Chapter- V

Beyond Epidermalization of Identity

The poetic strategy of fusing history and contemporaneity is evident in the poetry of Armand Ruffo. His strategies always question the dominant power structures. The enlightenment era of European Civilization is also the era of Colonization. Native Canadian literature juxtaposed the binary of civilization/colonization and re-reads literature in the light of colonial power structures. We should also remember the fact that this period followed the liberal humanistic academic approach towards literature. Ruffo historicizes the poem ‘Christopher Columbo Claims America, 1448’. The poem is subtitled “Upon the, occasion of the pope’s visit to the NWT, 1987’ and is in dialogical relationship with contemporary power structure. The poet sets the occasion to give his insight and replay. He says, ‘A King, someone claiming a divine right/to wealth and power, ruled alongside the church/which in turn claimed God and hope’ (Opening in the Sky, 28). The conception of the hierarchy power or the European superstructure, enshrined in the church and the state dominated the common people Michel Foucault while analyzing the aspect of hierarchy of power in Power/Knowledge (1980) says:

[…] no one can or may occupy the role that the king had in the old system that is as the source of power and justice. It was implicit in the theory of monarchy that trust in the king
was a necessity. His very existence, founded in God’s will, he was the source of justice, law and power. Power, in his person, could only be good; a bad King was either an accident of history or a punishment by God, the absolutely good sovereign. On the other hand, if power is arranged as a machine working by a complex system of cogs and gears, where it’s the place of a person which is determining, not his nature, no reliance can be placed on a single individual. If the machine were such that someone could stand outside it and assume sole responsibility for managing it, power would be identified with that one man and we would be back with a monarchical type of power. In the Panoptic on each person, depending on his place, is watched by all or certain of the others. You have an apparatus of total and circulating mistrust, because there is no absolute point. The perfected form of surveillance consists in a summation of *malveillance*. (158).

The notion of colonial imperialism is also the expansion of the monarchical power structure. In order to dismantle these structures the poet uses poetic strategy of the carnivalesm. Caravalesque or the concept of subversion is revolutionary concept in its application to literature. Mikhail
Bakhtin, in his *Rabelais and His World* (1984) studied the celebration of Carnival during the medieval period in Europe. Bakhtin says:

Carnival is the people’s second life, organized on the basis of laughter […]. All these forms of carnival were also linked externally to the feasts of the church… Actually, the official feast looked back at the past and used the past to consecrate the present. Unlike the earlier and purer feast, the official feast asserted all that was stable, unchanging, and perennial: the existing hierarchy, the existing religious, political, and moral values, norms, and prohibitions. It was the triumph of a truth already established the predominant truth that was put forward as eternal and indisputable. This is why the tone of the official feast was monolithically serious and why the element of laughter was alien to it. The true nature of human festivity was betrayed and distorted […] As opposed to the official feast, one might say that carnival celebrated temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order; it marked the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms, and prohibitions. Carnival was the true feast of time, the feast of becoming, change, and renewal. It was hostile to all that was
immortalized and completed [...] It was a consecration of inequality. On the contrary, all were considered equal during carnival. (Rivkin, 45)

The subtitle of the poem ‘upon on the occasion of the Pope’s visit to NWT, 1987’, shows its relevance. The poem’s central thematic concern is the claim of the invention of America. We should not forget the fact that it is also the claim of the European’s invention of the Northern American Indians. From this perspective the poet’s remembrance of the Pope’s visit equivalent to the hierarchy of the medieval power:

Both king and church had much in common. Both believed explorers were opportunists. Necessary. Loyal only if controlled, if rewarded. Explorers lived a deep fear, endured sky, sea, the unknown. Lived for gold and plunder and were Heroes when they did. After the fast came the plenty. And plenty of it. Titles and women. Song and Dance in the streets of Seville. Up at Fort Simpson a conference will bring together Elders and Youth announces the Grand- Speaker. The pope will visit. The Prime Minister and Governor General will greet him. Drums will beat time to Mother Earth. Explores will have come and gone America will have been claimed. (27-28).
The poem contains the elements of Michel Bakhin’s Carnivalism and dialogism. These canonical strategies find appropriate place in the Native Canadian literary scenario where the power of the writer often dismantles the traditional writings.

Ruffo has written several poems on the issues of Native Canadian land rights. Daniel David Moses in one of the interviews says that when the Europeans came to Canada the Natives had the land and Whites had Bible, but now Europeans have the land and Natives have the Bible. One can find the thread of similarity between Native worship of land and nature and European’s belief in Christianity. In the process of evolution, Natives have lost the primordial nature. The past glory and their affinity with the land is no more present in their lives. In the poem ‘Theater Indigenous’, Ruffo sets the artistic nature of Native Canadian Theatre. Human beings have become ‘thirstiest beast’ and the reminiscence of the past encapsulates the poet and says, ‘Consider it. / Families and Nature is seen through his poetry. The destruction of the Natives and Nature is seen through his poetry. The theme of destruction of nature is one of these strategies of Ruffo to create awareness among the Natives through theatrical settings where art and poetical strategies merge. The poem continues:

Take this setting:
First a forest silence,
the lightening is dimmed,
a night sky. Move in,
abruptly the sound from your throat
cries out childlike.
focus, closer, shift perspective by star
or moonlight and your eyes are stained
with red ochre.
The mascara of ritual complete
you too ooze through village landscape
your blood siphoned from freshly cut wounds
to be planted.
The earth becomes fertile animals grow fat. (23).

So, the land rights of Native Canadians and the destruction of nature
becomes a recurrent theme. It ceases to be archaic and yearns for
permanent settlement. This provides a broader scope for the theme of
healing which becomes recurrent theme in their discourse. Eventually, this
socio-poetic perspective leads to the hope of freedom from the ceaseless
exploitation. Ruffo makes this as a theme in the poem ‘Voice’:

Not knowing my direction
I played to the spirit of the earth
And the hereafter: give me strength
Give me strength
Strength.
The moon was a lamp.
I moved on quickly
away from a life of prison
A row of fields stretched in line
cultivated clean as a cell.
My people hoped I could fly.
I could not. I was caught.
There is no moon now.
We are what we are
and always shall be. (19).

Native Canadian literature reverberates the thematic concerns of the subaltern studies. The theme of imperialism of the dominant is equally led by the literature of the ‘visible minority’ and ‘invisible minority’ such as Blacks, Jews and South Asians. The voices of these minorities find it difficult to find placement in Canadian discourse. Arnold Harrichand Itwaru and Natasha Ksonzek analyses the ‘imperial vision ‘and “Eurocentric- Eurocentric Vision” of the Europeans and their deceptive
promotion of multiculturalism. In their work *Closed Entrances: Canadian Culture and Imperialism* (1994) they say:

The Imperial Eye. The gaze of Empire. The gazing continuation of domination. The imperialization of vision. The Imperial Eye is a possessive eye. It claims as its own whatever it beholds. It burns with the desire to own, to possess, to order, to control, to dominate, to destroy. This is what gives it life. It cannot exist without this. This Imperial Eye is a tyrannical eye. In its delusions of grandeur it demands obedience to its glance, home to its presence which it think is Supreme Sovereign, Majestic, Wise, born to rule the world its stage where it struts and plays out in lofty airs its bloody thirsty avarice and insatiable greed where it is always the ground and heroic violator pompously virtuous over the brutalized the enslaved, the raped, the demeaned, those murdered in their sleep, those worked to death whose lament the wind of the world mourns (5).

The strategical device used by Native writers questions the monolithic Eurocentric gaze. In the poem titled ‘Conversation’, Ruffo gives insight into the discussion of the Native issues. The attitude of the bureaucrats who ask the leader to come and hold deliberations in the urban centers is satirically exposed. Ruffo places the poem in Ottawa:
I know our conversation
will not last
the birds are seeking spring
innocent traitors
unhesitantly winging their sky
slight and lost
as blossoms or tuffs of willow
leaving us down on snow:
a delicate sadness.
and I am thinking of your lips
and the words that will make
a memory soft and warm
curling like clouds
from our morning coffee.
Now, almost as an aside, he tells me you’re dead,
just like that,
a bad heart? A broken vessel in the brain?
he’s not sure,
a broken heart? A rupture of memory?
neither am I (63).
The poet does not forget the bitter memory of the brutalities of the Europeans on the Natives. The poet narrates another occasion:

But then it happened years ago,
and this is another city,
another time
of wives and children,
and we are simply on our way to buy wine
for the barbecue.
There isn’t much we say except
agree on the delicate kind of person
you were,
consider your absence,
your flight (64).

The deliberations are always in favor of the dominant group and suppress the Native issues. In the poem ‘Influences’ the poet clearly exposes the extravagance of a bourgeoisie leader:

… television boredom, broken furniture,
wrecked cars, bottles
filled with tears
and stacked in the bedroom,
traded in for deposit,
all the while our elected members of parliament
merrily singing
“life is just a bowl of cherries,”
singing and arguing for first place,
For expense cheques
and suburban comfort,
politicians who gave up believing
in small towns,
politicians who never did believe,
who never stood under one black window
too high to reach
and whose children never will (71).

Opening In the Sky consists of sixty-three poems. This collection deals with diverse themes, celebrating the cultural, political, social, religious and environmental issues. The Indian way of life, their cultural, political and communal consciousness is also a major concern.

Similarly, violence and oppression are two essential strategical political factors that are often focused in the poetry of Armand Ruffo. However, he highlights these elements in other canonical discourses apart from Native Canadian poetic strategy. In his poetry, Ruffo employs poetic and political strategies to show the strategical devices of the dominant
power that subjugates its victims. On the treatment of this subject the poet glorifies counter-revolution by singing the gospel of justice. In the poem ‘Let The Oppressed Sing’, we can observe the various strategies of hegemonic structure in oppressing both counter-revolution and its ideology. The poem is subtitled, ‘For the Native people who fill Canada’s prisons and for all those who continue to struggle for Justice’. For Native people ‘prison’ curtail their freedom of expression and once they come out, it is only to a world of “Concrete and steel” (41). Ruffo writes about this situation by foregrounding both the political and the social hierarchy:

Let the oppressed sing of Chile,
that Anishanabe who excused himself for drinking,
but said he only wanted to have some fun,
that man with the woman nobody else wanted,
that big man who had just been released from concrete and steel
to a world that for him is concrete and steel,
that Mississauga who told me there were only 13 hundred of his people left,
and who like so many others of his kind had fallen between the fiscal cracks of a corporate society gone money mad.
Let the oppressed sing of Chile,
where Mother Earth has become infected
by nuclear waste,
Where Father Sky has become infected
by industrial waste,
where traditional home lands have been flooded,
clear-cut and mined in the name of progress,
where one half of the world’s population starves
while the other half grows fat in both body
and mind,
where law means wealth and power and a strong arm
carrying a big stick,
and where justice is just another word (41).

The poem is sarcastic in criticizing the policies of the Canadian Government who do more harm to the Native in the name of “Just doing their duty (To Serve & Protect?)” (42). Ruffo conveys his perception in revealing the oppression towards the Native Canadian by equating it with that of the Latin American countries. Similarly, Latin American countries went through the tragic and traumatic experience of continental colonialism and autocracy. Here in the poem, Ruffo selects Chile as an
example. It represents a symbol of revolution as well as a counter-revolution. Ruffo continues:

    Yes. Let Minnie sing of Chile

    along with all those other mothers and children

    who have died needlessly, senselessly,

    unjustly—Let all of them sing of Chile.

    for Chile is more than a country, it is a people

    dispossessed the world over(42).

The poetic canon of Armand Ruffo rehistoricizes the violence from Native point of view. Significantly, *Opening In The Sky* deals with the saga of survival. The theme of survival is a general discourse in Canadian literature and in particular Native Canadian Literature. Survival of Indian culture and their environment is a unique factor in their discourse. Apparently Native Canadian poetry criticizes the imperial policies of America. In attempting this, Ruffo unmasks this cultural domination of America by strategic devices against the centre. Margaret Atwood criticizes the American imperialism in her poem, “Animals in That Country”. Particularly, Armand Ruffo is conscious in Criticizing American imperialism in his poem “The Other Side Of The Looking Glass”, Natives could watch their side of the *Looking glass*” (32):
Wash the smog from your eyes, the exhaustion,
the accumulation of years
and examine yourself closely
your teeth are perfect plastic
your hair is someone else’s
your skin is pulled and stitched
your face is stretched young
your smile is permanent
Now look closer Look into the eyes
examine them thoroughly. (32)

The theme of survival of Native cultures is foreground in the poetry of Armand Ruffo. However the poet rewrites colonial history by paying tribute to the Indians who survived during the early phase of the European immigration to Canada. It includes a list of Indian Warriors, Hunters, Mothers, Grandmothers and Chiefs. The colonial history is also an era of Colonial Manichean World. On a wider interpretation of the Manichean world it is relevant to analyze the poem for Duncan Campbell Scott. Scott was a distinguished Canadian poet. He also worked at the Department of Indian Affairs and retires in 1932. Ruffo reveals another face of Duncan Campbell Scott by writing about his “work” and “mission”. Notice how speaks aloud and forthright:
This or nothing.

Beware! without title to the land
under the Crown you have no legal right
to be here.

Speaks as though what has been long decided wasn’t.
As though he wasn’t merely carrying out his duty
to God and Kind. But sincerely felt.
some whisper this man lives in a house of many rooms,
has a cook and a maid and even a gardener
to cut his grass and water his followers.
Some don’t care, they don’t like the look of him.
They say he asks many questions but
doesn’t wait to listen. Asks
much about yesterday, little about today
and acts as if he knows tomorrow.
Others don’t like the way he’s always busy writing
stuff in the notebook he carries. Him,
he calls it poetry
and says it will make us who are doomed
live forever (25).
The “present” problems of Indians are not discussed. To Scott political stand of Indians may be the theme in his poetry but his “mission” as a political emissary is a failure. The poem typically shows the colonial cultural, political and religious conflict between the Indians and the Europeans.

Poetry of Armand Ruffo is political as well as personal. He criticizes the imperial nature of the European education. In the poem ‘Mandate’ which is subtitled ‘For the angry young warrior’, the Poet’s contempt to the European educational system is evident. He writes:

You educated you
Know-it-all
Middle of the road
Mouthy lovely mystic
Equality and Justice
And Compassion
(such vague terms!)
Have not yet triumphed
There is no dial to touch
We are here
Touch this spot
This earth
We share (14).

Significantly Paulo Freire in his revolutionary book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1983)* analyses the educational system from a “oppressed” consciousness. He rewrites the so called enlightenment of a political educational pedagogy.

The theme of assimilation is one of the core themes of Native Canadian literature. The residential schools, jail, churches and other institutions have “stolen” the Native children. The outcome of these strategies leads to frustration and estrangement among the children. Ruffo reveals these strategies in the poem ‘public Education’:

I live in a free country where I can get what I want.

education

profession

spouse

house

drive a car, cat in restaurants, in a free country

where prisons hold criminals, courts prove guilt

and there are no bars to upward mobility.

I live in a free country and was glad to look white.

Never said a word when I was taught someone else’s history.

In a country where no one had to say there were more
Indians in jail than in school. All I had to do was look around me (54).

These struggles for attaining education mostly results in frustrated violence.

This is analyzed by Howard Adams in *Prison of Grass*: Canada from a Native oint of View (1989). Poets relationship with his mother, friends, classmates, relatives and various Indians organizations is also a major theme in *Opening In The Sky*. In the formation of his poetic canon Ruffo writes his boyhood experiences that share a major portion in this anthology. In the poem ‘Pale Face’, he writes his school days experience:

When I was small
One day I came home crying
because the kids at school had called my mother Squaw.
I told her what they said and she said well we are Indian. I then went directly to the mirror. After that
I went back to school to face them. (55)
But in the class the poet wants to return to home: ‘Sitting here I wish/I could have been there/ to tell her/ it would do/no good/and that she was beautiful’ (55).

Opening In the Sky politicizes the environmental issues. The destruction of the natural resources due to urbanization and colonization reveals the poets reservation for the ecological preservation. There are poems about seasons, Lakes, rivers, forest and bushes. Ruffo compares the hitherto ecological destruction with the time prior to the rush of immigrants. In the poem ‘Untitled’, the poet narrates:

And I Dreamt we were
Safe and warm
in a land
Where all the creature
of earth and sky
spoke freely
and
understood (53).

Poetry of Armand Ruffo reworks historical narratives. These narratives were unique in shaping dominant ideology. In reading against the grain the canonical formation or the poetic discourse of Native literature is radical in distrupturing the concept of traditional poetic
definitions both in form and content. Significantly the influence of oral narration shapes to revalue poetic discourse from a cultural dimension. In fact Native Canadian discourse is related to the critical term “strategic essentialism” which means the plurality of ideologies and identities that theorize literary canon. This discursive strategy is diverse in Native Canadian poetic discourse in general and in particular it is evident in the poetry of Armand Ruffo. Robin Ridington in his essay, ‘Cultures In Conflict: The Problem Canadian Discourse’, analyses Native Canadian discourse. He Says:

The oral traditions of people who are native to this land are a form of discourse that connects them to the land and to the generations that have gone before. Their discourse has given them a highly developed form of government that is different from our own [...] their discourse also demands a responsibility to past generations, to the land, and to generations as yet unborn. Their discourse honors and enables both individuality and social responsibility. The discourse of Native people takes place within real time, but it is meaningful in relation to a time of mind, a mythic time. Performer and listener share both a common time frame and a complementary knowledge of that mythic world. They share a
common responsibility to the names that are fabulous in their lands. Their relationship to the names and to one another is conversation takes place in the same time as their common experience, but it also takes place in the time of their ancestors. The names of these ancestor and their lands are parties to the conversation....(W.H.New, 276).

The political leadership of Native Canadian people finds difficult to raise their political issues that caught up in the “gaze of Empire”. At this juncture, one is enforced to pose the questions on the issues of belonging. The situations raise the pertinent questions of Whose Canada? That remains incomprehensible. It also creates an atmosphere, where one goes to the extent of questioning the possibility of creating a nation state for indigenous people in Canada. This is a political question and many writers have responded to this through their works. Noel Dyck in his introduction to his book *Indigenous Peoples and Nation State: ‘Fourth World’ Politics in Canada, Australia and Norway* (1992) says that natives are “struggling variously to retain traditional lands, to cope with government administration of their affairs and to survive as culturally distinct peoples within nation-states” (1).

History and literature of Native Canadians and Europeans could be differentiated on many written and non-written ideological foundations.
The historical consciousness on the theoretical grounds and its influence on Native literature gives power to writers to re-read, re-vision, de-mythify and finally to deconstruct from a Native perspective.

When we re-read the literature of Europe the “Euro-Ethnocentric” and “Anthropocentric” perspectives of ‘self’ and ‘other’ always results in heated debates. Terry Goldie analyses the dialectical tension of indigene’s image in Native literature written by Natives and their image in the works Non-Natives. He brings out this analytical view in his book *Fear and Temptation: The Image of the Indigene in Canadian, Australian, and New Zealand Literatures* (1989). Goldie says that the White authors fear and are often are tempted to include and exclude Natives from/their works. He concludes his view point:

[...] this study can be seen as reflections of the fear/temptation split manifested in the violence and sex commodities. The general sign of fear incorporates an indigenization which excludes the indigene. Temptation holds with it an indigenization by exclusion for the white who, one might say, “acquires Indian”. Note that my word is “acquires”, not “becomes”. Some psychologists might diagnose this acquiring as a rejection for self for non-self which represents a significant degree of self-hate. The typical pattern of such
narratives on indigene must modify such an interpretation, however. The indigence is acquired the white is not abandoned. There are novels in which a Woman is not woman or a plumber id not plumber but there are none in which an Indian is not INDIAN, or Maori not MAORI […] The indigene field must be circumscribed in order to preserve its position as symbol of national essence. Roland Barthes has suggested that the Eiffel Tower is the ultimate signifier of things Parisian, an open symbol which has in itself no meaning and thus any meaning might be poured into it. How much more symbolic than is the Aborigine of Australia, the Maori of New Zealand, or the Indian or Inuk of Canada. Those of us who are white citizens of such countries often find that the indigenous culture is the only one of any interest to European observers (215-216).

Goldie’s assessment could be read along with Edward Said’s ‘Orientalism’ in stereotyping the image of Oriental Countries. Native Canadian writers use different discursive strategies of dismantling the stereotyped roles to re-value history because the “Central factor in all of the literature on the indigene is that his or her role is invariable that of the indigene” (215).
This ‘fear and temptation’ could be seen in the attitude of the whites towards the indigene. This historical fact is the central theme of Armand Garnet Ruffo’s *Grey Owl: The Mystery of Archie Belaney*. Grey Owl was an English man who transformed into an Indian. This could have been the history or mystery or could be reality or the invention of white conception of psychic transformation. This is the theme and treatment of Grey Owl and its subtitle show that it is only the mystery of Archie Belaney.

The intertextual discourse of Grey Owl is evident in the epigraph which is taken from the writings of Native American novelist, poet and critic N. Scott Momaday. Momaday says: …an Indian is an idea which a given man has of himself. And it is a moral idea, for it accounts for the way in which he reacts to other men and to the world in general. And that idea, in order to be realized completely, has to be expressed. (V, Grey Owl).

Grey Owl is the ‘expression’ of the poet to devalue/re-value the image of the popular belief of the image of Grey Owl in history and literature. The book is divided into four sections titled, ‘Beginning’, ‘Transformation’, ‘Journey’, and ‘No Retreat’. In every section there is the picture of Grey Owl. The poet introduces the multi-facet of the ‘mysterious’ person just before the section ‘Beginning’. He begins:

Transformation and Journey
Archibald Stansfeld Belaney,
And Grey Owl, Wa-Sha-Quon-Asin.
The geography.
England. Hastings, a seaside village, his-birth
At 32 St. James’s Road; the move to 52 St. Helen’s road,
Near the woods he played in; to 365 St.Mary’s Terrace,
Where he watched the ships move out to sea; Highbury Villa
And his menagerie of pets.
Canada. Toronto, where he worked in Eaton’s department store;
Tamagami, Bear Island, where he began trapping and married
Angel; Biscotasing, meeting the Espariels and becoming
A Riverman; Doucet, Gertrude and his first two beaver;
Cabano, where he began to write; Ajawaan, where he completely
Become Grey Owl (V-VII).

This epigraph is the story of Grey Owl in a nut-shell. The ethnic
geography and the displacement or the ‘hyphenated identity’ is one of the
strategies of immigrant writings in Canada. Ruffo is a Native Canadian,
influenced by his Ojibway heritage. But Grey Owl in the popular mystery
and history is an English man who transforms himself to an Indian. Grey
Owl’s works include The Men of the Last Frontier (1931), Pilgrims of the
Wild (1934), The Adventures of Sajo and her Beaver People (1935, and
Tales of an Empty Cabin (1936). There is a long distance of identity between his English name Archiebald Stransfeld Belaney and his Indian name Grey Owl, Wa-Sha-Quon-Asin. Ruffo uses different strategies for re-valuing the ‘mystery’ of Grey Owl. Armand Ruffo conducts a thorough study on Grey Owl and gathers “valuable social and historical information”. Ruffo collection of research on Grey Owl includes Anahareo’s Devil in Deerskins: My Life with Grey Owl (1972), Lovat Dickson’s The Green Leaf: A Tribute to Grey Owl (1938) and Wilderness Man: The Strange Story of Grey Owl (1973) and Donald B.Smith’s From The Land of Shadows: The Making of Grey Owl (1990). He also visited Hastings, in England, where Archie Belaney was born. Ruffo also collected Owl’s Photographs, films and interviews. The author acknowledges his influence:

As a child I had a photograph hung on the wall beside my bed of Grey Owl and my great-uncle Jimmy drumming together in Biscotasing, northern Ontario, Grey Owl’s “home town”. This image, along with the stories of Archie which have been a part of our family for long as I can remember, I carried with me through childhood. It was, however, not until years later, in trying to learn more about the history of Native Canada, that I once again found myself in the company of this mysterious Grey Owl. Consequently, not only did I rediscover
the books he had written himself, but I also came upon new work about him, which, ironically, led me back to old sources. This work then, is a culmination of all that I have ever heard, read, and imagined about the man and his times. (213)

In fact Grey Owl is not merely a narrative poem but it amalgamates popular myths, history and culture. At the beginning of every section the poet places the photograph of Grey Owl. In the first section, titled “Beginning”, we can see the young Archibald Stansfeld Belaney:
This photograph as the ‘semeiotic’ shows a typical European/English boy. The photograph proceeds the poet’s perception of the division of the race and class showing the hierarchy. It is titled ‘Influences’:

You must speak straight so that your words may go as sunlight
Into our hearts. When God made the world he gave one part
To the Whiteman and another part to the Apache.
Why did they come together? I am no longer Chief
Of all the Apaches. I am no longer rich; I am but a poor man.
The world was not always this way.
I have no father or mother;
I am alone in the world. No one cares for Cochise,
This is why I do not care to live
And wish the rocks to fall on me and cover me up (2).

This was written in 1886 by Cochise and influenced Archie who was eleven years old whose “mind is living somewhere out there among the Red Indians” (2). Archie carries two books; *Great Chiefs of the Wild West* and *Two Little Savages: The Adventures of Two Boys* who lived as Indians and what they Learned. They represent the intertextual canonical formation
of the text that stands to be in the dialogic relationship to these texts. This binary of the Manichean world of colonial period is analyzed by Frantz Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961). Fanon says:

A world divided into compartments, a motionless Manichaeistic world, a world of status: the status of the engineer who built the bridge; a world which is sure of itself, which crushes with its stones the backs flayed by ships: this is the colonial world. The native is a being hemmed in, apartheid is simply one form of the division into compartments of the colonial world. The first thing which the native learns is to stay in his place, and not to go beyond certain limits. (40)

The world is given to ‘Whiteman’ and ‘Apache’. The division of people on race and class is the result of colonialism/imperialism. Archie understands the dichotomy of Native Indian and English elite culture and their essential elements. The poet says, “Archie will become an Apache!” (2). His hero is Cochise, a Red Indian. In his journey to Canada, Archie does not forget his childhood experience:

Admit it. You’re going the wrong way.

What you’ve got to do

Is tell somebody.

Tell them you’ve made a terrible mistake.

But the evening’s dark and cold and there’s no one on desk.
Then look up towards the bridge. Shout to the captain
To turn the ship around. No. wait. Hold it. You can’t.
They’ll think you’re stark raving mad. Calm yourself.
Instead, clench your collar and look back to the sea.
But I can’t, because all I see out there is High bury Villa,
My childhood home:
the heavy furniture in the drawing-room,
The stiff high-backed chairs, the piano by the French doors
Which open to the garden, lilies and roses in blue Venetian
Vases, tea-time with silver and china,
white linen napkins on A tray (15).

Archie Belaney decides not to return to his homeland. George Mc Cormic, his childhood friend describes Archie as a ‘mysterious chap’
while Margaret McCormic describes, ‘He looks more Indian than ever’
(17). Archie writes in his Notebook, “I feel shackled by so many old emotions/I swear/ I will never return” (17).

Grey Owl’s narrative strategies are historical, personal and impersonal. Each section is again divided by prose poems written by Belaney and his friends and relatives. This impersonal perspective draws
the multifacets of Belaney. The impersonal perspective of his friends is reflected in the poem by George McCormick, in 1913:
Undoubtedly by this time he has gone Indian,
Shoulder-length hair, a large felt hat, buckskin
Jacket, moccasins. His voice too has changed,
Now having assumed a Canadian accent. And to think
That merely eight years ago we were fast friends.
Under that strange exterior, there walks a torn man,
I say to myself as I shake hands for the last time
With a perfect stranger. (23)

Ruffo uses strategy of the transformation of Belaney to an Indian to
show the hierarchy of power structure and the colonial ‘gospel’ of
civilizing the ‘lesser breeds’. In the section titled ‘Authority, Authority,
Everywhere, 1915’ he says:

They make me a lance-corporal
Because of my previous experience
In the Mexican Scouts, 28th Dragoons,
And store my silver six-shooters safe keeping.
Then they put me in the Royal Highlanders of Canada
And order me to wear a kilt. Indians don’t wear skirts,
I cry but, and beg to ask them, how
They can expect us to win the war without pants.
The minute I turn from visiting my aunts
They rip the strip from my arm and yell, Belaney!

Go absent-without-leave again and you’re one dead Indian.

I can live with that (26).

The imperial nature of European civilization could be seen in the unconscious depth of Archie Belaney. The discourse of suppression is evident when he says, “You want to talk civilization. OK/let’s talk war.”(26). The dichotomy of identity between a ‘native’ and a European heritage is seen in his nature. His wife Ivy Holmes Belaney says that it “is the end of time” (30), when she visits Belaney and when he was a wounded soldier:

It’s not, tomorrow comes, and I began to find him strange, Secretive, almost reclusive. He begins to hobble around On crutches. Begins to go down to the seaside to watch The waves. Insists on going alone.

When his discharge comes Through, he leaves for Canada.

He says he will write but never Does. What went wrong? I keep asking myself, we never Argued or fought once (30).

This hybridity of consciousness and its influence on Belaney makes her to say, “It was his saving grace-Ojibway taught, he got a job/ as a
Grey Owl foregrounds the theme of preservation and destruction of nature. The colonial policy of accumulating wealth using different strategies is seen in the text. The text addresses various issues of the time. The colonial administration taught the Natives:

What they teach me is how
To make a clean kill,
How to drown them as quickly as possible.
The winter hunt is the best
Kill the mother in the spring
And the title ones starve and
You destroy your source of replacement (35).

The character of Grey Owl becomes a strategical for dismantling history. The carnival celebration of Indian war dance and its entertainment package for the European society and its re-valuing customs shows the author’s political stand of re-reading culture. The study of literature and its shift to cultural politics/cultural studies reveals the carnivalisation of cultures across the continents. In the section ‘war Dance Given at Biscotasing By Jack Leve, Fur- Buyer-Sudbury Star, May 30, 1922’, the carnival cultural/political Dance of the Natives gives insight into the
conscious political awareness of their oppressors. This proposition subscribes to the view of Frantz Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) about the violence, and one can find its relevance in the Canadian situation of Colonial administration. Fanon says:

> The appearance of the settler has meant in the terms of syncretism the death of the aboriginal society, cultural lethargy and the petrifaction of individuals. For the native, life can only spring up again out of the rotting corpse of settler. This then is the correspondence, terms by terms between the two trains of reasoning. But it so happens that for the colonized people this violence, because it constitutes their only work, invests their characters with positive and creative qualities. The practice of violence binds them together as a whole, since each individual forms a violent link in the great chain, a part of the great organism of violence which has surged upwards in reaction to the settler’s violence in the beginning. (73)

Similarly, as Fanon says, the ideology of exposing violence of the colonial masters is evident in the poem through the importance of their rituals. Through the ritual War Dance Ruffo problematical the oppression. Archie Belaney Organizes the performance and acts the role of the chief:
The chief began his death song by beating his drum, singing and mocking the prisoner; then chief and council held a conversation in their own language and decided his fate. Finally the Chief spoke in English and told the prisoner of the wrongs that the Whiteman had done to the Indian. After this was over, he lit a fire and the entire tribe began their torture dance by beating their spears, knives and tomahawks by the flames. Then they danced around the prisoner, letting out wild yells and stabbing him with their weapons. The dance and torture lasted for about fifteen minutes after which time the Chief addressed the prisoner and told him that he admired him for being a brave man and therefore would let him go free (30).

The War Dance is also a ‘torture dance’ where the native dig out the colonial torture. Here the binary of Slave/Master position is subverted by playing the role of subordinated/hegemonic power structure. In the next section, Jack Leve, a friend of Belaney says, “[…] how badly Indian people have been treated/the decimation of the animals, the destruction of the land” (38).

This purports to the proposition that literature, politics and culture amalgamates to form a radical definition of literature. The study of Cultural politics gives immense power for writers to redefine the literary works. It is to be observed that the culturologists Glenn Jordan and Chris Weedon defines cultural politics in their book Cultural Politics: Class,
Gender, Race and the Postmodern World (1995) as: The legitimation of social relations of inequality, and the struggle to transform them, is central concerns of cultural politics.

Cultural politics fundamentally determine the meanings of social practices and moreover, which groups and individuals have the power to define these meanings. Cultural politics are also concerned with subjectivity and identity, since cultural plays a central role in constituting our sense of ourselves. Cultural struggles often reflect and/or produce deep emotional feelings—feelings of patriotism, elitism, racism, sexism, anti-racism, and so on. In another words, they are necessarily connected to subjectivity. The forms of subjectivity that we inhabit play a crucial part in determining whether we accept or contest existing power relations. Moreover, for marginalized and oppressed groups, the construction of new and resistant identities in a key dimension of a wider political struggle to transform society (5-6).

The centrality of Cultural politics raises the pertinent questions of whose culture? And whose ideology? Ruffo’s poetic canon celebrates the conflicts of Natives and the Eurocentric Masters of the colonial imperialism. Archie Belaney, the white who turned to a ‘Native’ problematises the Native issues. But his transformative identity is really a problematic hybrid identity and it rises answered and unanswered
questions such as is it possible for a white to become an Indian? Is it possible to change the colour of the skin? Is it possible to forget one’s own ethnicity?

In the next section titled, “Transformation” Ruffo describes Grey Owl’s external and internal metamorphosis. In the picture we can see Grey Owl wearing a European hat with hair. This takes the place of short from childhood photograph:
This hybridity of his identity is seen throughout the poem. This is evident in the section, ‘Simple Addition’:

A is for Archiebald
A is for Anishnabeg
A+A= Archiebald Anishnabeg
B is for Belaney
B is for Beaver
B+B= Belaney Beaver
Now simply add A+B
A+B= Archibald Belaney
Anishnabeg Beaver
Archiebald Beaver
Anishanabeg Belaney. (46)

But still the controversy of his identity gains prominence only when we actually raise the questions of his contribution to the Indians? Gertrude Bernard says Indians “need Archie’s help (51) because “In Free Country” (50) the Europeans perpetuate violence on the Indians and destroy their resources for their benefit. The situation is “mad as hell” (50)

The Lac Simon people explain in their broken English that two trappers from town poisoned the bush, used strychnine for bait and didn’t bother to collect it
come spring. So happens their huskies ate it and died.
these people depend on their dogs
and can’t afford to buy new ones. With the onslaught
of white trappers clearing the area of everything
that so much as moves, beaver, marten, lynx, fox, wolf,
you name it, they can barely make ends meet.
What little they earn goes to pay their debt
at the Hudson Bay Company store (50).

The transformation of Archie Belaney to an Indian enforces us to
direct his ideology of defeating the destroyers. Gertude Bernard says:

Cultivate the art of listening (Listen, damn it) Archie always
says. Frustrated and angry With the way their trapping grounds
are being destroyed, they sought revenge for their dead
animals and burnt down the shack of these white men, poured
coal-oil over their traps, which sent them scurrying into town
and to the police. The two Indians responsible are now in jail
facing a possible two-year prison term. You will speak for
them when they go before the court; Nuna speaks with finality
offering Archie a smoke. (51)

One of the characters in the poem Nuna who is an Indian reveals the
fact that, “the use of strychnine is illegal” (52) and they “depend on Nature
for their survival” (52). The journey from the White European to a Red
Indian or a Native is seen in “Simple Addition”. But the transformation from the former to the latter is not described by Grey Owl’s relatives or himself. It is the author who judges his identity to show the transformation. His friend Dave White Stone has written that, Owl is being suspicious by the Indians. Dave White Stone says, “Indian can’t say he is/Can’t say he isn’t. Speaks the language though” (66). He continues to question the identity of Grey Owl:

    And nothing fits.
    Grey Owl?
    Wa-Sha-Quon-Asin?
    Archiebald Stansfeld Belaney?
    Whiteman? Redman?
    Who’s Speaking? You yell
    as you now break your pledge and stand and rush
    to the mirror and make your Indian face.
    Who are you speaking as? Who are you
    speaking for? You rip the noose
    from your neck and fling into the corner (68).

    This was written in 1929 by Dave White Stone, who says, “but aware you must go” (68). The self assuming identity as an Indian and identity assumed by Native people or by other European is seen in
different contexts. From Britain America many have come to visit Owl and “They announce that I’ am the first/ to promote conservation; the beaver/the forests, the Indian /way of life”. (71). Now Archie Belaney is conscious of his identity:

I begin by singing my name Grey Owl,
and singing I was adopted by the Ojibway,
and that for 15years I spoke nothing but Indian;
then, before I know it, I have Apache blood.
Finally I’ am calling myself an Indian writer.
Fast, it all happens so fast.
At first I’ am hesitant.
I’ am unsure of the name, the sound of it (71-72).

The assumed name of Belaney as Grey Owl proves the fact that it is not the native culture he tries to possess but the name. On the other side he tries to “promote an indigenous philosophy for Canada” (72) and is “without hesitation” (72). The transformation of Belaney described by Gertrude Bernard gives insight into her perception of Belaney’s external identity. Archie Belaney is now active in various Indian associations. He is the President, Treasurer and Sole Member of the Beaver People Society. In a lecture given on the occasion of Canadian Forest Association’s annual conference, Belaney “acts” Gertrude says:
On the podium Archie is a natural.

A transformation occurs

and he is no longer merely Archie the reformed trapper
but someone he calls Wa-Sha-Asin, Grey Owl—
He who walks By Night—who speaks and acts
like a great Indian orator of old (75).

He continues to narrate the characteristics of Indians:

To Be A Red Indian

Red skin. Black hair. Piercing eyes.


Always slouch. Never smile

Say How-Kola (76).

At this movement Grey Owl or Archie Belaney is popular both in Canada and abroad. He came to Canada in 1906. This was written in 1931 by Gertrude. Lavat Dickson says that he is “half-breed” (85), when he published his first book *The Men Of the Last Frontier* in 1931. This book is about the portrayal of the Canadian North-land. He says that Owl himself had wanted to give the title as “The Vanishing Frontier” (85). This title gives emphasis on the destruction of nature. In England people have rated him as the authority on ‘Canadian Wildlife and forest lore’; The “Vanishing” could also means the destruction of Indians and their culture.
There is dominant discourse in European world on the theme of ‘Vanishing Culture’ of indigenous people. The colonial devastation of native people and their culture and created a mess but still the indigenous culture survives against the odds of Globalization.

The split personality of Grey Owl further changes his attitude towards people when try to learn of watch him closely. When the people try to identify him as a Whiteman or an Indian, Owl says in ‘WHY I RETREAT’ (WHEN ANYONE COMES TOO CLOSE):

One face is truthful
The others lies
One face gives
The other takes.
One face is kind
The other cruel.
One face remembers
The other forgets.
One face is gentle
The other rages.
One face is cares
The other neglects.
One face is open
The other sealed.
One face heals
The other hurts.
One face is handsome
The other ugly.
One face changes
The other remains (90).

The roots of Grey Owl haunt him. The Christmas celebration reminds his experience with his wife Gertie, as he calls her. The echo of Christmas bell tolls “in the spruce tops her with the wind in them, but there will be no one to hear them but me” (91). This had written by ‘Archie –
bald’ in 1934 in a letter to his wife. It seems that he is alienated among the Indians. He is between the English and Indian cultures. This duality and the ambiguity in the existence of Grey Owl is succinctly brought by Ruffo. The next section is titled ‘Journey’ and it is Grey Owl’s experience of the post-transformative identity. The section opens with the picture of Owl with his friend Lovat Dickson:
This picture shows the contrast of appearance between Grey Owl and Lovat Dickson. This was taken when Owl visited England. It contains dialogical relationship to his earlier appearance of teenage and his attempts to imitate the Indian Nativity. His experience in England reverberates the past. This hybridity of ambivalent thought questions his own identity.
Though Owl declares ‘the past is dead’, he cannot detach himself from it. As soon as he enters the hotel room, Grey Owl’s memory tries to recollect the past:

The movement I entered

I could’ve sworn I had stayed here years ago—may be as a child

with my grandmother when we came to London to visit Ivy and her mother? Ivy, my dear departed wife. Are you still at Bayswater? Are you still waiting for your husband to return?

He said he would. What difference does it make? That past is dead. Bury it. Let it rest in peace.

That was someone else, some Englishman named Belaney who died and was reborn. Grey Owl. A name I’ve earned which no one can take away from me. I don’t need her, or any one to tell me who I am. The Indians knows. Alex knows.

I have no need to defend myself. My work speaks for itself. (95)

During the lecture tour of Grey Owl he declares his identity on many occasions and his consciousness towards the Indians is seen in his ‘work’. The lecture of Grey Owl, highlighted by the media confuses his identity.
Yorkshire Evening News considers Owl as a ‘Canadian Indian’ and the lecture tour as a ‘pilgrimage’, “on behalf of his people and the small creatures of the forest with whom he has identified himself so closely” (109). The London Times highlights Owl as “a picturesque figure in Indian dress” (109). Harrogate Herald gives the identity of Owl as a “Red Indian author and naturalist” (109), whereas Nottingham Journal & Express reviews Owl as a “remarkable man…half-primitive, half-complex…the modern, the literary, Hiawatha” (109). This exposure leads to the questioning of George Turner on the definitions of self and identity. He asks in the section ‘Question/Answer’:

> The question is whether
> Or not
> What do I see?
> What do you?
> Do we see the same?
> (How can we?)
> So I stand and speak
> I have no choice
> I cannot live with what I see.
> What choice is there anywhere?
> Do we choose birth

Parents
Home

Sight?

Do we choose time?

The time it takes.

Enough to try

At least

To answer (112).

One of the answers to Grey Owl is by John Tootoosis. He says, “An Indian can tell who’s Indian. / Grey Owl can’t sing or dance. / But he’s doing good/ and when we meet / I call him Brother” (128).

After leaving for Canada, Owl participates in every political discussion with the Government as he is a lover of nature and wishes to do something to the Indians through discourse. His dream is to preserve the Messissauga River in film. He aspires to be the representative of Indian people. He likes to travel throughout “Great Britain and America promoting conservation (129). He is an ambitious man who wants prestige and popularity. As a writer, Grey Owl narrates his intention and this is evident in the section ‘WHY I WRITE’:

So I can live in the past

Earn a living

Protect the beaver,
Publicize conservation,
Attract attention,
Sell 35,000 copies in 3 months,
Give 138 lectures in 88 days,
Travel over 4,350 miles,
Wear feathers,
Play Indian—no
Be Indian,
Get to go to pow wows,
Get to tour Britain,
Meet the King & Queen,
Become famous
Become alcoholic,
Leave a legacy
Lose a wife,
Be lonely (135).

The historical reality and the notion of his identity and the ‘reason’ to become an ‘Indian’ obviously unmask Ruffo. He uses make-up to become an Indian. It is not the loss of naturality but it is a ‘white-Indian’ hybridity because “we know Wa-Sha-Quon-Asin is not born” (145) an Indian. The Indian for the rights of Indian people in Canada.
In the last section titled ‘No Retreat’, we see Grey Owl in Canada. He says, “There is no retreat. No rest” (148). This time he says that his real name is Mc Neil. The transformation of his external appearance is completed in this section. Now he is the symbolic of Indians in the European literature in Canada.

He is the spokesperson for the Indians and says “… Canada’s heritage will be saved only/when Indians are made active partners in its preservation” (148). The marginalized voices of Indians gain prominence through Grey Owl’s but the bureaucrats including Governor General Lord Tweedsmuir “listen sympathetically/but do nothing” (148).

In the last section ‘No Retreat’, Ruffo of places the picture of Grey Owl. He is a typical Indian in appearance. The long hair and the feather in head add naturality:

Lovat Dickson, a friend of Owl is now fed up with Owl’s discourse about the lives of Indian people. Grey Owl is against the Colonial policies, devastation of natives and the emerging of Capitalism in Canada. He aggrandizes the Native culture and philosophy by unmasking Colonial strategies. The emergence of Colonialism and imperialism is also the ‘colonialism’ of knowledge about the Natives. Edward W. Said distinguishes ‘colonialism’ and ‘imperialism’ in *Culture & Imperialism* (1993) and exposes its negative influence on knowledge:
imperialism means the practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan centre ruling a distant territory; ‘colonialism’, which is almost always a consequence of imperialism, is the implanting of settlements on distant territory [...] Neither imperialism or colonialism is a simple act of accumulation and acquisition. Both are supported and perhaps even impelled by impressive ideological formulation that include notions that certain territories and people require and beseech domination, as well as forms of knowledge affiliated with domination: the vocabulary of classic nineteenth-century imperial culture is plentiful with such words and concepts as ‘inferior’ or ‘subject races’, ‘subordinate peoples’, ‘dependency’, ‘expansion’, and ‘authority’ (9).

Grey Owl is an “Emissiri” of the Indian people. He glorifies the dignity of Native culture and exposes the colonial oppression. When he goes to England, he says, “I spoke of my people. / My philosophy/. I wanted to share” (171). Lovat Dickson says:

Grey Owl uses this time to describe for the King the plight
Of Canada’s Indian people. Speaks of old-time independence
And dignity that has been stripped from them. Tells
How their traditional homelands have been decimated,
Clear-cut, mined and flooded. Explains that they
Have become squatters in their own land, because of what
He calls civilized greed. Says they must be allowed
Back to the forest before it’s too late
And there are no forests left, before everything is polluted
And dead. Implores that it is they, not white people,
Who should be put in charge of Canada’s forest and wildlife (174).

Grey Owl becomes a controversial figure as he exposes the colonial strategies that destroy nature and animal resources. BBC refuses Owl to broadcast his farewell speech to the children of England and his script on fox-hunting becomes a controversy. When he visits United States, he gains his footage as a famous writer and naturalist. Americans believe “the only good Indian is a dead one” (195), because they are not harmful to dominant power structure unlike the living ones.

Born as a Christian, Archie Belaney’s belief in it fades because of his constant touch with Indian way of life. Now he is old. In 1938 when he was admitted in a hospital, a nun asked his religion. He was unable to speak. Instead Grey Owl, “I want to point to the window but cannot lift my hand. Instead I pray: the trees, the wildlife the trail, all/that I am. Then an even brighter light. /(203). On his death bed the childhood memory haunt
him. After his death *North Bay Nugget* April 13, 1938, quoted Mrs. Angele Belaney who claimed, “Grey Owl/ is not an Indian but a full-blooded Whiteman. (204). Ottawa Citizen, April 20, 1938, printed that Archie Belaney couldn’t have practiced conservation of wildlife under his own name. Henceforth, he changes the name to Grey Owl. London Times opines that there is a conflict of opinions regarding his Indian blood. Liver Pool Daily Post doesn’t concern his identity; instead it glorifies Owl for working “increasingly for the protection of wildlife” (207). *Manchester Guardian* rated Owl as one who devoted his life to the understanding of nature. *Winnipeg Tribune* glorified his attainment as a writer and naturalist proclaims their survival for a long period. It also prophesizes that future generation are told of the masquerade “their wonder and their appreciation will grow”. (207)

Grey Owl’s conscious memory recalls the childhood experiences with his mother, even at the time of his death. He says, “M-o-t-h-er! I wanted so many times to scream (182). He continues, “And how one day/ with those same hands you held me and said you had to go, and from now on I was to live with my aunties/No, I wanted to be with you/” (182). Grey Owl’s conscious White European heritage reminds us to think of his hybridity of the racial consciousness.
Is Grey Owl’s existence a reality or mystery? Or is it a carnival masquerade that dismantles the concept of identity by birth or an ideology? Or is it the creation of the author to de-historicize the history? Or is it a strategy of the writer to juxtapose the Indian way of life and the Europeans? Or is it to expose the atrocities of the Europeans on Indians? Or is it to aggrandize the Ojibway heritage and their Oral tradition? Or is it the author trying to show the canonical structure of Native Canadian poetry? These questions stand out to be pertinent and their incomprehensibility demand the clear understanding of the dialectics of the Native Canadians. One can read the inter textual similarity of racial and cultural perspectives of ‘hybridity’ in the work of John Howard Griffin’s *Black Like Me* (1960). This similarity creates a kind of cultural matrix. Both the texts problematise the ideology of the colour of the skin and the material transformation to artificiality.

White novelist

John Howard Griffin
As he appeared
before he decided
to cross the color line

skin temporarily darkend

by medical treatments,
hair shaved,
John Howard Griffin is
Ready to pass as a Negro in the
Deep South

*Black Like Me* troubles the conscience of every individual who believes in the dignity and justice of democracy. The text foregrounds the racial problems of the Black community in United States. Griffin is a white author who goes through a medical treatment in order to change his colour of the skin to problematise “What it is like to be a Negro in a land where we keep the Negro down” (*Black Like Me*, 5).
The book was published in 1960, a dynamite period of second wave of Afro-American or Black Renaissance. This emergence of Civil Rights Movement and Black Artistic Revival transformed the particularities the ultimate Revolution Griffin’s ideological vision of the book deals with the existential problem of the human race. In the preface he says:

The Negro. The South. These are details. The real story is the universal one of men who destroy the souls and bodies of other men (and in the process destroy themselves) for reasons neither really understands. It is the story of the persecuted, the defrauded the feared and detested. It could have been a Jew in Germany, a Mexican in number of states, or a member of any: “inferior” group. Only the details would have differed. The story would be the same […] This began as a scientific research study of the Negro in the south, the careful compilation of data for analysis. But I filled the data and here publish the journal of my own experience living as a Negro. I offer it in all its crudity and rawness. It traces the changes that occur to heart and body and intelligence when a so-called first-class citizen is cast on the junk heap of second class citizenship (5).
Black Like Me and Grey Owl revolutionize the racial and cultural problems respectively. If Henrik Ibsen and Bertold Brecht revolutionized the political theme, these two texts gave prominence to the existential question of racial hierarchy. The metamorphosis of the mind from the actual reality of Grey Owl and John Howard Griffin shows the possibility and impossibility of being in the latter stage of transformation. The ghettoed mentality of the Negroes and their attitude towards the white community is the core issue of Black Like Me. The racial psychic tension is the communal psychic tension. Marginalized sections or Minority voices finds difficulty to raise their voice on a large platform in the dominant power structure. The same thread of similarity can be seen in the writings of Jewish Canadians and Black Canadians of Canada.

The tension and conflicts between the minority races and their dominance reflects in their literature. Grey Owl and Black Like Me epitomizes the dialogic relationship to history. The transformation of Archiebald Stansfeld Belaney and John Howard Griffin to a new identity doesn’t enforce them to forget their beginnings. The unconscious and conscious attachment to their families is evident when both of them compare the early phase of their existence as Whites.

John Howard Griffin’s idea of changing the colour of his skin is not merely an action to know the racial discrimination but it is an attempt also
to know the psychic repression of being as Negro. During his discussion with Whites Griffin learns, “…two great arguments – the Negro’s lack of sexual morality and his intellectual incapacity” (111). This method of stereotyping the Black people is evident in the attitude of the whites.

*Black Like Me* is the factual experience of the author. Griffin’s mental agony as a ‘Negro’ and his original identity as a Whiteman always disturbed his conscience. He could not escape from the memory of his wife and daughter, and “was anxious to get back to his wife and child” (139). His bitter experience resulted in writing this book. After the publication of the book there were many violent incidents against Griffin and his parents and were: unable to bear the hostility (155). Griffin re-charged his colour of the skin to white whereas Grey Owl does not throw away the Indian identity to European White.

In the first section of Grey Owl titled ‘Beginning’ we can observe the influence of Indian Chief Cochise on Archie Belaney that made his “escape” Grey Owl’s perception of Indian identity and his transformation to an Indian to become the leader compete him to negotiate with the Canadian Government. Many rated him as a courageous man who devoted life for cause of Indian’s problems. It is not the identity that the media focused on his devotion to solve the problems by creating consciousness and awareness. Grey Owl never returns to his home country, England but
conscious envisage to embrace his roots is seen. The text closes by mentioning his date of birth and death and his England and Indian names respectively:

BETWEEN BIRTH AND DEATH WAUSSAYUAH-BINDUMIWIN

Born: Archiebald Stansfeld Belaney


Down the avenue of trees, I see

A spot of sunlight.

And I am trying so hard to get there.

Dies: Grey Owl, Wa-sha-quon-asin

April 13, 1938, Prince Albert, Saskatchewan (209).

The “Vision” “Philosophy”, “Dignity” and “Religion” of Grey Owl can be seen in the epigraph of his tomb which was recorded by Betty Somerwell during her ocean voyage with him from England to the United States in 1931. Ruffo has borrowed this couplet from The Green Leaf: A Tribute to Grey Owl by Owl’s friend, Lovat Dickson. Grey Owl, Wa-sha-quon-asin died as an Indian and not as a Englishman, Archie bald Stansfeld Belaney.

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