

**SILENCED BY DESIGN AND DISPLACED BY
WILL: A FOUCAULDIAN STUDY OF NATIVE
AMERICAN LITERATURE**

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**ASIA e UNIVERSITY
2023**

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A Thesis Submitted to Asia e University in
Fulfilment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
November 2023

ABSTRACT

The study seeks to explore how in the pertaining hegemonic scenario of the White world the Native American literature offers a critical perception on some of the vital present-day issues of survival, resilience and power imbalance that they are facing. The selection of literary works is made from a range of genres written by different Native American writers over the last four decades. Undertaken dissertation debates that the Native American literature addresses the issues that are disrupting the indigenous culture. It encounters the false formation of the Native Americans as misnomers through the dominant White narratives. The works of Sherman Alexie, Thomas King, Doug Boyd and Louise Erdrich selected for analysis incorporate the complex aspects of the Native American literature, culture and history in the milieu of the subjective perspectives and experiences of the writers. By incorporating close reading method as the methodological approach, this study has attempted to read across Native American texts by applying the theoretical ideas of power politics of White governmentality by the French theorist Michel Foucault. The findings indicate that suppression of the Native Americans caused by the monopoly of the White hegemony is the crux of the whole fiasco that ultimately paved the way to silent the Native American narratives. It reveals that by reclaiming historical memory and using storytelling to establish their Indigenous identities, Native American authors dynamically fight against cultural erasure. These works serve as acts of cultural survival, presenting alternative epistemologies that contest colonial narratives and establish sovereignty over their own representation, in addition to exposing the mechanics of systematic oppression. Addressing historical injustices and dispelling persistent stereotypes are crucial goals of this study, which concentrated on the deliberate exclusion, misrepresentation, and ongoing stereotyping of Native Americans. This research is significant from the Native American perspective as it highlights the marginalized Native American narrative in its counter discursive approach and also highlights that how the privileged white sphere shapes, misinterprets, and discards an entire narrative based on falsified notions. This counter-discursive strategy fights misrepresentation by correcting misconceptions, promoting narrative sovereignty, and encouraging a more equitable portrayal of Native American experiences.

Keywords: Power politics, governmentality, bio power, Native Americans, white settler Colonialism

APPROPAL

This is to certify that this thesis conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in quality and scope, for the fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the thesis submitted in fulfillment of the PhD degree is my own work and that all contributions from any other persons or sources are properly and duly cited. I further declare that the material has not been submitted either in whole or in part, for a degree at this or any other university. In making this declaration, I understand and acknowledge any breaches in this declaration constitute academic misconduct, which may result in my expulsion from the programme and/or exclusion from the award of the degree.

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Signature of Student:

Date: 2 November 2023

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

“And We removed from you your burden” (94:2)

I am thankful to Allah Almighty, who is the all source of knowledge and bestows it on its people. He is the one who brings things from nonexistence to existence who with his utmost kindness enabled me to complete this task. I am also thankful to my respected supervisor for her continuous support and kind guidance. I am thankful to my family who has seen my meltdowns and I am thankful to very dear friends who kept me going and this hard journey finally came to an end.

I always have had this interest of representing the marginalized especially when they are side lined and excluded by those who are in power and did everything intentionally. It is ironic that I am saying and writing it all with slow and sometimes no internet, when my country and people are also being persecuted at the hands of power politics and government. I am writing at a time when Maori people of New Zealand are still trying to save what is theirs, and when Palestinians are being made to suffer the bio power and political control. Hence, it further strengthens the undertaken Native American cause which is still the least acknowledged. The Native American literature produced over decades tries to highlight the systematic exclusion by the government which is still relevant in the current era.

This work may not be perfect and has its flaws but it tried to talk about the issues that are there since long and were never given due credit in actual sense. I hope it will make a difference.

Aqdas

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

“Nations are Narrations” (Said, 1993 p. xiii)

Native Americans and their literature have always been marginalized by the dominant White spheres. Everything related to them has been presented as inferior, specifically when it comes to their land and insignificant when it comes to their stories of resilience, in the constructed versions of reality by white hegemonic power structures. A series of injustices conducted against them remained the hall mark of the White politics and literature. For a very long time, the Native Americans have been shown as an absent figure and their diversity was merged into one single entity, by discarding their versatile approach towards nature and universe that ultimately resulted in severe power imbalance that dominated the White domain and nearly erased the Native American domain in sense of culture and specifically their stories and land (Kidwell, 2005). In order to counter the erroneous narratives against the Native Americans, it is important to look at the things from the perspective of Native American themselves.

This study aims to explore two important aspects of the Native American discourse by specifically focusing on the land and stories as mode of survival and resilience for them as presented through selected Native American literature. The land is portrayed in Native American literature as a symbol of spiritual linkages, ancestral connections, and the effects of colonization. Narratives function as cultural repositories, mirroring past challenges and tenacity. Land and stories together capture the intricate reality of Native American life, highlighting historical hardship, cultural diversity, and the constant struggle for justice, identity, and preservation (Teuton, 2018). Majority of

the Native American writers continue to strive for a common aim in their works, and that is to make themselves visible in white political power structures. Thus, by studying these power relations, the Native American side of story can be learnt by having a first-hand experience of Native American authors, as the Native Americans do not want their stories to be told by those who claim themselves to be falsely representing them. This Native American issue gets even graver when the direct involvement of the white power politics and governmental institutes played a drastic role in sabotaging the Native American epistemology.

This research will explore the power politics that has resulted in the imbalance of power narratives. The White narratives always denied the presence of Native Americans, as they were neither present nor existed for them. They were stereotyped as people with no language of their own having no oral tradition, folklores and art of storytelling to convey their side of perspective. For the Whites, the Native Americans neither existed in past nor are they present today and will soon be considered an extinct ethnicity altogether. Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz (2012) in her book on Native Americas, titled as *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States* writes that almost five hundred Native American nations, that makes an average of almost three million Native Americans living in today's white United States of America are the predecessors of the almost fifteen million Native Americans that were displaced and massacred by the whites. (p.143)

Literary cannons always play an important role in formulating the identity of any nation and so is the case with Native American identity. Historically, Native American literature and imagery have been left out of the popular American conception of "National" literature and imagery. This exclusion has come about through a complex

interplay of factors including historical marginalization, canonization, bias side of White literary canons, stereotyping, appropriation and misrepresentation on mainstream opportunities. For a variety of reasons, Native American literature has been left out of the national literary canon. The historical conflict between European and Native American influences in American literature is highlighted by Krupat (1983) while spotlighting the conflicts between Native American and European influences in American literature, revealing power relationships, conflicts between cultures, and the long-lasting effects on Indigenous identities. This investigation exposes a complex story that deepens our comprehension of the intricate relationship that Native American literary forms have with colonial powers. Although it hasn't been fully accepted yet, the rich and diverse literatures of Native American people have a strong case for being included in the canon of American literature because of their antiquity and indigenusness. Cheyfitz (2002) further exposes the reality by talking about the ongoing colonialism that is supported by federal Indian law. This has consequences for the inclusion and study of Native American literatures. Native American studies have remained ambivalent about their potential place within a more inclusive, or aware, postcolonial studies, while post-colonial studies have largely ignored Native American issues in the United States for reasons related to both literary and political theory.

Native American Literature is considered to be an act of resistance in voicing their identity in a White world by subverting derogatory White narratives against them and producing their own narrative by adopting a counter discursive approach. They are collectively reduced to the misnomers. Native American Literature is an umbrella term that covers the versatility of the indigenous tribes. Native American literature is a rich and varied body of material created by Native American tribes across North America,

encompassing myths, songs, stories, oral traditions, and modern written writings (Teuton, 2018). With a wide variety of voices and belvederes from many tribes and locations, it aids historical reflection, identity expression, and cultural safeguarding. Relationship to land, cultural survival, colonialism, and the interaction of tradition and modernity are some of the issues covered in this literature.

The inaccurate and disparaging term "language-less" has been applied to Native Americans unfairly; it was coined by historical figures like Christopher Columbus and reflects a colonial mindset that has undermined the rich linguistic diversity and cultural expressions of Indigenous communities. Lundquist (2017) further digs in and mentions about one of Columbus's letters where he wrote, "I will bring back six of them to your highness, so that they may learn to talk" (p.17). This is an extremely biased and racist view of the Native Americans. They are defined as ones who cannot speak, whereas, they are the ones who have one of the oldest oral tradition of folklores. This is why the undertaken research will analyze the Native American perspective who will be telling their point of view to the world. This approach acts as a strategy to counter the false claims of Whites who play a role of manipulation by hijacking the Native American Narratives because of the White dominance over power narratives which further marginalizes the status of the Native Americans by suppressing their voices in every possible way.

Historically, Anglo Americans have largely denied the existence and autonomy of Native Americans. According to Lundquist (2017), Native American origins dates back to 28000 years ago. They are also known as First Nations among the human beings, they have a significant historical and cultural presence across North America (Bird, 2002). The denial of the existence of Native American instigated them to be expelled

from their own lands, which were eventually over taken by the Whites. For Native American groups, this historical denial and expulsion resulted in relocation, a loss of autonomy, and institutional oppression; it also signaled as the beginning of persistent persecution and cultural marginalization in American history. The elimination of Native American literatures from both White literary canons and Indigenous cultural cosmotheses poses a serious threat to the survival of Native Americans—jeopardizing their physical existence as well as their literary and cultural presence (Calcaterra, 2019). As Warrior (1995) asserts, “Survival in the face of genocide has always depended on resistance, and resistance has always been carried out in the name of continuity” (p. 90). It refers to the urgency of preserving Native literature as an act of cultural resilience and historical resistance. It acts as a challenging task for the Native Americans to make their presence not only seen but also felt in a White world that is intentionally blindfolding itself by playing a cunning game of not being able to see the ones who have been living over there, on those lands that are now wrongly and forcefully over taken by the White settlers. Native American is a general term covering all the Native Americans in it, they are the people with no individuality and tribal recognition that they actually deserve. The Whites denied the very existence of the Native Americans by saying they never were present.

Throughout the history, since the Native American interaction with the Whites at the time of Columbus, Native American discourses just like the Native Americans themselves are treated as misnomer that plays havoc in demolishing the identity of Native Americans, which is associated with their land and stories (Williams, 2009). The term *Columbusing* describes the process of finding or claiming something that has been long-established by a different group of people. When non-Native Americans or non-

Native American organizations discover or appropriate Native American literary traditions without giving due credit or understanding, it's known as Columbusing in the context of Native American literature. Columbusing can entail misrepresenting Native American cultures or characters in order to reinforce negative narratives or maintain stereotypes. This may lead to misrepresentation of Native American literary traditions. Eason (2018) talks about how important it is to restore and reflect Native American identity and knowledge, especially in the media, courts, and educational settings. The majority of popular conceptions and depictions of Native Americans are unfavorable, out of date, and restrictive. In this essay, he looks at how the ubiquity of these representations combined with a relative absence of positive representations in the modern era feeds a bias loop that keeps Native Americans and other populations at a disadvantage. He demonstrates how the same mechanism that produces unequal results can be used to advance good modern ideas and images of Native Americans, leading to more fair outcomes, by concentrating on three institutions: the legal system, the media, and education.

Native American tribes have historically endured severe injustices at the hands of numerous dominant groups, such as European colonists and subsequent settlers. These injustices included systematic inequality, cultural erasure, and expulsion from ancestral lands. Acknowledging these past injustices is essential to comprehending the current struggles that numerous Native American communities experience. It is untrue to state that the detrimental attempts made by some persons and organizations throughout history to minimize or deny the existence of Native American peoples are representative of all Whites as a monolithic entity. Native Americans have long been acknowledged and respected by numerous groups and communities, both before and after European

colonization but the treatment that they face by Whites has always been of critical nature.

Native Americans faced displacement from their lands at the hands of Whites which were also overtaken by Whites, *The Trail of Tears* and Indian removal act were among the efforts to diminish the Native American ethnicity. Moreover, Doug Boyd (1974) stated that the Native Americans faced brutal genocide by Whites which reduced their population from almost twenty million to approximately two million (p.212). This ruthless massacre of Native Americans eliminated many tribes completely. This ongoing trend of excluding Native Americans have changed a new approach of excluding them from literal spheres and thus, raised the issues of identity, land, loss of their stories and the need to preserve them by adopting resistance as a strategy.

A long history of systemic neglect and cultural marginalization is reflected in the omission of Native American literature from the main narrative of national literature and literary imagery. The lack of representation in national literary canons can be attributed to Eurocentric viewpoints that have historically dominated the process, frequently marginalizing the rich and varied literary traditions of indigenous people. In addition, Native American voices have historically been suppressed and undermined by the effects of colonialism and cultural assimilation programmers. The goal of policies like the boarding school system was to eradicate native languages, customs, and storytelling techniques, which put obstacles in the way of future generations' access to Native American literature. In addition to these historical contexts, stereotypes and misrepresentations still exist in the few contexts that recognize Native American writing. Such falsehoods have the potential to reinforce negative narratives and lead to a skewed knowledge of indigenous cultures.

As with several other issues, the North Dakota pipelines issue is emblematic of the ongoing challenges faced by Native American communities in asserting their rights and protecting their lands. The pipeline construction through sacred sites and ancestral territories raises environmental, cultural, and social concerns for indigenous peoples; these issues are connected to the historical and contemporary struggles for recognition and sovereignty. The pipelines not only pose a threat to the environment but also disrupt the complex web of relationships that Native American communities have with their lands. In order to address these omissions, campaigns have been launched to promote indigenous publishing projects, advocacy for the inclusion of Native American literature in school curricula have been in practice that encourage diverse storytelling that authentically captures the richness and complexity of indigenous lives. In a similar vein, resolving the pipeline problem in North Dakota necessitates valuing the viewpoints of Native American people in decision-making processes, recognizing and upholding indigenous rights, and holding meaningful consultations with impacted communities. Although Native American perspectives have been acknowledged, there is still much that can be done to make sure that they are regularly taken into account and given the weight they merit when making decisions, especially when it comes to matters like the North Dakota pipeline crisis. Addressing the pipeline issue in North Dakota hinges upon honoring the perspectives of Native American communities, safeguarding indigenous rights, and engaging in substantive consultations with those directly affected, thus paving the way for a more equitable and sustainable path forward. (Mengden, 2017).

This study will be beneficial in the Native American studies dealing with the issues of the land and Native American perspectives that are mostly untold and are

largely misinterpreted, mainly in the White societies. It would provide a facet to the study of the Native American narratives from the perspective of Native Americans.

1.0 Background of Study

Question of the identity and survival of Native American culture has always been an underrated and problematic concept in the white hegemonic structures (Hartsfield, 2004). The plight of Native American culture has struggled to gain meaningful recognition over the years, as it remains overshadowed by a brutal five-hundred-year history marked by massacre, genocide, and the exploitation of Indigenous lands. Their existence remains largely overlooked within the dominant White hegemonic power structures. In this scenario, it is important to study and explore the perspective of those who are marginalized and are directly influenced by every policy that is developed under the strategically approached governmentality of the Whites as the power structures belong to them and they are the ones who are deciding things for the Native Americans. This study aims to find out and discuss Native American perspectives from the context of Native Americans themselves.

Native Americans' counter-discursive approach challenges the hegemonic narrative imposed by the White world. It is a two-way approach of answering and questioning the White monopoly and a critique against the ruthless dealing of the Native American possessions, mainly their land and their side of story respectively, which are the main concerns in the undertaken research work and it also acts as an open challenge to the Native American dignity and existence. Native American literature refers towards the multiplicity of their traditions that is having a common concern, writers from different Native American tribes are raising their voices, and they are telling their stories

while addressing their shared issues of identity through land and stories. It is a mode of survival in a biased White centric world, where the Native Americans were brutally discarded from every walk of life, no place was given to them even in the White dominant literature; Lundquist (2017) writes that even William Shakespeare, the famous English dramatist mentioned them only once, of course it does not need to be mentioned that it was in negative sense. The Native Americans have a long history of marginalization for being treated as peripheral beings by White Americans in every sphere of society. They are treated as subaltern who can never be equal to the Whites and also termed as born slaves. Such ideology of Europeans communicates a very conventional mindset of theirs called Manifest Destiny. Manifest Destiny, a notion in American diplomatic history, appeared as a bigoted idea in the time period of mid-19th century to validate territorial expansion (Isenberg & Richards, 2017). Although it was sometimes addressed as an example of American growth and success, the concept behind Manifest Destiny was essentially one of racial and cultural dominance. It gave a front of legitimacy to the aggressive expansionist policies that stemmed into the systematic expulsion of Indigenous people. European settlers and American pioneers overlooked the rights and cultures of Native American nations and justified the theft of lands by presenting their activities as a civilizing mission (Bowden, 2013). This very mindset is legitimized again and again not only in Anglo-American literature but also in their visual narrative. Through literature and visual narratives, Anglo-American systematic marginalization of Native Americans is maintained. According to Brown (2019), negative perceptions and inaccurate depictions of Native American people in Western literature have exacerbated their marginalization.

1.1 Problem Statement

The Native Americans' forced displacement from their lands and the denial of their stories culminated in a period of five centuries covering subjugation and exploitation that led to their marginalization from the literary world at the hands of White people. This resulted in a literature of resistance and resilience by the Native Americans in a White world that was inequitable in power. This made an effort to introduce a shift in paradigm by making their presence seen and voice heard and to counter their imposed status of being the *Other*. It is an attempt to bring marginalized literature into the mainstream.

Native Americans were intentionally excluded and misrepresented. Even in the present day world they are regarded as savages, who are neither equal nor fulfill the apparently settled criteria of normal human beings. Through this, they have been continuously manipulated by the White power domains through stereotypical depiction of the First Nations. This misrepresentation is propagated by conventional culture, predominantly through media and cinema, which often paints them as uncivilized and archaic (Lyubymova, 2019).

The White narratives which are present abundantly have taken up the responsibility of mis/representing the Native American cause and hence acting as a false claim. In order to challenge this misrepresentation of the Native American epoch, this study aims to explore the Native American story and giving the voice to the intentionally unheard and shunned voices from the periphery. To hear the voice of the marginalized Native American literature, this study has done an in depth analysis based on close reading of the works produced over the last four decades that includes multiple genres.

This analysis of multiple genres in one study is an effort to give the Native American literature a new dimension of inclusivity which has not been seen earlier at one place.

Native American literature has adopted a counter discursive approach in sense of their land and particularly their side of story and hence, challenged their stereotypical misrepresentation by Whites and developed a completely different standard of their own to raise their voice and represent themselves and counter the marginalizing approach towards them. Native American land and indigenous stories will be interpreted as a Native American narrative, which will be addressing the crucial point of addressing their side of story and their subjugation by the power politics and White narratives under the French theorist Michel Foucault's notions of power. The studies that have been conducted in this regard are mostly from eurocentric perspective, that presented a sham narrative and false claim. This study aims to fill this gap of eurocentric misrepresentation of the Native Americans and their narrative.

The undertaken study wants to highlight the Native American literature and cause from their perspective. Therefore, it has taken the multiple genres and attempted to talk about the commonality of the aspect. Such amalgamation of Native American genres along with their representation has not been done before which addresses the Native American perspective in totality and bringing forward what the Native American writers have been putting forward under the responsibility of serving and protecting the Native American identity and heritage.

This study endeavored to address the identified gap by employing a Foucauldian perspective. It is Michel Foucault, who guides this study to uncover the White power politics and its role in shaping the governmentality of control on the subaltern Native

American community and its literature. It is this Foucauldian theory that reclaims the Native American paradigm by discarding the stereotypical misrepresentation of the Native Americans that has been widely promoted by the White spheres. When it comes to the research gap, it is interesting to note that majority of the data available is from White perspective. Even if it claims to represent the Native American cause, it is more of an untrue claim and more of a misrepresentation. Therefore, it is important to highlight the Native Americans' narrative that is built on their own perspective. The gap which is in need to be addressed here is that the Native American Land which is more than a capitalistic commodity includes several indigenous stories of survival and endurance, and it should be told and heard from the Native American point of view. Thus, it attempts to bring the marginalized Native American discourse into the center. This study aims to fill this gap by addressing afore mentioned concerns by adding more to the voice from periphery.

As mentioned earlier, that although much of the literature is available when it comes to the Whites and the Native Americans, but the actual Native American perspective has remained unexplored especially in the context of land and stories that can explain how the Native Americans are surviving in a hegemonic White society. Native American literature is an area that presents the issue of the Native Americans and explains how they are coping with their cultural genocide and literary epistemicide respectively as they never have gotten clear opportunities to voice their point of view in front of the world. In this regard, no as such exertion has been made yet, that aims to detangle the issues that are being faced by the Native Americans in an attempt to reclaim their land and tell their stories in their way. Thus, this study is an effort to bridge the gap of this absence of Native American's voice from literary canons by doing the close

reading of the selected works of Native American literature. This study represents a vital step towards rectifying the historical silence surrounding Native American voices in literature. By delving into the narratives of cultural genocide and literary epistemicide, it endeavors to empower Indigenous peoples to reclaim their stories and assert their rightful place within the literary canon.

1.2 Research Objectives

This research has the following research objectives:

- i. To explore the dimensions of survival and resilience in Native American Literature.
- ii. To examine the Native American land as the main source of attraction for the White settlers.
- iii. To inspect literary texts for power politics and the White governmentality as determinants of power imbalance.
- iv. To interpret bio power and bio politics as tools of hegemonic control over the Native Americans narratives.

1.3 Research Questions

This research attempted to answer the following Research questions.

- i. How do Native American narratives tell their story of resilience and survival in the White world?
- ii. How does Land emerge as a primary source of White hegemony and control over the lives of Native Americans and what is its subsequent portrayal in the Native American literature?