Conclusion

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Native Indian authors often face the dilemma of a privileged discourse charged with the value of Indianness. For a group of people who are writing within the confines of a non-literate culture, this privileged site could be a burden. In the past, native writers had attempted to write in English and their works have often fallen into the mould of overt resistance. Maria Campbell's *Halfbreed*, Beatrice Culleton's *April Raintree* and Jeannette Armstrong's *Slash* are some of the literary works where the native-white conflict is overtly portrayed. In this thesis, an attempt has been made to prove that there is a development, and certainly a change, in the native perception of counter discourse.

The overt literary resistance is very much visible in the writings of Lee Maracle. In her sociological work, *I Am Woman* and especially in her novels, *Sundogs* and *Ravensong*, the growth of native consciousness is the central theme. The resistance is subtle in Joan Crate's *Breathing Water* and the counter discourse is dependent on the subconscious mind of the protagonist. In Jovette Marchessault, however, one finds the intersection of
feminism and nativism and the resultant discourse is much more complex. The lesbian voice of dissent is more vitriolic in its attack on patriarchal assumptions.

The literary devices employed by these writers include revisionary historiography, reversal of myths, revisionary ethnography and valorization of native elements without a direct attack on the colonisers. But as shown in the preceding chapter, a complete negation of the colonial aspect would be impossible in this discussion. Lee Maracle's argument that her book, *I Am Woman*, does not concern the whites, is undermined in almost every page of the text, since she frequently addresses the whites albeit in an accusatory tone.

Again, the question as to whether a counter discourse should fall into the trap of binary oppositions, is, as any one could see, a topic that demands further discussions. Since a dialectic between a discourse and a counter discourse would be more productive, an attempt has been made to define the latter in relation to the former. However, the modes employed by the native writers to deconstruct the "Indian" of the western canon is discussed in this thesis. The protagonists in most of the novels discussed here are not hard core native enthusiasts. They are women living in metropolises, caught between two worlds that pursue different ends. The materialism and
solipsism of western life are condemned in all the texts and native spiritualism and family bonding are valorized, but not at the expense of verisimilitude. For instance, in Ravensong, the strong communal bonds are portrayed as bestowing physical and spiritual strength on Stacey, but the mystical experiences usually associated with Indian communities are never mentioned. The effort of the writer is to clearly delineate the travails of an Indian family trying to come to terms with modern life.

The reading of native texts in the context of western literary theories is not without drawbacks. In the native story telling context, a story teller's audience consisted of tribe or clan members who could be counted on to contribute a wealth of intimate knowledge to the telling of any story, and thus to actively participate in the dynamics of the story's creation. In other words, the performer and the audience shared an implicit knowledge of language and ways of speaking and the context. The narrative distance in the native texts as far as a non-native reader is concerned, is great. Thus, in Breathing Water, the introduction of numerous native myths confuses the reader. The predicament of the native author is no better. He/she will have to engage in a hybridized dialogue -- with the native reader and then with the non-native reader.
The approach of the writers discussed here towards feminism is also diverse. Lee Maracle's feminism has its roots in native militancy. Her anger towards native men for belittling native women is expressed well in her novels too. Joan Crate's approach seems to be almost antifeminist, but touches a deeper chord when one studies it in the context of Coucault's "different" loves. The extremely erotic "squaw" image of Dione may not be in keeping with the strong female image that native feminists wish to project. But it is the freedom of sexuality, a sexuality that does not bind that is expressed in *Breathing Water*. Jovette Marchessault's feminism is closer to the Cixousian brand of feminism with its accent or l'écriture féminine. In her creation of feminine myths and all-women communities, one can perceive a slant towards radical feminism. The colour bias of white feminism is brought to the forefront only by Lee Maracle.

The writers discussed in this thesis speak from the strategic position, at the intersection of the discourses of both feminism and postcolonialism. The "otherness" inherent in woman as well as in the colonized, helps both to manipulate the marginal status to suit their own needs. Ever since the deconstructive view claimed the margins to be the new loci of power, the marginalized have been regarded as the real power-wielders -- people who really control the discourse. The increasing influence of both
postcolonialism and feminism in the arena of literary theory would establish this.

The creation of a native canon is yet another issue to be discussed. The attempts to create a native canon similar to the western literary canon have had their repercussions. Dependency on western critics and western literary techniques are some of them. This apparent weakness could, however, be justified, for, the context of Native Indian reality is unique. Living as minorities in their own land, the native Indian cannot but help use the master's tools and present their works for the approval from the masters.

The canon of Canadian literature formed in accordance with the white notions of literature is devoid of "regional, ethnic, native and female difference" (Fee 22). Robert Lecker observes that the preferred texts of the canon makers are those that are "set in Canada" and focus on Canadian events and issues (687). Even though native writers write about Canada and focus on Canadian aboriginal reality, very few have been represented in the Canadian canon.

The efforts of the native Canadian women writers are indeed commendable, since they were writing against all
odds. The mustering up of courage to bring themselves to write, overcoming the fear of rejection, finding a sympathetic audience, keeping away from the temptation to romanticise native ways of living and finally attacking the white colonisers for the evils perpetrated by colonialism have all been extremely difficult steps for them. Since native stereotypes had already been created by the dominant discourse, it was essential that these writers steer clear of such characterisations. The fetishisation of native traditions has been a favourite tactic deployed not just by non-native writers but also by native writers themselves. Lee Maracle, Joan Crate and Jovette Marchessault have all kept away from such tendencies. With their feet firmly planted on the ground, these writers have written about the condition of native women caught between two cultures.

The texts discussed here also answer Gayatri Spivak's question, "Can the subaltern speak?" The vehement writings of Maracle and Marchessault affirm that native women can not only speak but also spit venom through words. Crate's writing may be more sober, but there is a distinct message hidden in her work -- that any attempt to submerge the native self by a native could prove to be disastrous.
The three writers discussed here do not show any semblance of homogeneity in matter or style. From the meandering volatile style of Crate to the overtly articulate and pointed criticism of the dominant culture by Lee Maracle and Marchessault's lesbian voice of dissent, there is little scope for a comparative work. But then, these writers who are writing from the margins of the margin cannot but reflect the social, economic, historical and cultural differences in their writings. If there is indeed something that holds them together, it is the element of resistance. Regarding themselves as outsiders, these women have taken on the subversive roles of women warriors, wild women and guerilla tacticians in order to engage in a critique of the multiple systems of domination.

Jovette Marchessault's lone voice of anti-patriarchal, anti-church, anti-establishment stand might not win her readerly sympathy. Her flight through fantasy and her attempts to create a matriarchal society might be scorned by many. However, her faith in 'women-power' and the consistency with which she levels her attacks certainly ought to vindicate her vitriolic writing.

The counter discourse of these women writers have surely made a mark in Canadian literature. The editors of anthologies of Canadian literature can no longer ignore
the vibrant force of native literature. In their attempts to voice their opinions and to escape the stereotyped native image, these writers have reshaped their identity -- as one that is diverse, multiple and ungraspable.

By translating their marginality into their works, Maracle, Crate and Marchessault transform the margins into sites of power. As they destabilize the binary oppositions between margins and centre and locate the other within both themselves and their readers, they open up new inter-subjective spaces, or what Bhabha describes as "a space of 'translation': a place of hybridity... where the construction of a political object that is new, neither the one nor the other" can occur (117).

The resistance literature offered by the native women writers demand to be read in the context of resistance to the structure of colonialism in Canada. The texts resist the normal conventions of literary classifications and hence they resist placement in the categories conceptualised by the dominant mode. For many of the native women writers, writing has represented a personal struggle with womanhood, culture, traditional spiritual beliefs and certainly, historical knowledge. They have realized that the unlearning of colonialist assumptions produced and reproduced by the dominant culture and its
replacement in order to provide living space for aboriginal culture is a daunting task. They are also certain of the fact that counter discourse is important for their survival and sustenance. In Maracle's attempt to develop her brand of militant feminism, Crate's experiments with free sexuality as a means to escape her schizophrenic existence and Marchessault's demand for the creation of a lesbian world of jouissance, one could discern attempts to move from the margin to the centre. The recording of their perceptions and their experiences of oppression under racism, heterosexism and other forms of discrimination is undoubtedly an ineluctable part of native liberation, decolonization and feminist activism.
Works Cited

