce this sense of resilience and, like the New Black Aesthetic, tries to create a new type of Jewish aesthetic compatible to the present multicultural climate. The novel moves between the early twentieth century Jewish tenements (in New York) and the fashionable artistic intellectual Jewish circles. It faithfully retraces the two polar opposites of the 'poor' Jew and the 'rich' Jew, corresponding to the Jewish immigrant's initial condition and his later affluence respectively.⁵¹ In his book *A Gathering of Ghetto Writers*⁵², Wayne Charles Miller remarks:

...the stereotype of the 'rich and pushy' Jew...unfortunately has taken its place in the American hierarchy of minority stereotypes...there was a time when most immigrant Jews from Eastern Europe huddled in the tenement slums of East Coast cities, particularly New York..The harsh struggle for livelihood forced the immigrant family into overcrowded and unsanitary tenements where the entire environment conspired to

create prime conditions for delinquency. Precisely because of the perils of the slums, a particularly heavy burden rested on the family. And tragically, social works noted, the very upheaval connected with emigration and the perplexities of urban life crippled the efforts of immigrant parents to provide firm direction for their young.⁵³

Sarah, a first generation immigrant, comes to America and rises to become a famous painter, but is unable to become a successful parent. In the African American context, the community faced similar problems subsequent to their migration to the North from the South. Parents were unable to guide their children as they had to survive in ghettos. The young children often fell victims to the 'Black hood' and turned to a life of crime. These facts, highlighted in the first chapter of my thesis, are also relevant to Jong's novel in which Sarah starts her life as an immigrant, staying in one such Jewish ghetto and working in a sweat-shop.

In *Of Blessed Memory*, Sarah begins the narration of her immigrant experience by emphasizing that she did not have the material benefits of the American Dream for a considerable period of her life. As she recounts her life story to her granddaughter (who records her narration as part of an oral-history project to enrich the Jewish-American archives), she is conscious of the ambivalence of such an idealistic notion as the American Dream, which she had noticed from the moment she arrived in America. She had started imagining the continent even while she was on the ship and felt that America was going to be a place where 'clinging to the past meant being left behind'.⁵⁴ The moment of arrival at Ellis Island is also described without any romantic aura:

The truth is, I never saw anyone kiss the ground at Ellis Island. Mostly, they looked lost, confused, uncertain...Where was I? Ellis Island. So much mythology has grown around those immigrants, because America needed a myth of huddled masses yearning to breathe free...In fact, the boats were filled with all manner of humanity...Afterward you could lie to your American born children and make it appear that all immigrants were saints. Far from it.⁵⁵

Sarah never loses this sense of alienation, of estrangement. Although she is able to rise above the tenement sweat-shop and become a painter employed by a professional portrait-maker, she does not forget the 'huddled masses' of immigrants and starts sketching them. It is her way of recording the existence of the first generation Jewish community in America, an existence that was far removed from the idyllic image of America as a promised land. In fact, Sarah dedicates herself to documenting history through painting, believing that such pictures best bear her legacy and are a tribute to her Jewish heritage.

Sarah, Salome, Sally and Sara are the four women who narrate the story of their family by turns. Sarah's narration documents her struggle to rise to the top of the American art circle. However, she also recounts the ways in which she tried to help the rest of her family, especially her mother, to come to America and start a new life. In her recollections to her granddaughter she clearly states that she is bequeathing these stories to her progeny as a 'spiritual will'⁵⁶, so that they will be able to realize that the old people have something of value to give, other than 'things'.⁵⁷ This concept of the stories of one's family (especially as bequeathed by the grandmother) becoming a 'spiritual will' between women is quite like the Black womanist's perception of women bearing witness to their history by such diverse methods as quilting, root-work and telling stories on the porch. Although Jong ostensibly describes the women of Sarah's family who exemplify survival as women of resistance, there is also a focus on the condition of the Jewish immigrants throughout the text. Thus the novel is womanist in that even the last surviving member, Sara, wants to bequeath survival stories to the entire race of Jews. It is also an example of 'social document' fiction like Wright's *Black Boy*, where the American socio-political scenario closely complements the protagonist's narrative. Jong, perhaps deliberately, makes all the

central women characters creative people. A common link between these stories of four generations is forged through their troubled mother-daughter relationships and a persistent need to do something for the betterment of the Jewish-American community.

Sarah keeps drawing the sketches of Jewish workers in the tenements and becomes increasingly critical of American capitalists. She quotes from Michael Gold and actually believes that:

America is rich and fat because it has eaten the tragedy of millions of immigrants...America's melting pot is a cauldron of boiling tears. And even the real Yankees sometimes drown in those immigrant tears.⁵⁸

Sarah's critique of the myth of the American melting pot is representative of her attitude towards the dominant culture attempting to Americanize everybody at the cost of erasing their distinct ethnic identity. She is perceptive enough to realize that believing in the myth of the American melting pot would mean subordinating her cultural/racial heritage to a stereotypically normative American identity.

But it is to Sarah's credit that she tries to be as successful a mother as she can possibly be. In the Sarah-Salome relationship we have the same process of revolt, estrangement and reconciliation that is emblematic of mother-daughter relationships in Black literature. The Jewish American mother-daughter relationship, is no different from the Black American mother daughter relationship, where a strong maternal presence alienates the daughter for a while because she believes she cannot establish her independent identity under her mother's thumb.

After years of estrangement, however, Salome ultimately reconciles with her mother's legacy when she herself becomes a mother to her daughter and realizes its

worth. Salome spends restless years in Paris trying to be an avant-garde writer but finally finds her calling when she decides to take up the mantle of a social activist, open a school for Jewish immigrants in America and write poetry expressing the immigrant's pain. In their commitment to the immigrant experience, the women in this novel show the same concern as Black womanists do. In one of her poems Salome writes:

Who are Jews after all/but a people without whom/we
would have to confront/the void in our own echoing
hearts?/ The symbol/of our phoenix yearning/to rise on
the ashes of death/People of the dream,/moving through
history's insomnia/people who can't sleep.⁵⁹

The third and fourth generations of the family, Sally Sky and her daughter, are further estranged from each other. Sally leads a life of dissipation apparently as a successful singer. What begins as a revolt against her mother Salome, eventually becomes a self-destructive habit. Motherhood stabilizes Sally temporarily, but she cannot shoulder the responsibilities of a growing child and chooses to pamper or ignore her daughter alternately. Ironically, it is Sally who starts interviewing her grandmother in an attempt to preserve the family archives and record the history of Jewish-American survival for a century.

As the novel comes full circle we find Sally's daughter Sara coming upon these family archives, tapes and photographs in a faculty library where she works as a research fellow in the Jewish History Department. The novel ends with Sara (herself a single mother now) successfully completing the project and putting forward the proposal for an exhibition of Jewish history in America. Only in the year 2000 does Sara become aware of the tremendous struggle of her ancestors (starting with her

grandmother) in America, culminating in the birth of her daughter Dove who, according to Sara, was born in a 'peaceful parenthesis of Jewish history'.⁶⁰

While wondering at the marvel of it all, Sara finally realizes the need to look forward to and create hope for the future. She says as much to the directors of the study programme when she places her proposal for the exhibition in front of the Council for Jewish History in New York City. She tells them:

I would rather stress the days of hope than the days of despair. Maybe we've been chosen because of our abundant life force, our refusal to surrender and maybe we should celebrate *that*. The more I think of the history of Jews in America, the more struck I am by the fact that we are all descendants of survivors, not victims.⁶¹

Sara's speech does highlight certain truths about the life of Jewish Americans. I have already pointed out the comparative ease of transition of Jewish Americans from their immigrant status to that of first class American citizens. The women writers, however, have chosen not to forget their holocaust experience and their initial struggle in the American soil as immigrants. In spite of being successful in creating a 'safe space' for their communities and families in an alien land, the Jewish Americans, especially the women, have continued to preserve their stories of survival as a legacy. Their economic success did not curtail their desire to 'bear witness' to history. These stories, as Patricia Hill Collins observes, go on to dismantle the interpersonal domain of power supported by the dominant ideology.⁶² Jong's novel can also be read as an ascent narrative, whereby the survivors become articulate spokesmen for their race/tribe. Sarah's paintings, Salome's altruism, Sally's music and Sara's history project—all become a collective ascent narrative of Jewish survivors who also happen to be women.

Sarah, Salome, Sally and Sara learn to be strong mothers and are able to self-actualize in their chosen professions. The strong mother-daughter bond in the Jewish tradition may occasionally remind us of the Black mother-daughter bond, but Jewish mothers are very different from Native American mothers. As I have discussed earlier, the Native Americans tried to resist oppression by retaining their unique rituals and heritage, and it was both men and women who carried on the task of continuance. The tribes collectively revered the feminine principle inherent in nature and therefore the maternal presence in family and community was valued in a way that is much less intimidating than in matriarchal communities. Native American literary discourse does record stories of their women in conjunction with procreation myths, but nowhere is she a dominant matriarchal ancestor like her Black American counterpart. This does not mean that the feminine principle is devalued in the contemporary quest for identity among Native Americans.

Native Americans choose to set their survival stories in conjunction with 'regeneration and motion'⁶³ rather than to represent socio-economic problems. Like the African Americans, the Native Americans have also learnt to assert their own identity by transcending victimization. Contemporary Native American women writers try to negotiate their identity by articulating unique tribal traditions. According to Rebecca Tsosie such an identity emphasizes their 'own special bond to the female life forces of the universe'.⁶⁴ The knowledge which an African American mother passes on to her child makes the child see her as a survivor and a 'Superstrong' mother. In the case of the Native American mother, her knowledge of tribal myths forms 'a powerful legacy of survival for the future generation'.⁶⁵

The Jewish American women have a different and unique advantage. Their stories do not try to stress issues of gender unduly and yet their concerns do reflect upon the 'continuance' of a tradition. Jewish American women also speak of survival strategies, although they were able to overcome their position as victims quite easily. For the Jewish American mothers survival is not that difficult in the new continent. Yet the pull of myth/history is strong enough to make them undertake to educate their progeny about the process of survival, so that they can form their identities on the basis of those stories which also help to heal the memories of their past. However, it must also be kept in mind that the Jewish-American man did not have to negotiate the difficulties of Southern segregation and racism like the Black American. Even in Jong's novel, male characters do not figure prominently in the struggle for survival and are often weaker than the women. But as in the African American tradition, here too, the onus of healing is on the womenfolk.

Sara's belief in the survival stories of the Jews is strengthened by the fact that she feels renewed love and respect for the women in her family as she recounts them. The creative act of writing liberates memory and grants her the freedom to re-imagine her community and family:

The holy teachers were right. Telling a story is a kind of meditation, a sacred act...And as she wrote, she began to see that only by telling *this* particular story, by inventing memory itself, would she be free to go on with her life.⁶⁶

Sara's efforts can be compared to Wideman's purpose in *Fatheralong*, where he imagines his father and narrates the road-trip he took with him in order to create a positive 'father story'⁶⁷ for his family and the succeeding generations. Sara's efforts are inspired by her attempt to make her community and family whole, as Wideman's efforts are directed towards rectifying the vacuum in the African American paternal

discourse. Thus, like African American male writers, Jong prefers not to foreground gender issues within the Jewish family and follows the spirit of the social document fiction as well as the trajectory of an ascent narrative (explained in Chapter 1).

Multicultural America and the American Dream :

Dinnerstein, Nichols and Reimers, in their book *Natives and Strangers : A Multicultural History of Americans*,⁶⁸ have pointed out the peculiar resilience of the myth of the American Dream which signifies equal opportunity in the popular mind, although immigrants coming to America have to begin at the lowest possible social rung. According to Dinnerstein et al, cultural pluralism is desired by most Americans but still remains a distant prospect.⁶⁹

My discussion of the novels in this chapter is intended to show how the pull of myth/history remains strong enough for marginal communities, in spite of the democratic nature of the American Dream. Eric J. Sundquist prefers to describe contemporary American culture as one 'steeped in ethnic fractionalization and contested identities'.⁷⁰ The American Dream, with its promise of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, has not been able to provide ethnic minorities with a 'safe space' to call their own. The writers/artists of these ethnic minorities have had to work consciously to ensure that their cultural/ racial identity would not be forgotten by their future generations.

Seemanthini Niranjana has pointed out in her essay 'Gender in India'⁷¹ that any cultural concept, whether it be gender or identity, cannot be 'homogenous' in a

multicultural society as there are numerous 'fracture lines' of caste, community, religion etc. She states more lucidly:

A significant facet of modern multicultural settings has been the vociferous assertion of identity politics of various kinds...with each articulating a difference as well as lobbying for recognition of such differences, especially with regard to state politics. Perspectives that, until recently, downplayed differences in favor of cultural assimilation into a larger mainstream, seem to have made way for a multicultural stance celebrating cultural difference today. It has been pointed out, however, that while it is true that to speak of the equality principle in a multicultural context is to actually recognize differences between groups, this always has to be contextually determined, for not all recognitions of difference yield themselves to an egalitarian principle (Hegde, 2002).⁷²

Differences between groups in multicultural America have to be contextually determined, although there are instances when they seem to possess similarities in their family and community structures. There are, for example, similarities among the 'spirit mind' that Little Tree says is the key to survival, the 'spiritual will' of the three generations of women in Sarah's family and the 'spirit family' of Black literature. But they do not all refer to the same idea of 'spirit'. In spite of being American, all these parallel literary discourses have been able to create survival strategies which have distinct overlaps with each other. Moreover, their commitment to their communities is a proof that they have imbibed the essence of the multicultural reality of the nation by articulating their differences, even while adhering to the egalitarian principle inherent in the American Dream.

Campbell and Kean have remarked that immigrants as citizens of America must learn to balance the claims of assimilation and pluralism. They quote Singh in this context:

A newly emergent American identity must acknowledge and empower difference without breaking under its weight. In rethinking our complex multicultural past, we need to address issues of distortion and

erasure, of shared myths and attitudes, even as they are interrogated, separately and together, by race, immigration and ethnicity.⁷³

A considerable amount of literature written by Black Americans, Native Americans and Jewish Americans try to 'acknowledge and empower difference'. However, 'ethnic fractionalization' is also a part of multicultural America, and its presence shows that cultural differences have not been contextually understood by the dominant culture.

Although multiculturalism may not be the only answer to the problem of realizing family identity, it does provide ample scope for ethnic minorities to create safe spaces in their families and communities. Respecting differences of culture also enables these communities to accept the necessity of non-traditional families in American society. Future configurations of community and family as imagined in a cyber/digital culture may further equip the cultural groups to acknowledge each other's differences.

On the other hand, a popular mainstream film like *Crash* (2005)⁷⁴ depicts the multicultural urban landscape of a city, like Los-Angeles, in order to emphasize the inevitable collisions of different cultures and ethnicities. Collisions in the workplace, consisting of sexual harassment and racist attitudes, are given equal prominence in this film with collisions in a mixed marriage, to show that the ideology of domination does not change, whether the oppressor is a white or a colored person and whether the relation of oppression is personal or institutional.

Finally, the American Dream, if it has to have any meaning for all these ethnic denominations, must reorder itself. The Native Americans and the Jewish Americans, along with the Blacks, have continuously responded to the changing scenario of America. The literary traditions of these groups of people articulate the inexorability

of the overarching structure of power and their identity as individuals within it as well as the sham of American democracy. The democratic ideal of the American Dream must therefore include the spiritual tradition of a people, and of distinct races, especially with regard to their survival and healing strategies, for knowledge of such wisdom is essential now more than ever to the realization of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Only by acknowledging this principle of spiritual resilience and healing can the American nation hope to rectify the patterns of oppression and exclusion inherent in the American Dream.

NOTES

1. Linda Hogan, 'Linda Hogan', interview with Laura Coltelli in *Winged Words : American Indian Writers Speak*, ed. Laura Coltelli (Lincoln : University of Nebraska Press, 1990), p. 81.
2. Anne Tyler, *Digging to America* (New York : Alfred A. Knopf, 2006), pp. 100-101.
3. The famous phrases from the Declaration of Independence. 'The Declaration of Independence' quoted in the introduction to *The Declaration of Independence: Origins and Impact*, ed. Scott Douglas Gerber (Washington D.C:C Q Press,2002), pp. xv-xvii.
4. Call Jilson, *Pursuing the American Dream: Opportunity and Exclusion over Four Centuries* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004).
5. Ibid., pp. 1-47.
6. Bell, *The Contemporary African American Novel*, p.250.
7. Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, pp.287-288.
8. Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 7.
9. William Bevis, 'Native American Novels: Homing In' in *Critical Perspectives on Native American Fiction*, ed. Richard Fleck (Washington D.C.: Three Continents Press, 1993).
10. Ibid., pp. 16-17.

11. Ibid., pp.16.
12. Toni Morrison, 'Intimate Things in Place:A Conversation with Toni Morrison' interview by Robert Stepto in *Conversations with Toni Morrison*, pp.19.
13. Stephen Matterson,*AmericanLiterature:AnEssential Glossary* (London: Arnold, 2003), p.88.
14. Joy Harjo, 'Joy Harjo' interview by Laura Coltelli in *Winged Words*, p. 58.
15. Forest Carter, *The Education of Little Tree* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1976).
16. Paula Gunn Allen, 'Paula Gunn Allen' interview by Laura Coltelli in *Winged Words*, pp. 15-16.
17. Carter, *The Education of Little Tree*, p. 38.
18. Ibid., pp. 38-39.
19. Ibid., pp. 38-39.
20. bell hooks, *The Will To Change*, pp. 107-124.
21. *Black Feminist Thought*, pp. 262-265.
22. Ibid., pp. 151-160.
23. Deborah E. McDowell, 'New Directions for Black Feminist Criticism' in *Black Feminist Cultural Criticism*, p. 34.
24. *The Education of Little Tree*, pp. 45-46.

25. Deborah E. McDowell in her essay 'New Directions for Black Feminist Criticism' writes about Black women/artists creating their own mythic structures. Native American writers both men and women create their own mythic structures when they integrate their rituals, oral traditions and stories in their narratives.
26. Edward Said ,*Culture and Imperialism* (London:Vintage, 1994), p. 273 quoted in Neil Campbell and Alasdair Kean, *American Cultural Studies* (London : Routledge, 1997), p. 48.
27. Linda Hogan, 'Imagining a Wider Community : An Interview with Linda Hogan' interview by Marilyn Kallet, in *Worlds in Our Words* , eds. Marilyn Kallet and Patricia Clark (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1997), p. 157.
28. William Bevis, 'Native American Novels: Homing In' in *Critical Perspectives On Native American Fiction*, p. 31.
29. 'ThomasK.Dean, Ecocriticism'; available from <http://www.asle.org/site/resources/ecocritical-library/intro/defining/dean>. Internet. Accessed on 9 November, 2008.
30. hooks, *Communion*, p. 244.
31. Toni Morrison, , ' " The Language Must Not Sweat" : 'A Conversation with Toni Morrison' interview by Thomas Leclair in *Toni Morrison : Critical Perspectives Past and Present*, eds. Henry Louis Gates, Jr and K.A. Appiah (New York : Amistad Press, 1993), p. 370. Walker in 'In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens' lauded her maternal ancestors because they used their

domestic skills to bear witness and also channel their frustration in the face of oppression.

32. Mary Mellor, 'Myths and realities', in *New Left Review*, 217, pp. 132-137 quoted in *Feminism*, Jane Freedman (New Delhi : Viva Books, 2002), pp. 57-58.
33. Ibid., p. 57.
34. Linda Hogan, 'Imagining a Wider Community' interview by Marilyn Kallet in *Worlds in Our Words*, pp. 157-158.
35. Alice Walker, *By the Light of My Father's Smile* (London: Phoenix,1998).
36. Alice Walker, 'Belief in the Love of the World' in *Anything We Love can be Saved: A Writer's Activism*, ed. Alice Walker, p. xxii.
37. hooks, *Communion*, p. 242.
38. Gerald Vizenor, *Manifest Manners. Post-Modern Discourse On Native-American Indian Literatures* (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1994) quoted in *American Cultural Studies*, p. 50.
39. Ibid., p.50.
40. Ibid., p. 50. Hill Collins in *Black Feminist Thought* has remarked that similar stories of survivance comprises the interpersonal domain of power.
41. Leslie Marmon Silko, *Ceremony* (New York: Penguin, 1977).
42. Sherman Alexie, *Reservation Blues* (New York: Grove Press,1995).

43. Eric J. Sundquist, *Strangers in The Land: Blacks, Jews, Post-Holocaust America* (Cambridge: The Belknap press of Harvard University Press, 2005).
44. W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* in chapter 1. rpt. In *Black Voices: An Anthology of African-American Literature*. (New York : Penguin Putnam, 2001), p. 496.
45. Sundquist, *Strangers in The Land*, pp. 2-3.
46. *American Cultural Studies*, pp.58.
47. Cynthia Ozick, *The Shawl* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1980).
48. Toni Morrison, 'A Conversation with Toni Morrison' interview by Bill Moyers in *Conversations with Toni Morrison*, p. 273.
49. Ibid., p. 273.
50. Erica Jong, *Of Blessed Memory* (London: Bloomsbury, 1997).
51. Although rich Jews are recreated in Jong's novel, pushy Jews as mother-daughter relations take precedence in this novel.
52. Wayne Charles Miller, *A Gathering of Ghetto Writers: Irish, Italian, Jewish, Black* (New York: New York University Press, 1972).
53. Ibid., p. 41-42.
54. *Of Blessed Memory*, p.21.
55. Ibid., p. 22.
56. Ibid., p. 49.

57. Ibid., p. 49.
58. Ibid., p. 67.
59. Ibid., pp. 118 – 119.
60. Ibid., p. 292.
61. Ibid., p. 295.
62. Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, pp. 287-290.
63. Rebecca Tsosie, 'Changing Women: The Crosscurrents of American Indian Feminine Identity' in *Unequal Sisters : A Multicultural reader in U.S. Women's History*, eds. Vicki L. Ruiz and Ellen Carol Du Bois (New York : Routledge, 2000), p. 584.
64. Ibid, p. 583.
65. Ibid, p. 584.
66. Jong, *Of Blessed Memory*, p. 299.
67. Wideman, *Fatheralong*, pp. 3-176.
68. Leonard Dinnerstein, Roger L. Nichols and David. M. Reimers, *Natives and Strangers: A Multicultural History of America* (New York : Oxford University press, 2003), pp. 279-282.
69. Ibid., p.281.
70. *Strangers in the Land*, p. 1.
71. Seemanthini Niranjana, 'Gender in India' in *Gender* ed. Nadia Tazi (New Delhi : Vistaar Publications, 2004), pp. 135-165.

72. Ibid., p. 161.

73. A.Singh, J. T. Skerritt and R. E. Hogan, eds. *Memory, Narrative and Identity: New Essays in Ethnic American Literature*(Boston:Northeastern University Press,1994) quoted in *American Cultural Studies*, p. 68.

74. *Crash*, dir. Paul Haggis. Lions Gate Films Release, 2005.