CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION
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In the thesis, identity is understood as being neither neutral and passive, nor fixed. While identity is intrinsically an individual issue, it is also relational, juxtaposed with others’ identities. Because identities are embedded in systems of power based on race, class and gender which makes it a political issue with ramifications for how contemporary and historical collective experience is understood. Identity, in a sense, is about ways of looking at people, about how history is interpreted and negotiated, and about who has the authority to determine a group’s identity or authenticity. For Canadian Native people, individual identity is always being negotiated in relation to collective identity and in the face of an external, colonising society. Bodies of law defining and controlling Indianness have for years distorted and disrupted older indigenous ways of identifying the self in relation not only to collective identity but also to the land. The thesis looks into the Native Canadian’s crisis of identity from the sociological point of view. A brief analysis of the historical events has been considered to examine the psychological and sociological aspects of group behaviour.

To be federally recognised as an Indian in Canada, an individual must be able to comply with very distinct standards of government regulations. The effects of these regulatory regimes might best be understood in terms of a “discourse” in the sense that Foucault (1972) used the term – as a way of seeing life that is produced and reproduced by various rules, systems and procedures – forming an entire conceptual territory on which knowledge is produced and shaped. The Indian Act in Canada, in this respect, is much more than a body of laws that for over a century have controlled every aspect of Indian life. As a regulatory regime, the Indian Act provides ways of understanding Native identity, organising a conceptual framework that has shaped contemporary Native life in ways that are now so familiar as to almost seem “natural”.

The thesis makes an attempt to examine how pervasively the Indian Act in Canada has permeated the ways in which Native peoples think of themselves. The history of the Native Canadians since the contact period, and the various categories of Native identity that have been legally defined under federal laws, have been discussed to examine the credibility of the three authors’ demand of
the possibility of curving a stable identity for their people. Understanding how the colonial government has regulated Native identity, it is essential for Native people, to attempt to step away from the colonising frameworks that have enmeshed their lives and hence make an attempt to revive the identities and ways of living that preceded colonisation.

One of the major problems confronting the British Empire in 1763 was maintaining peace with North American Indians who lived on the land acquired from France in the Treaty of Paris. The Royal Proclamation of 1763 was issued on October, 7, 1763, by King George III following Great Britain's acquisition of French territory in North America. The purpose of the proclamation was to organise Great Britain's new North American empire and to stabilise relations with the Native peoples through regulation of trade, settlement and land purchase. The Royal Proclamation ceased to be law in the United States following the American Revolution, but continues to be of legal importance to the First Nations of Canada.

The Indian Act legislated in 1876 seems to be even more confusing as it consolidates and expands the previous Indian legislation. The assimilative intention of the Indian Act limited the number of people who could be considered as “Indians”. According to the Indian Act, Indians in Canada are those individuals who are registered as an ‘Indian’ with the government of Canada and as holding First Nation membership associated with Treaties and Reserves.

A “Non-Status Indian” refers to a person of Indian ancestry who is not registered as an Indian in the Register. Many of these people were simply not enrolled on treaty or band lists at the time enrolment was occurring, or were removed from the Indian registry due to enfranchisement provisions with Indian Act.

The “Métis” represents the second constitutionally recognised aboriginal group. A Métis is defined as a person who self-identifies as a Métis, - a person of Aboriginal ancestry (i.e., at least one grandparent is or was Aboriginal) and - a person who is not registered in the Indian or Inuit Register.

The “Inuit” are the third constitutionally-recognised Aboriginal people of Canada who had no officially declared rights as Aboriginal people, as they were not included in the government’s original definition of “Indian”. 

143
The aforesaid categorisation of the vast number of Aboriginal peoples has affected their identity. This highlights the historical and political background of the terminology, or naming of Aboriginal peoples. It also sets the context within another European legacy of imposing hierarchical classes on Aboriginal peoples that did not exist prior to European colonial contact. This is how an alien government imposes classes of categories on the aboriginal groups thus shattering their integrity as sovereign peoples.

Indeed, to speak of Native identity reinforces the notion that the word “Indian” describes a natural category of existence. And yet it is equally clear that the label “Indian” has been an external descriptor which was imposed on the indigenous population as a common identity when the settler government in North America failed to define the indigenous citizenship. The fewer “Indians” that existed as per the Indian Act, the lesser was the financial responsibility of the government. Moreover, the main intention of the Act was to get rid of the distinctiveness of the First Nations peoples as was present in their unique relationship with the land, language, religion and culture.

During the early years of policy enactment, only men were considered “Indians”. That ‘man’, his wife and children followed his line of an ‘Indian’ people. All ‘legal’ Indians were wards of the government and hence were not allowed to vote in Canadian elections prior to 1960. Many ‘Indians’ lost their status as Indians because of their marriage with non-status Indians. Janice Acoose, for example, described how being classified by the Canadian government as a status Indian led to the violation of the rights of her Cree / Métis and Saulteaux cultures, which has caused a rupture in her sense of belonging to her own nation. The categorisation has placed her as a powerless and racialized individual at the bottom of the hierarchy of the Euro Canadian society. For indigenous people, to be defined as a race is synonymous with having the Nations dismembered. Contemporary Native identity therefore exists in an uneasy balance between concepts of generic “Indianness” as a racial identity and of specific “tribal” identity as indigenous nationhood. In general Native resistance to colonisation rejects notions of “pan-Indian” identities that can only aspire for equality within a settler state framework. For indigenous people, resisting colonial relations involves a refusal to accept the authority of Canada as a settler state, and casting a focus on rebuilding the nation that the coloniser has sought to destroy.
The education process proved to be a complex system in exercising Aboriginal rights to education because of provincial and federal jurisdiction regarding various obligations to Canadian citizenry and Indians under the Canadian constitution Act of 1867 and later the Indian Act of 1876. It was held that both Indians and the lands reserved for the Indians were exclusive matters of federal responsibility while schooling and education was a matter of provincial responsibility. This account explains the complications that the Native has to encounter in his everyday life. There is a constant struggle of living in diverse situations and challenging stereotypes and myths.

From the moment of original contact, Aboriginal presence and experience have also contributed to the constitution of the cultural identity of the Canadian nation. The development of a tradition of Canadian literature depended in part on evoking native elements. A number of non-Aboriginal authors have written about native characters and drawn on aboriginal symbols, at least in part to develop an “authentic” Canadian literature. This genre of literature draws on natives tales and symbols and events from the history of Euro-Aboriginal contact. Nevertheless, this process of ‘using’ the native images in the non-Aboriginal writings reflected an unequal balance of power between the Aboriginal and the settler cultures. The Europeans attempted to ‘imagine’ the Indians rather than to ‘know’ them. It reflected their fears and hopes about the New World. The basic assumption begins with the equation of the native with the wilderness and the uncivilised. Out of this process have come a multitude of ethnocentric images of Aboriginals that have distorted their cultures, making it difficult for those steeped in western culture to see native peoples with any clarity.

Ojibwa historian and storyteller Basil Johnston insists on the importance of understanding the cultural context in which the body of material is embedded. He argues for the central role of Aboriginal languages and literatures, both to scholarship on native peoples and to cultural preservation. The insider / outsider discourse in relation to Aboriginal literature stems from the difference of the attitude which Aboriginal scholars and writers deem essential. The difference lies in the strategic essentialisation made by the Aboriginal writers who are fighting a battle to affirm their rights. Because of "the continuation of an unjust power relationship" the body of Aboriginal writings are considered to be different texts. Regarding the thematic
expression of writings of the Native people, it reveals the authors' experiences of navigating in two worlds and the constant struggles and reminders that they are not really free to be in either world. It is the 'blending' of two perspectives in the place that lies in between the two worlds, offers a space for construction of a stable Native identity. The stereotypification and misrepresentation have made holes in Aboriginal culture, autonomy and feelings of self-worth. The Natives are now mending and healing their wounds by writing their own stories for their own people and also for the world outside. Instead of expecting the familiar 'English' text, the readers are made aware of learning as much as possible about the hidden layers created by the specific linguistic and cultural context.

Penny Petrone (1990) points out in her study of Aboriginal literature that it is a didactic tool for transmitting cultural percepts that should be understood to be different from the western idea of "art for art's sake'. The chief purpose of the body of Native literature is to present themselves in the way they want to be presented before the world.

There are several ways in which the marginalised groups in Canada have reclaimed the use of narratives for themselves. The first step is to re-narrate their identity instead of complying with the pre-given identity imposed on them by the dominant discourse. The narratives thus help re-narrating the agency to claim epistemic authority. Moreover, the strategic narration by the marginalised groups empower them and affirm their resistance by reflecting their experiences in an understandable way. It is from the perspective of a committed belief that social relations can be transformed through the agency of art, that the topic of the Quest for an Identity in Native Canadian Fiction has been looked into in the thesis.

The term 'Native Canadian Fiction' covers a vast and complex body of creative literary works. It is essential therefore, to clarify the specific parameters of the study undertaken in the thesis. The study categorically refers to the Canadian literature written by indigenous writers not in indigenous languages, but in English, that represents the problematic postcolonial Native Canadian consciousness. The Native Canadian fictions under study have been intrinsically bound up with the effect of the experience of colonialism and neo-colonialism. These literary works are perceived in terms of literary production.
that emerged out of the contact between the Indians and the Europeans, a contact which was historical.

The rich body of Canadian First Nations' oratures present before and during the days of the first contact was ignored by the European immigrants. European cultural chauvinism dominated in the early days and no First Nation man could find his voice heard. It was immediately after the conversion of the Indians in the mid-nineteenth century that the Canadian Indians started writing and publishing in English. The writings were basically in the forms of diaries, autobiographies, histories, reports, letters, travelogues and sermons.

The writings of the Natives illustrate how the indigenous peoples were dominated by the cultural and religious ideologies of the European settlers in the early contact period. But writings soon after the 1820s marked a drastic change in the tone as the Indians found themselves homeless in their ownhomelands after losing their ancestral lands to the settlers. In an attempt to relocate themselves in the New World, the First Nations writers began to write in an entirely new form - literature of resistance. The First Nations writers took up the thematic of identity formation in literature whereby they strengthened their community feeling and 'nativised' the English language and thus moulded the genre of English literature to suit their own purpose. The purpose of this literature was to comprehend and also to challenge the states of consciousness induced by an experience which had changed the Native Canadian psyche. The Native Canadian novel is a genre developed as a particular body of imaginative discourse primarily occupied with modes of resisting the role of dominant cultural hegemony in determining the Native Canadians' states of consciousness. The novelists are, in a conscious act, building and reconstructing an identity the Indians were hitherto denied. The Native Canadian fictions thus become a means of self-realisation.

The novels of Jeannette Armstrong, Ruby Slipperjack and Tomson Highway have also emerged out of the interaction between the larger social process and their own participation in this process. Their novels reflect the fictive and factual tensions and conflicts that result from the effect of socio-political change on the individual and collective sensibilities.

The experience of post-colonisation in the Canadian context involves a situation specifically peculiar to the construction of Canadian nation-building. Post-colonialism was structured by the neo-colonial experience which could be
explained in terms of high degree of economic and technological influence over a former colony's economic policy by foreign business interests suggesting the pre-dominance of the culture and values of the former colonial powers over the base culture. Study of the prescribed novels have revealed the fact that the independence of the Native Canadians has been only nominal and therefore should not be confused with liberation. The increasing polarisation of the standards of living between the whites and the Indians prevail in Canada. H.A. Bulhan in his critique of Frantz Fanon and the Psychology of Oppression (1985) refers to this condition as "un-freedom". In the third world context, Bulhan points out that liberation primarily involves emancipation from biological needs.

At a deeper level, however, liberty also signifies the freedom to fully realise one's own cultural and human potential. Liberation, in the Canadian context, is even more complex and tricky. The legislation that changed British North America into Canada was the British North America Act of 1867. The legislation created a new nation consisting of a confederation of three provinces - Ontario, Quebec and Nova Scotia. On one hand there was a strong colonial sympathy for the British, and on the other the reluctant acquiescence of the French - population of Quebec. It is within this shifting soil of uncertain loyalty, that seeds of nationality germinated and grew to register Canada's birth where the Aboriginal groups fail to form part of a comprehensive portrait of Canadian nationality. The process of nation-construction was seen as complex not only because of Canada's colonial history and geographical location but also because of the very double nature of the colonial powers, and moreover, the nation's own search for uniqueness in its bilingual / bicultural structure. It is under this complex circumstances, the native Canadian fiction begins to function as 'space' or a carrier of a message that challenges the Canadian reality which continues to be violated through the ideological mechanism of neo-colonialism. In this context the novels become the political narratives of liberation. What unites the three novelists is the fact that they all consider the novel as an ideological weapon for reasserting political and cultural identity.

The Aboriginal peoples are not one people. The differences between status Indians, non-status Indians, Métis, and Inuit are profound in terms of their histories and cultural identities. But even within the group "Indians" there are many peoples, differing fundamentally in their languages, traditions, economic organisation and the extent and nature of their contact with the
settlers. All of them suffered in different degrees from prolonged contact with the settler society, such as the destruction of their traditional relationship to the land, disease, alcoholism, the loss of language and customs through an unsympathetic educational system and a host of other policies to an anachronistic and backward way of life. Despite these differences, Jeannette Armstrong being an Okanagan, Ruby Slipperjack, an Ojibway and Tomson Highway, a Cree, the development of aboriginal demands has tended to follow a common trajectory. The five fictions written by them have been found to have put sole emphasis on the revival of cultural affirmation. Their cultural heritage has been considered as an important strategy to rebuild their people's identity in their engagement with the contemporary Canadian society. Each writer, representing his or her cultural background, has been found to have captured a moment of the wider historical consciousness of the society in the novels.

The crisis of consciousness, because of a shared colonial history, distinguishes the novels under study from the western apolitical expectations of the text as an autonomous aesthetic manifestation. Hence the novels have been examined to have fulfilled the conditions of being true narratives of liberation. While doing so the socio-historic perspective of the literary environment in which the texts are produced has been undertaken. The three novelists in their writings have been found to be concerned with their social, economic and political history, - but skin colour also has become an important subject of their writings. This calls for the ultimate search for identity - where the writer plays the role, according to Fanon, as a "self-appointed awakener of the people".9

The central issue, therefore, is not simply one of understanding the aesthetic aspect of individual text but rather how individual texts have evolved from a particular base of socio-economic historical determinants. The texts have been, therefore, considered in terms of functioning "as a variable in the larger system of literature to which they belong, which is itself a variable for culture as a culture."10

In the thesis an attempt has been made to examine Canadian concept of identity vis-a-vis the production of identity in novels written in English by the Aboriginal authors. The writings of Jeannette Armstrong, Ruby Slipperjack and Tomson Highway have been examined as texts that deal with the complex negotiation of identity of the Native Canadians, arising out of the neo-colonial policies of Canada causing their political and cultural displacement.
The idea of formation of identity dealt in the novels has been considered from the perspective of a reflection of the social and cultural developments evolving out of a history of ideas. The novels have been looked upon as carriers playing a role in the process of de-colonisation, and also addressing the role of culture in the formation of identity via self-reflection and reflection of values. While examining, characters and situations have been considered in the light of the neo-colonial experience of a socio-political betrayal and cultural alienation. The thesis examines how the basic preoccupation of the novelists lie in the resistance to cultural imperialism where the motif of the problematic outsider, the motif of journey representing transition and transformation of cultural mode and the conflict between individual and the family and the society generated by the socio-political tensions, have been repeatedly used. Each of the novelists has dealt with the similar situations and fictionalised them in their own respective ways.

The problematic of cultural dislocation leading to an acute identity crisis dealt in the novels has been studied from a sociological perspective. The five novels are a direct reaction to and growth from the strain and stress of the tension prevailing in Canadian society. The Canadian society is interpreted as structured to demonstrate the inter-group levels of conflicts between the Indians and the Europeans resulting in racial discrimination caused by systematic segregation in the society.

It is difficult to understand the significance that is attached to interpersonal relations and solidarities between individual members of different racial sections. Canada experiences cleavages and ruptures between sections differentiated by race, ethnicity, religion and culture. This base is however, not primordial, but is socially structured in the process of interaction. It comes to have social significance only as it is elaborated in systems of differential political incorporation, economic stratification and racial segregation. Under such circumstances racial domination is considered to be justified.

Moreover, the western superstructures of business and administration imposed on Canada by colonial domination hold the people together by pressure exerted from outside. The relationships between the different sections of people are characterised by inherent instability because the maintenance of cohesion is not on shared values, but on political control exercised by the dominant section.
The disturbing social forces shape the individual psyche. Because when a community under pressure changes, so does the individual's relationship to that community. Hence the characters are used by the novelists as an agency through which cultural discord and disorder are presented. The novelists sought an account of group identity that holds together both society and individual. And while doing so the writers differentiate between those elements of self-identity derived from the individual personality, traits and interpersonal relationships and those elements derived from belonging to a particular group.

The basic preoccupation of the novelists lies in the resistance to cultural imperialism. The cultural paradigm of the novels is dominated by an intense cultural nationalism. The root of these writings is grounded in the need to assert a strong cultural identity in view of the cultural negation of the Native Canadian psyche. The motif of the problematic outsider, the motif of journey representing transition and transformation of cultural mode and the conflict between individual and society generated by the socio-political tensions have been repeatedly used in the novels. Each of the novelists has used these motifs in his or her own respective style.

Jeannette Armstrong's *Slash* is a novel that traces out a young Native Canadian man's struggles with colonialism, racism and a self-identity that does not fit easily into "assimilated", "traditional" or "pan-Indian categories". The novel foregrounds key issues in the political, cultural, linguistic struggles of Native Americans in both Canada and the United States in the late 1960s and early 1970s, such as the birth of the American Indian Movement, changes in the Canadian Indian Act, the take over of the Department of Indian Affairs (DIA) and Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) offices, and the Wounded Knee occupation. Armstrong has made an attempt in the novel to formulate a Native Canadian identity as a possible means of regaining the Native's disinheritd self.

*Slash*, a fourteen year old boy comes to realise that being an Indian in Canada means either occupying a space which is entirely antithetical to white Canadian values or adopting an "assimilated" identity of becoming almost white. The protagonist struggles to make sense of his identity as an Okanagan community member and activist in many Native struggles. The ideological orientation of the neo-colonial system remains inconsistent with promises made during the time of achieving independence. Commenting on the state of political instability and domestic unrest that had resulted from corrupt
leadership, Armstrong, in an interview with Hartmut Lutz says –

my real quest was to present a picture of that time for a specific purpose. We are talking about that historical period, trying to determine how best to get that information to Native people, young people in particular. We wanted a tool to use in education, to give not just the historical documentation of that time but, beyond that, the feeling of what happened just prior to the American Indian Movement, and what happened during that military period – and that’s, frankly, what came out of it, the spirit of the people, and the rise, and the groundswelling and how that occurred, what the people were feeling, what they dreamed, and what their pain and joy were during that time. And it was the only way in which, without a lot of money, I could see developing something that might be worthwhile.^^

There are explicit narrations of examples that show how decolonisation fails to correct the economic class structure rather it paves way for the new neo-colonial leaders to take over the charge of the system. The leaders, according to Slash’s observation, are willing to compromise their idealism for the privileges of power that neo-colonial politics offered. Disillusioned with the failure of post-independence government and repulsed by the growing corruption among the officials, Slash observes how “a large percent of the dollars allocated by Treasury Board for services to the Indians under the Indian Act was used up by the D.I.A. staff, who knew little or nothing about the real situations on the reserve.”^^

Indian leaders, on the other hand, having failed in making their promises of a new nationhood a reality, are no longer regarded as the legitimate representatives of the people. This is reflected in the leaders’ close affinity with a neo-colonial system of functioning. The militant young men who had been treated like celebrities once are dumped by the leaders. Slash observed that, when the confrontation was over, and the agreements had been signed that had spelled out a lot of money, then suddenly the question had been “what are those people hanging around here for? Welfare checks?”^^

Fanon warned in The Wretched of the Earth of the dangers of the colonial tactics of elevating one set of men at the expense of another. He could foresee the danger of divisiveness in a society which was basically multicultural. This danger has manifested itself in neo-colonial societies like Canada, where there is
on the one hand the underprivileged desiring to climb upwards in terms of social status, and on the other hand the class of people determined to defend their inherited privileges. The serious consequences of cultural and intellectual colonisation is the cultivation of a dependent state of mind conditioned only to imitate. Armstrong satirises the deliberate attempts of aping western cultural modes. Apemanship thus becomes obvious indication of the loss of one’s Indian identity. Slash’s friend Jimmy is a case in point who wants to get an "education and get a high paying job and get lots of fancy stuff. New car, new clothes. An image." Jimmy’s pride in going around with a white girl-friend is another indication of neo-colonial hierarchy.

Hair styling, clothing, make-up and speech are all adapted as a means of de-Indianising personal appearance and to construct an identity after a western image. In *Whispering in Shadows* Armstrong gives an account of Penny’s daughter’s blind imitation of western vices. Shanna does not support her mother’s becoming an ‘activist’. She rather wants to do ‘normal-stuff’ in life. Shanna denies the Indian dress-code and embraces the western punk-style instead.

*Her mouth is covered in a slick, wet looking lipstick. Hardly any colour but her mouth looks slippery. Her cheek bones are glossed over the same way and she has the worst shade of mauve on her lids. Her stiffly curled eye lashes are tinged with a darker purple. The lime green mini-dress with a wide white plastic belt looks rumpled now. She has spent hours ironing it. And her hair. The permed shag, sprayed to stay, has attracted a thin film of grey dust.*

The crisis of culture has been depicted in the novel in terms of a conflict between tradition and modernity. In other words, the urban is equated with modernity, technology, images of fast change and instability. Armstrong’s intention in the novel has been to establish the fact that progress need not work against tradition. In both the novels the characters who have been depicted as having accommodated themselves to the demands of the materialistic universe, have been challenged not for what they are, but for what they represent.

The essential thematic focus of these post-independence novels is the psychology of neo-colonialism which characterises a psychological and ideological dependence on the west. The novels have subsequently reflected on its adverse effect on identity.
Penny’s sister Lena symbolises the conflict between the two opposing worldviews, - the indigenous culture - system and that of the west. This type of character is chosen by the novelist as an agency through which cultural discord and disorder are presented. These subjects have accepted the materialistic order of the urban life that puts them in confrontation with the world they belong to. In Lena’s words, “I always dreamed of going places when I was a kid. Seeing things. The world seemed so exciting and big. I used to read the magazines we picked up from the junkyard for the john. The picture in them always showed places and things we never had.” Armstrong’s novel reveals how the material and spiritual values endow a society with a unique ethos. The novelist has used the family as a metonym of Okanagan society to demonstrate how the economic institutions on which society was based earlier is dismantled, causing a disruption in the entire way of life of the Indians.

Men and especially women like Penny migrating to urban areas in search of work, have been considered to be one of the major reasons responsible for bringing a rupture in the fundamental structure of communal life. This indicates a rupture in the intense link man has so far shared with land.

In Chapter VIII of Tomson Highway’s Kiss of the Fur Queen, a similar pattern of shift from the rural to the urban is stressed upon. The connection between economic and cultural dependency as enforced by the west is summed up by Penny in Whispering in Shadows – “The resources are getting plundered and everything polluted ...... there is a rigid class system, as a result, keeping the rich powerful and the poor powerless.” This statement of the protagonist reveals the fact that the periphery is always the weaker recipient of the relationship.

Armstrong has shown in the novel that in the contemporary neo-colonial context, the most serious effect of the relentless exposure to and transmission from the cultural centre has been due to an excessive desire for the material objects of the centre. The materialism associated with the neo-imperial globalisation of culture is reflected in a homogeneity expressed everywhere throughout the world. Penny, the protagonist feels that there is a complex process by which the Canadian society has become increasingly committed to economic ends, and to the attainment of symbols of status, associated with power and prestige. It is this desire for power which is responsible for the emergence of an anti-humanistic culture.
The Okanagan society, presented in the novels of Armstrong, is seduced by the mindless consumerism. Here people refuse to realise the false reality that the gleam embodies and how it creates a disturbing ambiguity within themselves.

In Chapter V of Ruby Slipperjack's *Honour the Sun*, an attempt has been made to analyse the multi-faceted problematic of neo-colonisation. The writer has taken cognizance of the discourses of gender and class in which the Indian woman is not just a victim but an active participant. Delia, in *Honour the Sun*, is a victim of both economic and social exploitation. Her vulnerability has been examined in the backdrop of the declining quality of the Indians' lives in the reserves because of the country's neo-colonial links to the global economy to satisfy external interests, rather than internal needs. As a woman, Delia experiences a variety of social and economic barriers but her sufferings are related to pervasive gender bias. She is treated unkindly by the male-dominated society and so are her daughters.

By promoting the norms of the dominant European patriarchal society, colonialism succeeded in eroding many matrilineal and woman-friendly cultures and practices in Canada. Negative images make it difficult to recognise the positive contributions of Aboriginal women to community life and social change that intensify their subordination in the neo-colonial scenario. Delia has been projected as a symbol of the Native Canadian socio-cultural base. She represents the strength and endurance of Canada. "She is a tall woman, very solid and big, weighing about a couple of hundred pounds. When she emerges from the shadow of the cabin into the evening sunlight her hair lights up like a halo in a fine spray of light brown." Owl has always felt that there is something vital in the woman that can never be destroyed. But in contrast to this image of a strong, supportive mother – she is reduced to a vulnerable woman, – representing the cultural deterioration of the Native Canadian consciousness. Ruby Slipperjack examines the concept of nation within Canadian feminist history. But the concept of one nation has been problematic for colonised groups. The novel shows how the colonised woman is doubly oppressed. The social identity of the Native Canadian woman depends on the class she belongs to because class is important in analysing how race and gender have historically shaped one another.
Slipperjack’s aim in the novel has been to examine the continued and subtle forms of colonialism and epistemic violence leading to the Native woman’s segregation and trauma and a crisis of identity. Contact with the west has had a demoralising impact on the Native culture. Even after the phase of colonisation was over, a section of males in the Native community assumed the responsibility of decimating control over their women on behalf of the colonisers. Owl, the protagonist summarises her feelings about what it means to be a Native Canadian woman in Canada as she recollects many such incidents when the “woman is screaming and crying and the man draws his foot back and starts kicking her.”

The main target of Slipperjack’s attack in the novel is directed towards the lives of the Natives who are forced to assimilate into European culture, which causes disintegration of their society. In an attempt to retrieve identity denied by the imposition of an alien culture on authentic sensibilities, the writer comes to a painful realisation that those authentic sources which could have provided a stable cultural identity have, in fact, been rendered non-authentic and marginal. Slipperjack shows in the novel how the condition of acute dependency results in cultural sterility. The stifling of indigenous creative potential results in crippling of its people’s mind. The main cause of social inertia lies in the Native man’s sense of insecurity leading to psychological disbalance. A general atmosphere of stagnation is illustrated in the novel through their daily routine. The men come back from work in the evening totally drunk, “yelling, fighting and screaming” which makes the environment noisy and scary.

The trauma of the protagonist is reflected when she is found to be frequenting her father’s grave whenever she is sad. As she looks around at the crosses, she can recall most of the dead souls. The thought overpowers her mind that only one or two older people could have died a “natural death”. ‘The railway line and alcohol related accidents take so many lives.’ Slipperjack attacks the neo-colonial culture to describe the complex situation that has developed out of the contact between the west and Canada. Culture has been regarded here within the Marxist definition as not just a reflection of some higher, spiritual order but rather a product of economic and social forces. The Native Canadian society has been severely impaired by the socio-economic manipulation imposed on it by the colonial system. Slipperjack shows how a
combination of alien political, economic and cultural factors have changed the relationship of the individual to society and therefore of the functioning of the family as a fundamental unit of society. Delia’s failure as a mother to protect her family from falling apart makes her a habitual drinker. This is the path she chooses for herself to forget the dreams she could not fulfil in life. She loses her children one after another to poverty-related diseases and separation. Owl’s expectations from life and the world she lives in, is shattered causing an intense inner turmoil. At the end of the novel when she undergoes a sincere process of soul-searching, she exonerates herself as being only a victim of a larger, complex structuring of social mechanism.

The capitalist system that places stress on individual achievement destroys collective cohesiveness. Exchange values come to control even familial relationships. The protagonist in the novel cries helplessly over losing her mother to alcohol. She has only Jesus who can understand what her mother fails to understand. “Actually, it’s quite comforting to know that there is one person stronger and more dependable than your mother. He will be always near me – yesterday, today and tomorrow and all the days after that whereas people may be nice yesterday drunk today and may be dead tomorrow.” Their small cabin that had the voices and laughter of the family members bounce off the walls always, now stands barren. Her brothers succumb to tuberculosis and the sisters move away. Owl’s mother Delia is married to a man across the tracks. “........ Everyone’s gone, scattered everywhere, all over the place ........” Owl becomes homeless in her homeland. The novel deals with the problematic of the deterioration of traditionally symbolic relationship between mother and daughter.

Ruby Slipperjack’s second novel Silent Words records the transformation of the protagonist through a long, meaningful journey in life. In National Identity and Imperialist Domination (1983), Ngugi points out that the crisis of culture in colonised countries is depicted in terms of “conflict between traditional and modernity; the rural and the urban, and the clash of values consequently engendered by that dichotomy.” The urban is equated with modernity, which is an image of change and instability, while the rural represents tradition and stability. In Slipperjack’s novel the village and city continue to symbolise two conflicting and oppositional value systems – the city becomes the destroyer of the protagonist’s happiness while the rural fills his
soul with spiritual joy. Danny’s turmoil is illustrated when he cries helplessly looking for his mother. He holds the vices of the metropolitan culture responsible for his unfortunate state of being. "...... why did they have to move into town? Everything would have been all right if we had just stayed at our cabin." Migration to the town is symbolic of the loss of communal memory, which is a vital link between the present and the past of a people.

Danny runs away from home and is socially isolated because of his lack of knowledge in traditional Native wisdom and values. The imposition of an alien language (English) and alien world view (individualistic) has already disrupted the growth of this new generation Indian boy. This situation is illustrated in the conversational exchange that takes place between Danny and the young Ojibway boys he meets during his journey. Danny fails to understand the symbolic importance of non-verbal communication of the Native society. This incident also signifies the cultural stagnation as far as Danny is concerned who fails to understand the socially relevant customs of the Native community. The incident of the curving of the spoon is a metaphoric representation to illustrate the cultural bankruptcy of the urbanised Indian people.

Danny’s lack of knowledge of the communal rituals is illustrated further when he fails to understand the powerful symbolic incident in which old Jim expresses his strong belief in the presence of Memegwesiwag, the great spirit and leaves a pinch of tobacco for them on the rock edge.

Mr. and Mrs. Old Indian and Old Jim have been portrayed as the initiators of action at a time when the community faces a crisis. Slipperjack shows in the novel how the alienation and marginalisation of elders who were not only the archetypal repository of values but also the mediums of transmission play an important role in the community. When Danny is forced to leave home because of his father’s illicit relationship with another woman, he is reduced to a mental wreck and can do nothing more than nurse his broken spirit. But his enriching associations with the elderly people of his community have been stressed upon as responsible for developing consciousness of Danny’s Indianness in the novel.

Danny’s world becomes different since the day the old man tells him – “well, well I see you have much to learn.” This statement suggests that culture systems are meant to be carried forward and the elders are the natural agents of this transmission. Old Jim’s two selves of “talking-to-himself” and
“talking-to-me” voices merge together as he almost re-lives the history. Danny, under the influence of old Jim's speech transcends beyond the real to spiritual world. The glorious past of his people comes alive before Danny through the words of the old man. However, the death of the traditional structure of the Native community to the neo-colonial urbanisation makes the role of people like Old Jim totally marginalised.

Apart from the three elders who have significant role in the narrative of the text, there is also in the backdrop the presence of other elders, for example, the voice of an old woman in the street who has a word of caution for Danny “Don't talk to people much.” The protagonist becomes increasingly a cultural insider as the novel progresses. Initially he has suffered deep pain because of his genuine attachment to his family, yet gradually he is able to sever all ties with his ugly familial relationships and is drawn towards the magically spiritual world of his ancestors.

In order to draw attention to the corruptive influence of city life, Slipperjack builds up a contrast between alternative value systems in the novel. The novel highlights what is morally wrong in contemporary society by presenting a description of Danny's home in the town which is disoriented. On the other hand, by using the communal narrative voices and legends, the reader is allowed a glimpse into the harmony of rural life. Here the novelist is stressing upon the urban – bad / rural – good dichotomy of values. The news of Danny's father's arrival is so unpleasant to the boy that he fears, - “This place is good, it's peaceful, and he is going to bring all the ugliness to it.” This is how Slipperjack creates a repulsion in the minds of the readers about people who try to live their lives by going against the Native ethical values. The novelist, however, does not romanticise the rural life. The protagonist is seen to be recollecting the difficulties he had to encounter while learning how to pick berries and how to ride a canoe. Life in the open was terrifying when the wind blew whipping around and he lost his way because “the snow was coming down in huge chunks, quickly obscuring the path and the footprints” he left behind. But all these experiences help him to grow a sense of dignity of labour and a pride in being an Indian.

Tomson Highway's novel Kiss of the Fur Queen analyses how under post-colonial circumstances, the elite leadership inherited control over the same tools of communication and education to impart the ideological hegemony on society.
at large. Highway's story reflects that the central problematic of culture in the contemporary Canadian society is its direct relationship to power politics. In the novel, the protagonist, Jeremiah realises that his educational development has been part of a larger complicity. He and his brother Gabriel have had the experience of distancing from the family and then the community. By the time the brothers complete their education in the residential school, they have already been alienated by virtue of their training and is too culturally distanced to be released from their crisis of identity. The educated Indian is implicated in a choice between knowledge associated or equated with power on the one hand, and a sense of belonging with his own people, on the other. Jeremiah's failure in taking part in agricultural works when he comes home, is a case that illustrates the rupture between his Indian self and the self he wants to internalise. The fingers he uses for playing piano are too delicate to perform hard work. He thus ceases to be the son of the land.

What emerges from a reading of the novel is an awareness of the paradoxical situation of the community's view of education as an advantage, and the individual's dilemma of education as an alienating force. To get members of the community educated was motivated by socio-economic factors. But education, as in ideological systems, not only disturbed the balance by putting emphasis on excessive individualism, but also presented the problem of alienation which permeated the consciousness. Central to Highway's work is the presence of one such problematic outsider who strongly resists ideological manipulation, but in doing so, marginalises the self and faces a premature end in life. Gabriel has been portrayed in the novel to fulfil this design of the author. A fundamental loneliness is a trait basic to his character. His loneliness has been aggravated by social pressures which have affected his relationship with his own brother. He has been exposed to a certain degree of education and is therefore already removed from the community. The Christian missionaries who broke into the social hierarchy of the Aboriginal society attempted to enjoy the power and control that the community elder had enjoyed so far. The superimposition of the western system of education plays a significant role in Gabriel's personality. It widens his separation from the community and at the same time makes him painfully aware of it. The paradoxical implication of the system creating a confusion of belonging is evident in Gabriel's character. He finds himself completely lost in the city, and
is driven by a terrible urge “to run into his mother's arms and hide, crawl back into her womb and start over.”

Highway attempts in the novel to demonstrate the seriousness of cultural conflict by reflecting its effects on two different levels by creating two different characters. The vulnerability of the young Native mind has been represented through the character of Gabriel while the influence of the materialistic values is represented by the neo-elite life-style of Jeremiah. Jeremiah is an example of co-existent cultural dualism. His gradual acceptance of coming to terms with two selves makes his quest for identity a problematic one. He desperately needs to survive as a “transplanted European”. This brings the two brothers into confrontation. Gabriel longs for ‘home’ that can assure him of a sense of belonging. But when Jeremiah also fails to provide a connection, he turns hostile that proves to be fatal in the long run. Gabriel’s quest therefore becomes intensely individualistic, drawing him further away from the community and towards an increasing inner turmoil. When hope of reconnection with his village in northern Manitoba vanishes and revival with elder brother fails, Gabriel turns to alcohol and drugs. His death caused by AIDS is the metaphor that signifies the seduction of a dominant culture that threatens to obliterate Native identity. Jeremiah suffers from a sense of inadequacy at having failed to protect his brother. His gradual shift from western classical music to the reconstruction of the Cree tale represents a necessary reassertion of his Native identity.

In the thesis, one of the primary objectives of analysis has been to demonstrate how and why a shared deep preoccupation with the insidious complicity of economic and cultural colonisation provides the central narrative strands of the novels under study. It is understood that the ideological coercion was an integral part of the strategy of colonising a vast number of Native Canadians. As it was practically impossible for European imperial powers to maintain physical control over the colonised people, political and economic colonisation had necessarily to be sustained by cultural imperialism. In keeping with Fanon’s observation that it was not enough to merely physically ‘delimit’ the place of the native, colonial authorities had to build up a structure of moral reflexes that would “serve to centre around the exploited person, an atmosphere of inhibition.” The implementation of western ideological domination was achieved by the undervaluing of indigenous culture-systems with a simultaneous
substitution of the western attitude to the world. The novels under study record
the clash between the two world views and subsequent victimisation of a large
number of peoples caused by the imposition of powerful ideological tools.

In the context of this study, ‘ideology’ has been used in terms of the
definition offered by Luis Althusser in *Ideology and Ideological State
Apparatuses*. He offers a distinction between two types of ideological
The argument put forward in the thesis is that it is the Ideological State
Apparatus, which, according to Althusser, does not arise from external
imposition, but arise from within society, that have been responsible for the
‘interpellation’ of the Native Canadian subject, making him a participant in his
own exploitation and subordination.

The five novels within the narrative structure reveal the conflict that arise
as a consequence of the mechanism of ideological coercion. Therefore the
characters are structured to demonstrate the inter-relatedness of the different
levels of conflict. The basic concern of the novelists is to reveal the dichotomy
of two cultures of Canadian society that do not coincide. The first category
comprises of people who have accepted the ethos of materialism, and the
second group comprises of those who are authentic and hence are negated and
marginalised in the society. The novels have reflected how the conflict with the
greater society results in varying degrees of consciousness which affects the
individual’s choice of action either positively or negatively.

The characters are used to analyse psychological ambiguities and the
complexities of human states of mind when put in an intricate situation. The
characters who have been depicted as having accommodated themselves to the
demands of the new materialistic universe, are targets of attack. For example,
Jimmy and a lot of young men in *Slash* who “seemed to try to impress each other
about how well they could talk English, and how much they could look important
with business suits and all.” or the impulsive behaviour of Lena in *Whispering
in Shadows* have been introduced by Jeannette Armstrong to highlight the new
acquisitive consciousness of the Indian psyche. Their desire to achieve what the
dominant society possesses, is rooted in the social structure itself. They
consider themselves to be happier than the rest of the people. Because, they do
not suffer from any conflict of values initially that troubles others in the
community. Lena’s reference to “those lights in the city” are not real, but only
appears to be real. This argument is developed following Neil Lazarus’s suggestion in *Resistance in Post-Colonial African Fiction* (1990) that the ideological power of the “gleam” lies in its clever manipulation and misrepresentation of reality. Similarly while Gabriel, in *Kiss of the Fur Queen* recognises Jeremiah’s behaviour in terms of a duplicity, he is not aware that Jeremiah’s passion for western classical music is genuine. Because, as a participant Jeremiah’s subjecthood has been conditioned through the triple association of Christianity, western classical music and power. Highway’s primary focus has been on the hypnotic effect of the gleam or the creation of material desire as a means of socio-economic ideological control. The impact of an early education in the Missionary governed school is far deeper than mere dependence on western education with Jeremiah. His ambition to pursue his career as a pianist can be fulfilled only through his affiliation with the dominant culture. Jeremiah’s frustration at being a Cree is reflected in his utter confusion as he fails to understand why he can not hate “this conquered race of people.” This ambiguity is further reflected in the statement when he says – “I don’t even know if I enjoy being Cree.”

Ruby Slipperjack’s protagonist, on the other hand, is an example of a well constructed subject ingrained with a colonial mentality. The small girl shows subtle signs of her belief in the infallibility of white supremacy. As a child she is drawn to believe in the magic of the white man’s life. This is illustrated in one of her queries as she wonders “Are white men’s flowers able to live longer than our wild flowers?” She is enchanted by the charming beauty of her new teacher as she says “the bluest eyes I’ve ever seen.” Both these images are suggestive of a crossing from one order to another. It is also suggested that according to the received notions of physical beauty all things white carry positive connotations. Migration of her friends and sisters to town in search of jobs intensifies Owl’s distance with her community. World out of the reserve seems to be a better place to live in. Town becomes her obvious choice after her alienation from her mother as she says – “I’m gong to live in the city with Vera and Greg ....... yes, I like the city .......” Slipperjack’s other novel *Silent Words* also records how this factor of “gleam” of the town is celebrated by many people in contemporary Canada. Life in the city is associated with power and social promotion while the rural has signified simplicity in the novel. Danny’s father’s migration to the city symbolises his prototypical neo-elite
consciousness. Danny refers to this decision of his father as a self-conscious step that would help him to "get a job and live with the witch." Danny feels that the father he knew when he was small, is gone now. Danny says, "I don't know him anymore."

All the above mentioned characters are used by the novelists as an agency through which cultural deterioration and confusion are presented. The assimilated characters are used to project the disturbing social forces responsible for shaping the individual psyche. When a community under pressure changes, so does the individual's relationship to that community. This creates conflict within the individual who is compelled to make a choice. In view of the current inadequacy of the Canadian social fabric to sustain the identity of the self, it becomes the task of the writer to generate modes of expression that could build up a counter-cultural discourse. The three novelists under study have fictionally objectified the steps required for the movement towards a decolonisation of mind paving way for constructing a stable identity. There is discernable within the texts a pattern of steps suggestive of the right kind of people and the right kind of path to be followed.

The right kind of characters are apparently termed as social failures because they refuse to accommodate themselves to the general direction that the social ethos takes. This results in a conflict between those individuals involved and their immediate society. The refusal to adjust results in a two way rejection, – the protagonist rejects his immediate society and therefore the society reciprocates by ostracizing the individual. They suffer from a loneliness causing by the dilemma of making a choice in life. But their alienation is a short lived one. A firm pride in their Indianness helps them overcome their confusion in the long run. All their journeys in life bring them home where they find answers to all their queries. In Slash the protagonist is depicted to have developed a bitter hatred against the dominant society. He longs for a home in a world without having white people around. This longing indicates his urge for harmony in the society that can safeguard all its inhabitants. Slash identifies himself with the people who believe in violence. But he is able to come back home finally, something which his own brother Danny fails to do. Danny's alienation from the community is too deep to allow him to return to his roots. Therefore he dies. Tom (Slash) in Slash and Danny in Silent Words undergo long journeys under different circumstances in life. But the consciousness in both
the cases are similar. After the completion of their journeys in life both of them are able to overcome the despair they suffered in the past. They are the transformed men in life, in complete conjunction with their cultural traditions and values. Lena's alienation in *Whispering in Shadows* also is caused by the desire to live life in individual capacity in the town. But she suffers from an inner turmoil over the shift. She comes back home, to Penny, who never fails to listen to the voice of Tupa, who symbolises the tribal wisdom.

The primary focus of the novelists has been to reject a false consciousness and help people reconstitute their perception of themselves. Hence the novelists use two levels of arguments. By doing so they have tried to deflate the west's attempt to negate the Native Canadian identity by ensuring the western presence and its assumption of cultural and moral superiority. The questioning of the 'received history' therefore plays an important role in presenting positive alternatives to the present social order. The colonial notion of Canada as entering history only upon contact with Europe, has been challenged by Jeannette Armstrong in an interview with Hertmut Lutz. She refers to the new wave of awakening among the present generation Native Canadians as "renewal" because it was there and is just being renewed. Armstrong refused to comply with the stereotypical projection of the Indians as savage. She says, "No! we are not going to agree with that. The only correct version has got to be from our people! Nobody else can give the correct version, but our people. And we're going to stick to that."46

Gabriel in *Kiss of the Fur Queen* argues with elder brother Jeremiah about the superiority of Indian religion, a religion, which is older than Christianity. He quotes Amanda and says, "Indian religion listens to the drum, to the heartbeat of Mother Earth."47 This simple statement of Gabriel challenges the colonial notion that the Native Canadians saw the light of civilisation only after their conversion into Christianity. Old Pra-Cwa in *Slash* tells the protagonist the history of the Okanagan people. The novel records the old man's experiences in a vivid manner. "He had seen the valley change from a land full of deer and good things to eat, to a land cut up and cultivated and turned into towns. He had seen forests cut down and miles of land mined and changed. He had seen the people change, too."48

Through their extensive research into North American historiography, the three novelists successfully substantiate the presence of a rich tribal heritage.
Moreover, the novels emphasise on the fact that the colonial interlude is to be regarded only as a tragic phase in the long history of Canada. Two types of history have been stressed in the novels repeatedly. The official history that has the approval of the imperial centre, has been circulated through institutionalisation while the true living history emerges from the people themselves in the form of legends, stories, myths and songs. Tomson Highway manipulates the traditional Trickster tales of Weesageechak in *Kiss of the Fur Queen* that represents the role of culture hero and educator. In chapter XIV of the novel, the two brothers, Jeremiah and Gabriel jointly construct the story of Weesageechak coming down to Earth to kill the cannibalistic monster Weetigo. The novelist makes an evident indication of opting for an expression of oral tradition which is as important as history itself to the Indian psyche.

Moreover the use of memory becomes another very important device to the novelists in the novels where the narrative voices draw upon the legends of the past and use them as a link between the past and future generation of tomorrow. In *Silent Words* the relationship between Danny and Old Jim is significantly symbolic of a link between old Canada and the Canada of future. Old Jim not only teaches Danny the history of his people, but also how to relate to the animism of nature, a philosophy which has been constantly ignored by the contemporary changing world. Similarly the Medicine men have been portrayed in the novels as having the power of transmission of traditional wisdom to the new generation. When Tom’s extreme loneliness in *Slash* drives him towards drugs and alcohol, he finds solace in the words of the Medicine man. Tom is finally relieved of the pain he has been carrying as a burden in his heart. He considers his meeting with the Medicine man as a very important turning point in his life. He is amazed to see how these people “for some reason, kept to the old ways regardless of what other influences had been.” The meeting makes Slash understand how important and precious his existence is to the world. Both the Medicine man and Pra-cwa in the novel represent the inter-relationship between the past, present and future, and they are integral to Tom’s eventual conception of history as a dynamic and dialectic tool in the contemporary world.

Contrary to the belief that cultural nationalism has a tendency to glorify the past, the novelists do not present the past as romantically magical. The past rather has been portrayed in terms of its constructive potential on which
the future may be modelled. It may provide a sense of cultural security essential for the development of healthy sense of identity. For example, in Honour the Sun, when a tremendous loneliness descends upon the protagonist she dreams of leaving her native place in search of a place which will be free from strife and struggle typical of a Indian woman’s life. She therefore fails to achieve a positive connection with her present society.

The distancing has occurred in Owl’s case because, more often than not the self-advancement possible through education comes at the expense of the community. This has caused an intense crisis of identity. This aloneness, however, is not to be interpreted as a struggle of the individual in terms of the western concept of individualism linked to social isolation. The conflict has to be resolved not from within an existentialist crisis of the self but rather from the individual’s relationship to the society. Describing this alienation in terms of the loss of a native capacity, a confused Owl admits – “I’m always suffering for something I didn’t do and feeling guilty about something I couldn’t do anything about.”

Slipperjack has revealed in the novel that ethnic identity is “ultimately related to questions about the satisfaction afforded by social life and to the problem of arriving at a mature capacity to tolerate the suffering and death that is the destiny of all.”

Ironically the spiritual presence of the Medicine Man offers Owl an answer to this loneliness. As they sit together, a calming peace settles over Owl’s troubled mind. She admits, “I’ve nothing to give him, yet he’s given me so much.” The Medicine Man thus symbolises tribal harmony and wisdom in Honour the Sun.

Tupa in Whispering in Shadows, Pra-cwa in Slash, the Medicine Man in Slash and Honour the Sun and Old Jim in Silent Words have been portrayed with a definite purpose to challenge the projection of the success of imperial invasion and conquest of their own lands by the dominant discourse. This has been an important strategy used to construct the Native’s fractured identity. The idea of Canada’s past, independent of the white presence thus has become a key factor in the creation of a new master narrative of history. As far as the narrative technique is concerned, Kiss of the Fur Queen is different from the other four novels. Though the mythical quality presented through the legends of Ayash & Weesageechack as the voice of resistance is absent in the novels of Armstrong and Slipperjack where the style is more of documentation, yet the
issue of the relevance of the past to the future is represented with full effect. Despite the difference in narrative device, all five novels emphasise on the significance of memory in exploring a meaningful past. The past, in the novels, does not detain the present, past is not only projected as a source of comfort but also as having a functional purpose in strengthening the morale of the community. *Whispering in Shadows* of Armstrong deals with this basic propagation that the Native worldview is primitive and hence against modernity. Penny, the protagonist's appeal to the world is that, the Indian philosophy has its deep relevance in the modern-day-world but it refuses to be a part of the anti-humanistic culture brought by globalisation. As an Indian, Penny feels, it is important to understand one's glorious past and to break free from the "illusion of western development and progress." She thus stresses upon the relevance of the past on the present day lives of the Indians.

As traditionalist members of the Aboriginal communities, Armstrong and Ruby Slipperjack emphasise in their novels that the traditional values of the Native Canadians are as important in the modern era as they had been in the past. Their ability to establish this as a characteristic of setting serves the persuasive function of enhancing the self-perception of the members of the movement. It has contributed to the mood of the narrative by affirming that although the traditional values of Native Canadians had not changed, they remained able to adapt to changing environments, without being indoctrinated into the European value system. Olive Patricia Dickason highlights on the Native's unique power of adaptability in these words –

"Adaptation of course, had always been the key to Amerindian survival; the circumstances might have changed, but the requirement to work out satisfactory life patterns under prevailing conditions remained the same. Traditional values, instead of disappearing, would find new life and new forms in rising to these challenges."

The point of the novelists have been to provide insight into the fact of understanding the relevance of the Native worldview in the contemporary modernised world. While doing so, emphasis has been on the age-old scientific rationale of the Indian philosophy.

David, in *Whispering in Shadows* expresses his anguish over the mindless mechanisation of the world. He says –

"I've spent most of my time thinking about technology and its effects on
the natural world. I even looked at some of the mechanisms employed to keep the system in place. At class disparities and competition. I’ve looked at consumerism as a cultural artefact, held as sacred as any religion. I have even thought about the increase in human violence as an environmental symptom. But in all that, I obviously overlooked something right in front of me. I overlooked the communities which are still connected to land in healthy way as an opposing force to that system. A true natural sustainability. As the only hope for protecting biodiversity.\textsuperscript{55}

This is a theme that returns in \textit{Slash} written by the same author. In Chapter IV, the novelist gives a vivid description of an incident that reflects the thoughtless functioning of the government by the white people. The Municipality in the Okanagan proposes to dump 2-4D into the lakes to help control the weeds that are starting to take over the lakes. The Indian people raise protest against the application of the poisonous chemical. A councillor of one Band says –

“I think you’re confused. Our lakes are sick. Sick from dumping into them and the rivers all kinds of shit. The fish are sick. We used to get kikinee from the lakes. There used to be lots. Now the old people warned everybody ten years ago to stop eating fish from these lakes. You see, when you open them up, they got holes burned in their stomachs. Their gills are all sores. The meat is soft and stinks no matter how fresh they are. On the outside, there is white spots and holes in the tail and fins. May be they got cancer.”\textsuperscript{56}

The message that the incident proposes is how illogical and ridiculous the white man’s mechanical approach towards the world can be. Armstrong’s purpose in the novel is to help the world change its perceptions of present reality by revealing the thoughtlessness of the white society and in contrast, the logical approach of the Native worldview. Armstrong’s views find resonance in the words of the old man in \textit{Silent Words}, when he mutters in Indian accent – “To honour da Eart, boy, you mus’ un’erstan dat it is alive. Da men wit da machines are like lice dat feed on da libing scalp o’ Mudder Eart.”\textsuperscript{57}

As the narrative polemics of the texts is to challenge false ideological constructs that are held responsible for creating an acute identity crisis among the marginalised, the novels become a site of counter-hegemonic activity. The
purpose of the narrative voices has been to draw out a collective response in
terms of revival so that resistance becomes a shared activity. Therefore
community has been stressed upon by the novelists as having a significant role
in shaping the Indian psyche. It is the community that keeps memory and the
continuity of a heritage alive. The social memory, or collected narratives of the
past that are shared by members of a group is an important aspect in
constructing a stable identity. Members must be reminded of where they came
from in order to continually focus on where they are going. Armstrong and
Slipperjack have used the family as a metonym of Indian society to demonstrate
how the simple evocation of traditional truths is an important aspect of family
rituals and is instrumental in developing one's identity. It is the family-ties that
教 a member to become an important part of the larger community, the
absence of which has been highlighted to be disastrous for the development of
the Indian psyche.

In Slipperjack's *Silent Words* and *Honour the Sun* the characters of the
protagonist Danny and Owl become increasingly lonely as the novels progress
from the descriptive consciousness of their alienation caused due to severing of
the familial ties. Danny, makes it clear that he had a wonderful 'home' as long
his mother was with them. But things fall apart as his father becomes seduced
by another woman. The father and son share a strange relation from that point
as Danny says - "I don’t even think of him as “Dad” any more. I just say “my
father now.”" The same theme returns in *Honour the Sun*, where Owl leaves her
native home and moves away to town following her mother's second marriage.
For her, there is no 'homecoming' in the physical sense of the term. But the
spiritual journey of her life comes full circle once she meets the Medicine Man,
who symbolises the communal voice. She could not have anticipated that visit
to the village during summers in 1968, would transform her personality, leading
her back to the sacred place of her ancestors. She listens to the silence and
waits for the sun to shine for her people in the sky without caring about the
clouds. Before she leaves for the town she takes *a deep breath of the clean,
fresh air and watch the sun's rays dance n the water's surface .......* Her flight
inward gives her a new consciousness in which she is the sole witness of her
own homecoming.

From Danny's narrative on the other hand, it is evident that when he
comes back home he is a transformed person, in full control of his life. He
reveals that the worst fear he faced earlier was the fear of returning home. He asks Old Jim, "But who will I find ?, I can only find me !" Old Jim answers 'Boy when you come home, you don’t just find yourself, you already got yourself !'

The description of Danny’s long journey begins from Chapter III of the novel and the story offers repeated explanations of the circumstances that have so strongly affected Danny’s identity as a Native Canadian. Community becomes the substitute to the home he does not have any more. The trajectory in his quest ends with his complete involvement with the community that makes him a strong confident Indian man. Danny’s association with the people of his community finally helps him get rid of the cultural stagnation and thus regenerate his self in a positive way.

Armstrong’s protagonist in Slash also shows signs of cultural deterioration initially. The contradiction inherent in his personality represents the sense of inadequacy most of the Indian young men suffered from during 1960s. After a long spell of alienation, he is inspired by the words of Medicine Man and returns to his own people. His intense desire to come home is a metaphoric expression of his attempts towards re-rooting himself. Armstrong gives a vivid description of the strong feeling of unity among the Indians in the reserves. While doing so, the author emphasises on the importance of the effect of collective sharing on the life of the protagonist. It is Slash who becomes the vehicle of Armstrong's ideological message. His life is structured into phases that correspond with the development of his consciousness. He embarks on enlarging the consciousness to see himself as part of a larger whole, a larger territory, containing the history of Indian peoples and their glorious past. It is his people, who becomes the source of his growth and development as an Indian man, proud of his cultural heritage. There is a description of group activity in chapter III of the novel –

*Whenever there was a gathering people brought out the drums and sang the protest songs and the friendship songs. Almost all the people grew their hair, and wore chokers and beads and blue jeans. A strong feeling of unity persisted among the people. Nobody questioned which Band or which Tribe a person belonged to; everybody was Indian and that was good enough.*

There is a visible shift in Slash’s consciousness. After a turbulent journey in life he comes home, happy and content. Armstrong uses Slash’s character to
emphasise on the positive message that the Indians in Canada can achieve their goals through collective participation and action.

There are three instances of 'connectedness' in Whispering in Shadows wherein collective communication and co-operation translated into positive action. There is a description of a circle of friendship centre to celebrate the visit of an Indian man from Bolivia in the first half of the novel. The circle has been considered to be a symbol of unending bond shared by the Indians all over the world. By being a part of the circle, the Indian renews himself in his tradition. The man from Bolivia was asked to add medicine to the smudge from his land so that he can fully take part in joining his heart to the Indians of Canada. As the man from Bolivia kneels to place his medicine on the top of the glowing sweetgrass, a sweet scented smoke, rising, makes the atmosphere spiritual. While offering their prayer, some people “bend over to inhale a little of the smoke or cup their hands over it.” The significance of the circle is stated by Wayne in this way – “we also come here to join our hearts for those of our people who are in need of prayer.”

Secondly, the circle dance which was held to celebrate Penny and her children’s coming back home is regarded as a message of tribal unity for the new generation boys and girls who have been the victims of cultural deterioration. As the drums start beating, Penny and her daughter begin the steps inside the circle of people. Penny is overwhelmed with joy as the smiling faces of her people hug her children that signifies their warm acceptance of the kids. Penny feels a strong upsurge of emotion as she thinks – “why didn’t I come home a long time ago? I feel like I’ve been in prison and suddenly I’m free.” Her daughter Shanna’s relaxed face is indication enough that Shanna is beginning to develop connection with her tribal heritage as an Okanagan.

The third instance is when both Penny and Lena come back home to heal. One is suffering from physical ailment while the other one from a deep rooted frustration in life. But in both the cases the mindless Western approach towards life and the world has been held responsible. Both the sisters consider ‘home’ to be their only destination in life. The home here is referred to not as family but the community as a whole. It is, in Penny’s words, “something, which gives deep comfort and security.” Community, thus, has been stressed upon as signifying connected meaning, the lack of which in anybody’s life proves to be disastrous. Similar is the case with the two young brothers in Kiss of the Fur...
Queen who undertake the archetypal journey from the tribal order to the city, that takes them away from a boyhood, associated with the harmony of communal living, towards the urbanised social system. Inspite of Gabriel’s gradual cultural deterioration and alienation, elder brother Jeremiah remains a passive witness until his meeting with Amanda. The dusky Indian girl stands as a link between Jeremiah’s western upbringing and the traditional Indian ancestry as she initiates a complex introspection in his mind. From being a passive witness Jeremiah acts positive by way of reconstructing the tale of “Chachagathoo the Shaman” which symbolises resistance to the physical, cultural and spiritual genocide of the Cree. Further, Jeremiah helps his younger brother to die as an Indian, surrounded by his mother, brother and the medicine woman while the smell of the burning sweetgrass in the room adds to the sombre situation. What Jeremiah has accomplished is not very significant yet it indicates a subtle hint of a possible revolution. It is a suggestion on the part of the novelist of a new beginning after a complete break with the corrupt neo-colonial heritage, (symbolised by the Catholic priest) and acceptance of the traditional belief of the community (represented by the medicine woman). Highway’s purpose in the novel, has been to focus on how a more positive freedom can be achieved through a more affirmative strategy of resistance that involves both self and community. The novel stresses upon the concept of ‘Indigenism’ as an inherent right for aboriginal people to practice an independent level of politics in order to maintain their distinct identity.

The three novelists continue to conceptualise the Native Canadian’s identity in terms of “imagined communities” with a shared sense of comradeship and likeness of culture as has been discussed by Anderson. As Holm, Pearson, and Chavis (2003) have contended, indigenous people continue, in general, to think of themselves in terms of their “peoplehood”. Defined as the relationship between common language, sacred history, territory and the ceremonies of a given group of people, “peoplehood” explains why certain groups of people who are no defined as a “state” still continue to hold their own common culture and identity. Holm, Pearson and Chavis explained the indigenous perspective in this way –

“...... peoplehood is self-contained and self-governing. Moreover, it predates and is a prerequisite for all other forms of socio-political
organisation. Infact, peoplehood, rather than the band or the tribe, is the basis of nationalism and the original organisation of states.”

Formerly many indigenous groups were capable of escaping the effects of modernity because they had occupied areas of the world that were not very often frequented by outsiders. However, the three authors express their fear that due to the increasing search for resources throughout the world and the globalisation of business, cultures that had previously remained comparatively untouched are now suddenly being placed in situations where their entire way of life is threatened to be destroyed. Hence the novelists have fictionalised the concept of the significance of cultural affirmation as an important strategy of resistance for the survival of the threatened indigenous groups of people.

Though the thesis does not intend to assert that indigenous perspectives are the optimum worldview that should be held by everyone, yet it does assume that they represent an integral part of human life. Their continued existence as distinctive cultures is necessary for preserving the contradiction of diverse ideas that prevents civilisation from becoming homogenised.

It is in the spirit of examining ways to help maintain alternative perspectives among the cultures of the world that this thesis has been written. More specifically, this thesis looks at identifiable examples of successful rhetoric that have been used by the three indigenous writers in fictionalising the issue of cultural identity in their novels.

The rhetorical works of Native Canadians were chosen for this analysis because they represent a unique set of cultures among indigenous groups that suffered the effects of colonisation and globalisation at a certain point of time. The purpose of this analysis was to study these key books by Native Canadian authors that could be considered successful in their meeting the intended goals of addressing and framing a stable identity for the aboriginal group of people.

The five novels chosen for this analysis represent two well-developed messages that were designed to address very similar issues involving colonisation, cultural encroachment and problems associated with the Native Canadian’s quest for an identity.

The books were published almost around the same time (mid part of 80s and the first part of 90s), represent acts of rhetoric that were anticipating the trend of globalisation. The general contention in the novels was to argue that the Native Canadians are one of the major indigenous groups to have become
the victims of modernisation. Jeanette Armstrong, Ruby Slipperjack and Tomson Highway's novels have been considered as narrative arguments used as a frame for promoting the rights of the indigenous people. These narratives have been found to be representing the experiences of the Native Canadians and their assertion of why it is so important for them to keep their identity and right to autonomy. The three authors were working on similar issues but presented separate lines of narrative argument in uniquely different ways. Inspite of their differences, they appear equally successful in helping to create and support the ideology of indigenism as an important strategy for constructing collective identity.

In the Native Canadian social context the basic concept of art is considered to be pragmatic and functional. Needless to say that all the five novels have affectively addressed the issue of the Native Canadian's quest for an identity in the present day neo-colonial Canadian scenario. In Armstrong's two novels the reader is allowed to comprehend fully through the texts the reasons why only revolutionary action can bring about true socio-cultural change. Hence the message has been conveyed through select voices. It is the individual protagonist who initiates action on behalf of the dis-enfranchised people in Slash. Whispering in Shadows, on the other hand, ends on a note of hope for a better tomorrow. But the style of narration differs from the basic straightforward approach used in Slash.

Like many Native narratives the text in Whispering in Shadows is not a linear one. It starts with the present, goes to the past and comes back to the present. The novel is structured around the reproduction of the spoken form through direct conversation, monologue, letters and poetry. This reflects the ambivalent identity of the protagonist which is in a constant flux. It is not possible to locate a unified identity of Penny, the protagonist. Rather the plurality of devices serve the purpose of making the readers aware of the internal conflict of consciousness going on in her mind which is typical of the post-colonial narrative.

Ruby Slipperjack's two novels, however, are more suggestive and subtle regarding employing of the literary device as a means of expounding a social doctrine. Here the novelist is found to be equally committed to the act of telling a story, that goes beyond the function of a socio-political text. Ruby allows a
lyrical flourish in style while focussing on the depiction of the communal sufferings of her own people.

*Kiss of the Fur Queen,* on the other hand, is a novel, where the novelist is found to be engaged in presenting an oral culture to the readers. Transmission of the cultural ethos into a written form is done by infusing references to dance forms, speech patterns and the use of culturally derived metaphors. Moreover, Highway has emphasised in the novel that one method of stressing difference of identity is to use language as a marker of cultural identification. There are several vernacular words and sentences which are not always translated for the readers who are unfamiliar with Cree language. The presence of Cree words in the novel changes the texture of the style of narration. It indicates that the meaning needs to be understood from the context. Although the three authors maintain their individual style of narration, yet they share a similarity in using the art of literary expression as a tool for the recovery of identity in the contemporary Canadian scenario.

The primary objective for analysing the novels was to determine how the stories were capable of addressing the problematic of the quest for identity of the Native Canadians. Designed to reveal information about the symbolic nature of each story, the events, characters, settings were taken into consideration. The narration of the events was designed to provide meaning to the representation of what the world had become for the Native Canadians in the present day scenario.

The characters were especially examined to see what traits they possessed and if any of their traits seemed conflicting. Most important, the goals of the characters were identified. The characters reaching their goal were assumed to have been sanctioned by the rhetor.

It was assumed that the main point of each of the stories would be to serve the purpose of finding a solution to the quest for identity of the Native Canadians. Therefore the analysis looked at the main theme of each story in terms of how it met the issue.

While discussing the main points of the stories, the focus remained on looking at identity from the sociological perspective. Despite the fact that the style of narration used by each author was different, yet the common themes included the fact that the stories placed the Native Indians within an ongoing process of constructing an identity that had been denied to them by the
dominant social structure. The texts discussed the downfall of bureaucratic systems that governed Indian policy in their country. The implicit and explicit values revealed in the texts were fundamentally in line with basic Native Canadian values. These values were held to be appropriate for them to uphold the Native Canadians sovereignty and self-determination.

Notes and References


4. Myth : The use of the term 'myth', as it is used here, is similar to the definition used by Barthes (1972). Barthes writes – Myth has the task of giving a historical intention a natural justification.


7. For the Canadian Americans, the war of 1812-14 was the end of an era. As long as the colonial war had lasted, they had been able to maintain their positions in return for their war services. With the loss of that bargaining tool, they were placed at a serious disadvantage.


20. Ibid, p. 68.


27. Ibid, p. 93.


Ibid, p. 69.


Ibid, p. 140.


64. Ibid, p. 30.