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Life and Writing in Works by Lee Maracle: A Native Canadian Woman's Search for Development

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Esta dissertação foi julgada e aprovada, em sua forma final, pelo Programa de Pós-Graduação *Stricto Sensu* em Letras, área de concentração Mestrado em Literaturas de Língua Inglesa, para a obtenção do grau de Mestre em Letras, pela seguinte Banca Examinadora:

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Somos todos juntos uma miscigenação
E não podemos fugir da nossa etnia
Índios, brancos, negros e mestiços
Nada de errado em seus princípios
O seu e o meu são iguais
Corre nas veias sem parar
Costumes, é folclore, é tradição
Capoeira que rasga o chão
Samba que sai da favela acabada
É hip hop na minha embolada
É povo na arte
É arte no povo
E não o povo na arte
De quem faz arte com o povo
Maracatus psicodélico
Capoeira da pesada
Bumba meu rádio
Birimbau elétrico
Frevo, samba e cores
Cores unidas e alegria
Nada de errado em nossa etnia

Chico Science

RESUMO

LACERDA, Maira Primo de Medeiros. *Life and writing in works by Lee Maracle: a native Canadian woman's search for development.* 2007. 92 f. Dissertação (Mestrado em Letras) – Instituto de Letras, Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro, 2007.

Essa dissertação tem como objetivo analisar três livros de Lee Maracle, autora canadense de origem indígena, com base nas teorias autobiográficas, pós-coloniais e feministas, visitando brevemente a história canadense, para contextualizar a produção literária desta autora. A primeira publicação de Maracle ocorreu em 1975, com o lançamento de sua autobiografia *Bobbi Lee – Indian Rebel*. Esta dissertação, entretanto, visa discutir a segunda edição desse livro, ampliada em 1990. A narrativa autobiográfica permite-nos conhecer as lutas, dificuldades e corrente situação dos povos indígenas canadenses, para que, no próximo momento possamos analisar a evolução da escrita de Maracle, na publicação de seus romances. *Sundogs* (1992) foi o primeiro romance da autora. Por meio de sua narradora em primeira pessoa, Marianne, *Sundogs* desdobra a trilha da jovem protagonista na busca de sua identidade indígena. O mais recente romance de Maracle, *Daughters are Forever* (2002), apresenta uma introdução mitológica da formação de "Turtle Island", a América, baseada nas tradições orais indígenas. O romance narra a trajetória de Marilyn, uma assistente social, por volta de seus quarenta e cinco anos, que sofre pelo seu distanciamento de suas filhas, causado por sua própria maternidade inadequada. O nítido aperfeiçoamento das técnicas literárias ao longo dos anos, transforma Lee Maracle em uma das vozes de uma minoria oprimida que quebra o silêncio através da literatura indígena, denunciando a realidade de seu povo marginalizado há séculos.

Palavras-chave: Literatura indígena canadense; busca de identidade; teorias e críticas autobiográficas, pós-coloniais e feministas.

ABSTRACT

This dissertation's objective is analyzing three books by Lee Maracle, First Nations Canadian author, based on postcolonial and feminist theories, briefly visiting the Canadian history, in order to contextualize Maracle's literary production. Maracle's first publication took place in 1975, with the release of her autobiography *Bobbi Lee – Indian Rebel*. This dissertation, however, intends to discuss the second edition of this book, enlarged in 1990. The autobiographical narrative allows us to become familiar with the struggles, difficulties and actual situation of Canadian Indigenous peoples, which permits our subsequent analysis of the evolution of Maracle's writing at the publication of her novels. *Sundogs* (1992) was the author's first novel. By the first-person narrator, Marianne, *Sundogs* unfolds the young protagonist's search for her Indigenous identity. The latest novel by Maracle, *Daughters are Forever* (2002), presents a mythological introduction to the formation of "Turtle Island", America, based on Native oral traditions. The novel narrates Marilyn's trajectory, a mid-fifties social worker that suffers from her daughters' distancing, due to her poor motherhood. The clear improvement of literary techniques along the years transforms Lee Maracle in one of the oppressed voices that breaks the silence through Indigenous literature, denouncing the reality of her, for centuries, marginalized people.

Keywords: Canadian Indigenous literature; search for identity; autobiographical, postcolonial and feminist theories and criticism.

SINOPSE

Análise dos livros *Bobbi Lee Indian Rebel* (1990), *Sundogs* (1992), e *Daughters are Forever* (2002), com base nas teorias autobiográficas, pós-coloniais e feministas, com o objetivo de discutir a evolução de Lee Maracle como escritora, desde sua autobiografia, passando por seus romances inaugural e mais recente. Discussão da importante inserção de Maracle no gênero Literatura Indígena, através do conteúdo denunciador da condição marginalizada dos povos indígenas canadenses.

SYNOPSIS

Analysis of the books *Bobbi Lee Indian Rebel* (1990), *Sundogs* (1992), and *Daughters are Forever* (2002), based on autobiographical, postcolonial and feminist theories, with the objective of discussing Lee Maracle's evolution as writer from her autobiography to her inaugural and latest novels. Discussion of Maracle's important insertion in the genre of Native Literature, through the denouncing content of the marginalized condition of Native Canadian peoples.

LIST OF CONTENTS

1- INTRODUCTION

Literature invites readers to discover new worlds without even having to leave their comfortable couches at home, or the relaxing shade of a tree. The magic of imagining plots, scenarios, and characters broadens the minds of those who find in this practice a unique form of amusement and learning.

Since the first Greeks, who philosophically discussed the world in which they lived, literature was present and did split opinions. Plato thought that, in his ideal republic, the poets should be excluded for they copied the real world, and mimicry was not supposed to constitute the foundations for a stable republic. Aristotle did not share his master's ideas and, as a rebel disciple, described the features of poetics, stating that imitation is part of human nature, through which we acquire learning that gives us pleasure (ARISTOTLE: 1997, 6).

The development of literature, throughout the centuries left marks: classics that shall never cease to enthrall readers and inspire followers. At first, producing, publishing, and buying literature was limited to those who were literate and had the means to print and buy books. The expansion of the European conquest in the new world of America expanded the reach of literature, but it was only in the most recent centuries that literature became available to the various social classes of society. Very few writers with ethnic background produced written literature before the twentieth century, for, among ethnic groups, literacy rates were low and there was almost no chance of publication. One of the first books written by a member of an ethnic group was Harriet Jacobs' 1861 *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, an autobiography, published under the pseudonym of Linda Brent.

Literature produced by marginal groups has always been of special interest to me. To hear the voices of those excluded from mainstream culture is a privilege, since so few are able to publish and the access to their works is not widely available. The first encounter I had with ethnical literature was as an undergraduate student at the UFF, where I read short stories by writers from India, South Africa, the Caribbean, Canada, and by American writers of Indigenous descent. A short story by a Spokane Native American writer, Sherman Alexie, truly impressed me. "The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven" called my attention for its post-modernistic approach to post-colonial themes, such as prejudice and the absence of the feeling of

belonging somewhere, for both cultures that composed the protagonist as a person played a strong part in his subjectivity, so he was neither comfortable in the reservation, nor in the city.

At the UERJ, I was introduced to various other minority authors, and I read the following poem by Lee Maracle, which touched me deeply:

Performing

I shudda got'n Oscar
for all the lies I told,
all the masks I wore…
But they don't give
Indian women Oscars
for dressin' like Vogue Magazine
and drippin'
honeyed English

Remember T'a-ah
I speak broken
Ink-lish tooh?

Now

I am

speechless…
(MARACLE: 2000, 9)

The tone of the poem, a mixture of anger with a sort of conformity, led me to question the speechlessness mentioned by Maracle. She mentions Oscars that are not given to Indian women, even though they greatly perform the roles of the oppressed at home, in their works, or just by confronting the photos in fashion magazines that install patterns of beauty based of WASP features. In addition, the poem mentions T'a-ah, this word that I tried so hard to understand and only discovered its meaning after reading Maracle's *Daughters are Forever*, in which the term appears again as grandmother, a possessor of great wisdom, the person who conveys cultural tribal beliefs to the next generations.

The first novel I read by Maracle was *Sundogs* and I truly enjoyed the narrative with its contemporary issues and analysis of present time politics and themes, such as generational conflicts, divorce, prejudice, and university education, from the perspective of an Indigenous narrator. *Daughters are Forever* came next and I deeply enjoyed it as well. The mythological description of "Turtle Island" and of the formation of the world gave birth to my desire to research Lee Maracle for this dissertation. At last, I read Maracle's autobiography *Bobbi Lee* –

Indian Rebel, and realized how much her writing had changed and improved from her autobiography to the last fictional novel published up to date.

Lee Maracle is a member of the Sto:lo nation, by her marriage to Dennis Maracle, and has a Salish and Cree ancestry. The first notorious person in her family was her grandfather Chief Dan George, who played the role of Dustin Hoffman's adoptive father in *Little Big Man* (1970), besides playing other parts on TV and films. Maracle's daughter, Columpa Bobb, is mainly a theater actress and has obtained some television credits. Lee Maracle, the author under research here, has produced an autobiography, novels, poetry, and theoretical texts on literature, sociology and feminism. Through the discussion of Maracle's autobiography, on the second chapter, the author will be better introduced by her own texts.

This dissertation focuses on the very contemporary literature produced by one of the voices of an ethnic minority in Canada: the First Nations, aboriginal inhabitants of North America. To clarify the terminology applied, it is important to bear in mind that: "The term 'First Nation' has usually been applied to Indian people in Canada, particularly registered, treaty and status Indians on reserves" (ANDERSON: 1998, 24). Canadian Native peoples speak more than fifty languages, and come from different ethnic groups, such as the Inuit and the Métis, for which the term First Nations does not apply. The status or terminology used to refer to Indigenous peoples varies from critical author to author researched here, so there will be many different terms that represent the First Nations Canadians.

This dissertation intends to present and discuss three works by Maracle: *Bobbi Lee Indian Rebel* (1975); *Sundogs* (1992); and *Daughters are Forever* (2002), in the light of contemporary autobiographical, postcolonial and feminist theories and criticism.

According to the *Canadian Government's International Policy Statement*, from 2005, "Canada has been recognized as one of the best places in the world to live" (*Canadian Government*: 2005, 4), and as Prime Minister Paul Martin claims:

> Our shared commitment to peace, order and good government, combined with the dynamism of our communities and citizens, has produced a vibrant and prosperous political community. Our federation has become a diverse multicultural society capable of transcending the narrow politics of ethnic and cultural difference. (…)
> Canada's continued success depends on the joint pursuit of democracy, human rights and the rule of law. Though many countries share these values, we have moulded them into a particular constellation that reflects our historical experience and our current aspirations. Our overarching vision is an inclusive society, where the will of the majority is balanced by a commitment to minority rights." (*Canadian Government*: 2005, 4)

These beautiful words about progress and good will are followed by the addendum “There are cracks in our model, seen most visibly in the condition of Canada’s First Nations people” (*Canadian Government*: 2005, 4). The attempt to constitute a country in which everyone has his/her basic needs attended to really exists; nevertheless, what reality shows is a little different. The government realizes that the most difficult task they have is changing the conditions of the Canadian Indigenous populations for their poor situation is especially due to the historical dispossession of land and lifestyle they suffered.

The image of Indigenous people has been stereotyped in various forms, sometimes quite contradictory, oscillating between heroic and hostile, exploited and protected, primitive and pagan (VALASKAKIS: 2005, 213). They occupy a complex place in society, as Gail Valaskakis claims: “Displaced from their lands and lifestyles, and beset by the intrusion of conflicting cultural values, Indians have been disconnected, even isolated, from the social groups that dominate North America” (217).

Stereotyping is a discursive strategy that functions in the ambivalence of an already known characteristic of the colonized which is constantly repeated and used by colonizers to enforce marginalizing policies (BHABHA: 1997, 293). The prolonged use of this discursive device creates a persistent image of Indigenous peoples as incapable, irresponsible, and passive beings. However, Bhabha remarks that “stereotype is not a simplification because it is a false representation of a given reality” (298), therefore its truth should be questioned and revised. This revision has been taking place, and as Molly Mullin underlines: “Recent writing by Native American women has continued to attempt to educate non-Indians and combat stereotypes – whether romantic or derogatory” (MULLIN: 1995, 614).

Isolated, living in the margins of society, the original peoples of Canada have suffered a great loss that can never be recovered. Their stereotypes, besides characterizing a false reality, promoted their exclusion. Invisibility might be the term that best describes the historical position of Canadian Indigenous populations. Linda Hutcheon states that “The history of Canada, as it was taught to most of us, is the history of immigration. It also happens to be the history of European colonialism and of native displacement and cultural erasure” (HUTCHEON: 1990, p. 10). In this case, Canadian history is briefly visited in the first chapter to contextualize Maracle’s literary production.

Maracle's autobiography, *Bobbi Lee – Indian Rebel*, is the topic of the second chapter, along with some theoretical discussion of the autobiographical genre. The importance of historically contextualizing Canada helps acknowledging the background of the issues dealt with in Maracle's works, because, as Linda Warley argues: "All autobiographical writing is retrospective in that autobiographers look back over their pasts in an effort to make sense of them, and the therapeutic aspects of this process have long been recognized by theorists of autobiography" (WARLEY: 1996, 64). Maracle's first published work also illustrates Warley's following argument:

> For autobiographers who belong to marginalized groups, on the other hand, who by definition do not enjoy social power, the act of remembering and inscribing their individual past lives might function as a way of affirming cultural survival and facilitating political self-determination. (WARLEY: 1996, 64)

Survival has been one of Indigenous people's main concerns since the contact with Europeans, most especially their cultural survival under the constant intrusion of Western values and laws. Maracle's autobiography itself has suffered from the "intrusion" of her white editor, Donald Barnett, on its first edition in 1975. In the prologue to the 1990 second edition, Maracle states that "In the end, the voice that reached the paper was Don's, the information alone was mine" (MARACLE: 1990, 19).

Nonetheless, with the autobiography, Maracle took the first step into her writing career and decided to pursue another path in life, one that was very different from her turbulent youth of wanderings and meaningless jobs. Telling her personal life story awakened in her the desire to speak, to write, to tell stories, to become part of the academic and literary world. As one of the first Indigenous woman to publish in Canada, Maracle made an important statement: the Indigenous women have a lot to say.

Literature produced by Indigenous people is one of the tools to challenge the invisibility into which they have been confined for so long. Susie O'Brien declares that Maracle is concerned in rendering "the historical conditions by which marginality is not chosen but conferred on the native subject" (O'BRIEN: 1995, 90). Via literature there is an attempt to heal the wounds of the colonial past and give confidence to Indigenous people, for as Beth Cuthand asserts: "In the process of colonization, many of our people have been severely damaged, mentally, emotionally, physically" (CUTHAND: 1985, 53).

Agnes Grant uses the term “Native Literature”, stating that it “often confronts readers with a history that is stark and unredeemable – because the historic treatment of Natives was callous” (GRANT: 1990, 195). In addition, Grant defines the term in the following words:

> “Native Literature” means Native people telling their own stories, in their own ways, unfettered by criteria from another time and place.
> Native literature reveals the depth and status of the culture, expresses Native wisdom and points of view familiar to other Natives, reveals the beauty of the Native world, beauty rarely recognized by non-Native writers. (…) For Native readers, the literature is a source of strength and personal development. (GRANT: 1990, 195)

Julia Emberley states that “Aboriginal women’s writing emerges out of an experience of resistance to their experience as the ‘colonized’” (EMBERLEY: 1996, 97). In addition, Emberley describes the development of this literary genre, during the 1980s, when “Aboriginal struggles for self-determination also emerged in the cultural sphere” (98). The quest for political representation involved a quest for representation in general, including in literature. Emberley lists some works from the period, such as: Beth Brant’s edited collection of poetry *A Gathering of Spirit: A Collection by North American Indian Women* (1986); Jeannette Armstrong’s novel *Slash* (1985); and, some years earlier, Lee Maracle’s *Bobbi Lee – Indian Rebel: Struggles of a Native Canadian Woman* (1975). As Jeanne Perreault and Syvia Vance state:

> To discuss Native literature is to tangle with a myriad of issues: voicelessness, accessibility, stereotypes, appropriation, ghettoization, linguistic, cultural, sexual, and colonial roots of experience, and, therefore, of self-expression – all issues that bang at the door of conventional notions about Canada and about literature. (PERREAULT and VANCE: 1990, xv)

Lee Maracle represents this Native Literature. The novels *Sundogs* and *Daughters are Forever* reveal the culture and the condition of Maracle’s people and constitute the corpus analyzed in the third chapter. Both novels’ protagonists are women. In *Sundogs*, the first-person narrator, Marianne, seeks her Indigenous identity at the age of twenty. Marilyn, the protagonist of *Daughters are Forever*, a mid-forty Indigenous social worker, has her mental processes described by a third-person narrator.

The three books under research share the similarities of presenting Indigenous women’s perspectives. Certain issues from Maracle’s personal life experience, which are part of the autobiography, are not absent from her novels, themes such as search for identity, domestic violence, and Natives’ struggles. Indeed, this dissertation intends to show the development of

Maracle's writing skills, in contrast to the slow improvement of the Indigenous condition in Canada evidenced throughout her works.

One of the main goals of Native literature is to denounce oppression and promote the hope for a change in the world, in order to turn it into a better place to live, where Natives and non-Natives can share a peaceful relationship, respecting one another. Beth Cuthand comments that "In the process of writing we come to some knowledge of our past, of our place in creation" (CUTHAND: 1985, 53). The recovery of this place in creation, denied by the mainstream culture, is gradually conquered and maybe the original harmony will, some day, be reestablished.

2- CHAPTER ONE – A BRIEF HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF INDIGENOUS CANADA

Creation

I know nothing
Of great mysteries
Know less of creation
I do know
That the farther backward
In time that I travel
The more grandmothers
And the farther forward
The more grandchildren
I am obligated to both

Lee Maracle

Giving a brief historical context to the situation of Indigenous Canadians requires taking a step into the new trends of scientific research that tell about the continent the Europeans found and conquered in 1492. It is important to highlight that the Aboriginal culture of Canada varied, as Alan Anderson describes: “Native people of Canada do not constitute a single ethnic category, but a very wide range of interrelated ethnic collectivities with their specific traditional languages and cultures” (ANDERSON: 1998, 24). Indeed, the issues shared by these peoples are the topic of this chapter for their common situation as natives.

The arrival of Europeans to the American continent has been widely researched, described, and discussed. For centuries, the dominant culture of the European colonizers represented the only possible source of knowledge, once reason and enlightenment were thought to be exclusively European. The process of colonization tried to install the European way of life as the only possible way of life. Religion and science were brought to the “savages” who lived in the “new world”.

Nevertheless, even with an incredible effort to erase from the face of the globe the native cultures of the Americas, the populations that inhabited this land did not disappear completely and part of their cultures survived. The number of descendents of Native Americans, or Indigenous Americans, Amerindians, Aboriginals or First Nations Canadians, did shrink. Erasures on their culture were inevitable due to the constant and oppressive dissemination of

Western values and practices. Still, neither the people, nor the culture died. As Gail Valaskakis illustrates:

> In Indian Country, traditional beliefs and practices continually emerged in periods of cultural invasion and social conflict, especially during the late 1800s and early 1900s. In these perilous years, Indians experienced the displacement, territorial transgressions, and cultural restrictions of reserves, the impact of Christianity and boarding schools, and the onslaught of commercial enterprise and government administration. (VALASKAKIS: 2005, 257)

The right to write history was believed to belong exclusively to victorious people, who defeated the opponents and could decide what should be recorded of events. However, since the mid-twentieth century, new methodologies of historical research have been trying to demystify the construction of history from a single point of view and narratives by the ones considered "defeated" have broadened our knowledge of the past, offering new perspectives, clarifying hidden or silenced histories, and providing a more realistic account of past events.

In this sense, there are almost antagonistic versions of the formation of Canada as a country, coming from two opposite points of view: Canada's colonization by Europeans, mainly British and French; and the history of the dispossession of the First Nations life, land and culture. The journalist and former General Governor of Canada, of Chinese descent, Adrienne Clarkson, on the foreword to the collection of Aboriginal literature *Our Story,* states that "Even though our laws did not explicitly state that Aboriginal people were not human, they were routinely excluded from society" (CLARKSON: 2004, 4).

History books written in the past five years will not leave the perspective of the Native and their history out of its text, for it would not only be making a mistake by proposing that Canadian history began by the encounter, but it would not sell, for being excluding and dated. Nevertheless, there is an "almost total ignorance in Canada about that history and about their [Natives'] present situation" (CLARKSON: 2004, 2). The historian J.M. Bumsted explains the question in the first paragraph of his book *A History of the Canadian Peoples*, by positing that:

> Once upon a time, a history of Canada would typically begin with the arrival of the European 'discoverers' at the end of the fifteenth century. These events at best mark only the moment at which the land and its people enter the European historical record, not the beginning of its history. Thousands of years of human development had preceded the Europeans' appearance. The Native inhabitants of North America have their own history. The work of countless modern specialist; chiefly linguistic scholars and archaeologists, has only begun to touch the bare outlines of the pre-European period. The record of human settlement clearly does not begin with the Europeans. (BUMSTED: 1998, 1)

The tone of Bumsted's text is austere and clear. He makes a statement of his attempt to teach about the contemporary world, in which his book is inserted, in order to portray the whole history of Canada, not leaving behind the history of the oppressed peoples living in the land for centuries in peace with the environment. Evidences from archeologists' work have to become part of the writing of history.

From 75,000 to 15,000 years ago, Ice Ages permitted the natural construction of a bridge over the Bering Strait, allowing human beings to migrate from what is now known as Asia to America. Archeologists have found pre-historical instruments such as stone points and knives on both sides of Beringia around 11,000 BP. Studies declare that around 9,000 BC, the Northwest Coast culture was established. This is the beginning of Canada's First Nations History (DICKASON: 2002, 2).

The evidences of settlement are not exact, but detail cultures structured around fishing, farming and hunting. Adaptation to the natural environment was necessary and preserved nature in all its complexities. Human interference was mild or none. The societies developed were mainly egalitarian; the chiefdoms advanced when life became sedentary, but power relations, in hierarchical groups had shapes completely different from European patterns.

Anthropologists categorize two types of time: linear and circular/ cyclical time. Linear time follows the common Western pattern of development, based on dates of events in chronological order. Cyclical time is perceived by the natural changes, such as the stages of the moon and the four seasons of a year. Indigenous people's time apprehension was circular, based on the observation of the natural processes of the world. The main thread of history's structure is time. As Marie Battiste and James Henderson explain:

> Eurocentric anthropology cannot say that any cultural paradigm is based upon a completely rational and objective perception of reality; however, general agreement exists on three points. First, the way in which a people perceives and understands the world is directly dependent on the unique configurations of its belief system. Second, the meanings attached to natural phenomena are directly dependent on the conceptual structure of which they are a part, and this conceptual structure is highly conditioned by the people's culture and system of thought. Third, what constitutes a fact depends on the consensus of the community or group that evaluates what is real and what is not, and such consensuses are based on mutually held belief systems, rather than on rationality. (BATTISTE and HENDERSON: 2000, 37)

The Indigenous apprehension of time was part of their belief system. Based on rationality, historians used to argue that history only begins when writing is developed, for writing would be the way in which recordings of past events can be made; what would lead to the conclusion that if

there are no chronological records, there is no history. Nonetheless, Bumsted, again, goes straight to the point, highlighting that "There may have been no written record of North American development before the Europeans, but to assume that 'history' begins only with writing is totally misleading" (BUMSTED: 1998, 1). Indeed, after the encounter, time in America became linear, for European pattern's influence and domination. On the issue of oral traditions, Jeanne Perreault and Sylvia Vance underline that:

> Oral traditions have been dismissed as savage or primitive folklore. Such dismissal has been based on the self-serving colonial cultural myth that Europeans (and descendants thereof) were/ are more developed ("civilized") than Aboriginal peoples ("savage"). So arrogant is this myth and so arrogantly held has this myth been that, except for Christian or scholarly purposes, the colonizers have not bothered to learn Aboriginal languages. To this day, inept and ideologically informed translations of legends or myths are infantilizing aboriginal literatures. (PERREAULT and VANCE: 1990, xvi)

Thus, the native oral cultures of America that did not develop writing were not able to record their history, what does not mean it did not exist. Oral cultures pass their traditions, beliefs and stories to future generations. Their culture cannot be considered, in no matter whatsoever, inferior for the absence of writing. So, what is known as Canada today, used to be Turtle Island – Native name for America. Gail Valaskakis underlines that "the traditions that Native people enact and act upon today in the ambiguous play of power and identity neither disappeared nor remained intact" (VALASKAKIS: 2005, 256). Oral storytelling in aboriginal cultures remains alive, as Kristin Herzog points out:

> Oral art should not be considered a defunct phenomenon. It continues to live both in and out of American Indian reservations. All of the Native American women authors widely known today incorporate oral traditions into their fiction and poetry, making the fusion of Native and Western elements the most outstanding feature of their writing. (HERZOG: 1995, 608-608)

By the fifteenth century, the estimated population of the Americas was of 112.5 million. Of this number a large percentage inhabited North America. At the time of encounter, various native groups had a developed way of life in which harmony with nature was fundamental. Their belief system, mentioned above is described by Olive Patricia Dickason in the following way:

> This dazzling variety of cultural particularities has tended to obscure the underlying unity of the Amerindian world view, which saw humans as part of a cosmological order depending on a balance of reciprocating forces to keep the universe functioning in harmony. (DICKASON: 2002, xi-xii)

This worldview contrasts the European view centered on man and his capacity to control nature for his benefit (DICKASON: 2002, xii). When the two worlds meet, a conflict begins. This conflict has not ended and is sometimes forgotten by some who tell Canadian History beginning by the European arrival. The reaction on the part of the newcomers was unfair: "Europeans generally did not recognize the validity of Amerindian civilizations, classed them as 'savage', and denied their right to sovereignty and even to landed property rights for those peoples living in non-state societies, which was the case of Canada" (xii). A history of oppression begins.

The unity of the universe was a concept widely shared by the Native peoples of Canada. Objects that were considered inanimate by the Western culture, had life and the most important value was harmony. Hospitality was a law, and its violation was a crime. Bumsted notes that:

> Nowhere was the gulf between Natives and newcomers more apparent than in the spiritual realm. Aboriginal religious beliefs were complex, although not readily apparent to the outside observer. They were part of an intricate religio-magical world that the Native peoples inhabited and shared with the flora and fauna. (BUMSTED: 1998, 24)

The colonizer's efforts to make the Indigenous assimilate the European culture and way of life were innumerous. In a sense, it can be argued that they managed to reach this goal in the long run, for the amount of Indigenous people in Canada that still keep the old way of life of a hundred or more years ago is almost inexistent. Indeed, many features of the culture remained and a total assimilation was never achieved for the Indigenous populations' resistance was strong. As Leroy Little Bear has described in his article "Jagged Worldviews Colliding":

> Different ways of interpreting the world are manifest through different cultures, which are often in opposition to one another. One of the problems with colonialism is that it tries to maintain a singular social order by means of force and law, suppressing the diversity of human worldviews. (LITLE BEAR: 2000, 77)

Colonialism was the official ruling system of the American continent, until 1898, when Cuba became independent from Spanish Colonialism. Resistance was the only way of preserving culture and surviving. In Homi Bhabha's words:

> Resistance is not necessarily an oppositional act of political intention, nor is it the simple negation or exclusion of the 'content' of an other culture, as a difference once perceived. It is the effect of an ambivalence produced within the rules of recognition of dominating discourses as they articulate the signs of cultural difference and reimplicate them within the deferential relations of colonial power – hierarchy, normalization, marginalization, and so forth. (BHABHA: 1999, 33)

The official history of Canada reports the expansion of colonial power in the land by conquering the unknown territory and signing treaties with the Native inhabitants of North America, who were illiterate and had a totally different relationship with the land from that of the Europeans. For the Natives, the land belonged to everyone, and all natural elements were their relatives as the great mother Earth had designed.

The treaties signed between Indigenous people and settlers varied in time and content. Under the title of "Peace and Friendship Treaties", several treaties were signed, confirmed and reconfirmed from 1725 to 1779. These treaties dealt with non-attack agreements, acknowledging European control over areas of the North Atlantic coast, and demanding Indigenous people to accept the blame in the case of conflicts. In the 1779 treaty, for example, the Micmac nation, after the American Revolution (1775-76), encouraged by Americans, fought the British; when subjugated, the Micmacs signed a treaty in which they agreed to "accept the blame for the attack and to promise that in the future they would protect English settlers"[1]

From 1781 to 1836, the "Upper Canada Treaties" were signed. These treaties dealt mainly with the purchase of Indigenous areas in exchange for goods, such as guns, gunpowder, hats and cloths. Through these treaties, the expansion of European settlements was validated. Indeed, there were uncertainties in the texts such as land wise extension "so far as a man can travel in a day"[2]. The purchase of Toronto for one thousand Quebec pounds worth of goods from the Mississauga nation was one of these "Upper Canada Treaties".

With the "Province of Canada Treaties", from 1850 to 1862, reservations began to be more and more delineated and larger amounts of land were bought by the Crown to be explored by mining companies. Then eleven "Numbered Treaties" (1871-1930) followed, in which the Native chieftains exchanged the land for residential schools and annuities, thinking they were sharing and not surrendering the land. Land was the source of life to Natives, not a commodity as the settlers saw it. The last treaties were the "William Treaties", encompassing a great part of central Ontario, and leaving behind Indigenous rights as the following comment shows: "The

[1] Information taken from the following web site, visited on January 28th, 2007:
http://atlas.nrcan.gc.ca/site/english/maps/historical/indiantreaties/historicaltreaties/p5.gif/image_view
[2] Information taken from the following web site, visited on January 28th, 2007:
http://atlas.nrcan.gc.ca/site/english/maps/historical/indiantreaties/historicaltreaties/p8.gif/image_view

Williams Treaties were different in many respects from other treaties in that they did not secure hunting and fishing rights nor did they guarantee possession of reserves"[3].

Canada's autonomy was granted in 1867. Canada became a country of continental magnitude, stretching between two oceans exits. By 1885, the Canadian Pacific Railway, connecting the Atlantic and the Pacific coasts, was finished. The main feature of the official history is the bilingual factor due to the French and British colonization, which somehow helped building a broader understanding and tolerance between different cultures. It does not mean that racism was absent. On the contrary, racist practices, such as those by the famous American KKK (Ku Klux Klan), also took place in Canada, where "the Klan assumed a Canadian face, posing as the defender of Britishness against the alien hordes and calling itself the 'Ku Klux Klan of the British empire'" (BUMSTED, 1998: 289).

Returning to the time of encounter between colonizer and colonized, one of the first acts of disrespect towards the Native peoples by the Europeans was naming places in their own languages, in total disregard of the names these places had in the Natives' languages. A second custom in the early European voyages was kidnapping Natives and taking them to Europe as living proof of the discovery of the "new world" and in the hope the captives would learn the European languages and habits and become interpreters or guides for future expeditions. Indeed, kidnapping proved to be an unsuccessful task, because of the fast acquisition of diseases in Europe or because of the harsh conditions of crossing the Atlantic the captives had to face. The effect of the encounter is not restricted to direct actions of the intruders; in 1862, an epidemic of smallpox killed one third of the Indigenous populations of British Columbia (CEC Network: 2006). In Bumsted's words:

> The Native population, lacking immunities to a variety of European diseases, was quickly decimated by epidemics, which spread silently across the land, often in advance of the actual appearance of a European carrier. Measles, smallpox, typhus, thyphoid, veneral disease, and tuberculosis were as much European imports as the gun, the horse, and the wheel. (BUMSTED: 1998, 7)

In addition to the last quotation, on the official Canadian government's web site, the following quote shows the impact of the encounter on the Native populations on its first one hundred years:

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[3] Information taken from the following web site visited on January 28th, 2007:
http://atlas.nrcan.gc.ca/site/english/maps/historical/indiantreaties/historicaltreaties/p45.gif/image_view

> The repeated outbreak of influenza, measles and smallpox had a devastating effect on Canada's indigenous population. Indeed, seventeenth century observations suggest that deaths from these diseases resulted in a decline of between one-half and two-thirds of the Aboriginal population of eastern North America during the first one hundred years of European contact.[4]

The first newcomers to get to Canada were mainly men – explorers, hunters and traders. This led to a reliance on the generosity of the male Natives to let their women "bestow sexual favors" to the white men (BUMSTED: 1998, 26). Of course, many times, the female favors were not requested but simply gotten by means of force. These events led to the beginning of a new type of inhabitant for the land, the half-breeds, or "Métis", as they are usually known in Canada. The Métis have a complex history as well, and their demands are quite unique because they lay in-between two worlds and two cultures.

Christianity was a major element of colonization because Europeans could not accept the Natives' paganism. Religious conversion became one more excuse for the conquest and oppression of the colonized peoples. The impression in Europe that most Indigenous peoples were cannibals was assumed and considered as another reason for the control of the land and establishment of Christian beliefs. The disrespect for the Aboriginal belief systems has been one of the most significant aspects of oppression.

For a long time in the early colonization of Canada, trading was the main activity between Natives and colonizers. The trading of European clothes for Native's fur represents in part the beginning of interchange. The east coast of Canada was colonized centuries before the west coast, since it is geographically closer to Europe. Dickason mentions that in the northwest, European colonization was faster and more peaceful than on the east. Nonetheless, she adds that "Contact on the west coast, despite its comparatively peaceful character, resulted in an 80 per cent drop of the Aboriginal population within a century" (DICKASON: 2002, 183).

This last quotation is shocking. The fact that a drop of 80 per cent is considered peaceful clearly indicates the magnitude of the slaughter that took place in Canada. The Natives that remained had no role in the European settlements and the "reserves" they were supposed to live in were shrinking at the arrival of each new commander of a British settlement, who decided the Natives did not need more land to survive than the few acres they still had. Clearly, the reservation life did not meet the Natives' standards, not only for the lack of freedom, but also for

[4] Information taken from the following web site, visited on January 17th, 2007: http://atlas.nrcan.gc.ca/site/english/maps/historical/aboriginalpeoples/circa1740/2

the gradual lack of natural resources, a consequence of colonization as well. Alan Anderson uses the term “virtual Diaspora” to characterize the situation of Aboriginal peoples who were removed from their homelands, territories that “became more scattered, due both to migration (voluntary or compelled) out of their original territories and to forced removal and consolidation into reserves” (ANDERSON: 1998, 25).

By 1830, the British administration of North America believed the Amerindians would soon become extinct, so they should be removed to the isolated communities in reservations or assimilate the new way of life conceived by the colonizers. The assimilation should be achieved by transforming the Natives in farmers and by educating them in the European way. As Molly Mullin describes:

> At the turn of the twentieth century, many policy makers and Christian missionaries believed that the only way Indian people could survive was if they gave up everything that distinguished them from Euro-American population – including their homelands, languages, religious practices, and styles of dress. (MULLIN: 1995, 612-613)

One of the most ironical parts of these decisions, besides the absence of consultation with the Natives themselves about the future they would choose for them – for they did not have any choice – was the fact that the funds for their education came from the “selling” of their land, accordingly to the “Numbered Treaties” mentioned above. This means that “The funds for this program would come from the invested proceeds from the sale of lands acquired from the Amerindians. In other words, they would pay their way into civilization” (DICKASON: 2002, 203). An addendum to this process is Dickason’s following comment: “Not only did the dominant society demand assimilation, it reserved to itself the right to dictate the terms by which it could proceed” (231). The colonizer’s idea was simple: in their minds, they were doing the right thing. Margery Fee comments on this issue stating that:

> Native children in Canada were frequently either sent to boarding schools with White teachers who often punished them for speaking their native languages, or taken away from their parents and communities and sent to White foster homes. Canadian Native communities are still struggling for control over their children’s education and foster care. (FEE: 1999, 243)

To illustrate the impact of such policies and how Natives tried to resist, Jeannette Armstrong, an Okanagan Native writer, states that “Many of our people were coerced and brutalized for speaking their language and practicing their culture until their memory grew distant and dim” (ARMSTRONG: 1990, 24). Armstrong’s family managed to save their children from

these coercing practices. In addition, she describes her father's strong will and commitment to his choices:

> At the time my father was a child, the government was taking Native children by force and putting them in residential schools. They were called agricultural schools at that time. The children raised pigs, they raised potatoes and they fed the nuns and priests – really well. My father did not attend these schools. He married and had children when the provincial government was coercing people in our communities, forcibly removing the children and putting them into residential schools at Kamloops, and they resisted. (ARMSTRONG: 1990, 24)

Children's treatment, regarding their fostering, was a topic that affected Natives tremendously. Jeannette Armstrong's father, once again, refused to have his children taken away from their family. He understood the world was changing and realized his children's need to learn the English language to survive. Talking to the traditional leaders of his community, Jeannette's father expressed the need for schools in the reservation, the only ones that his children would attend.

Coming from a culture in which children would learn from parents and family members all they need to survive by living with them, the contrast was huge, for white children were treated as adults and worked from early age. Model villages were created, where natives and non-Natives would live and the Natives would learn the European ways. The failure of this project was reflected in the Natives' acquisition of European vices instead of "values". The land that was not used in the European sense was taken away from the Natives and given to settlers. Violence erupted, leading to an atmosphere of hatred that has not entirely healed yet. Euro-Canadians expected assimilation and thought there was nothing in the Indigenous culture worth preserving (DICKASON: 2002, 237).

The Indian Act of 1876 was an instrument to regulate and oppress even more the Natives: it separated Natives into different categories, such as status, non-status and registered Indians. A Department of Indian Affairs was established in 1880, and it is now part of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. Its primary function is "to aid in maintenance of the bands and to encourage full and free participation in national affairs"[5]. The control over the populations was easier, for the Indian Agent became the person in charge of the contact between Natives and the rest of the country. Indigenous requests or demands would have to fit into the

[5] Information taken from the following web-site, visited on February 2nd, 2007: http://www.indians.org/welker/canada.htm

Indian Act or they would simply be ignored. Indian Agents are known to have profited from their dealings with Natives in the acquisition of personal properties that had been Indigenous lands. The Indian Act resulted in various and serious losses for the Natives – especially for the Métis – regarding land possession and governance of their lives. Truly, most of the colonization process' goals were achieved. Nevertheless:

> The Natives would prove tenacious in maintaining their own identity and culture in the face of much effort to Europeanize them, but they lacked the physical power to prevent either constant encroachment on their territory, or the continual undermining of the basic physical and spiritual substance of their way of life. The cultural contact between Native and newcomer was a true tragedy. (BUMSTED: 1998, 27)

The history of Canada that follows the first encounter between colonizer and colonized is marked by constant arrivals of settlers, French and British in the beginning and later from other European citizens; as Alfred Crosby asserts: "Between 1820 and 1930, well over 50 million Europeans migrated to the Neo-European lands overseas" (CROSBY: 1999, 419). More recently, immigrants from Asia, Africa, and Caribbean, among various other nationalities, have arrived in Canada. These peoples conquered the natural environment and turned the Indigenous land into their own homes. Canada developed economically and socially relatively well in the past two centuries. Modernity soon changed the plantations, the fur trade and the fishing economies of the past, into capitalist industries. The constitutional system also developed and attempts at the formation of a Canadian nationality have been taking place.

Many people left the rural areas and moved to the cities in the early twentieth century seeking better job opportunities. A welfare system was designed to prevent poverty, installing public hospitals and providing public schooling. However, Natives' reality was always different from the one of the average Canadian. An example of the gap within the country is the decline of the death rates in the period between the two World Wars, when, as Bumsted remarks:

> The main exception to the national trend was in the Aboriginal population. Their death rates ran four times the national average; infant mortality was at least twice that of Canadian society as a whole. Large numbers of Native mothers died in childbirth. Moreover, Indians suffered up three times more accidental deaths than Canada's population overall. (BUMSTED: 1998, 283)

As Maracle tells in an interview to Sneja Gunew and Margery Fee no wonder why the aboriginal death rates exceeded those of the average Canadian, for:

> In the ‘50s, seventeen of my teachers died in a single breath because we weren’t allowed to go to the particular hospitals unless there were no white people in those hospitals. If it was empty, we could go there. And doctors wouldn’t come into our communities because they were afraid of us, and that was okay, so we all died, our babies and our teachers, our elders. (FEE and GUNEW: 2004, 213)

In the same period mentioned above, racism in Canada grew. The various backgrounds of the population that formed the young Canadian nation created an exclusionist society. Assimilation was not complete, and remained the policy for Natives’ populations, as Bumsted underlines: “Canada’s treatment of its Aboriginal population continued to display both belief in the superiority of its culture and its antagonism towards the Natives peoples” (BUMSTED: 1998, 289). In the first decades of the 20th century, Native children were still taken to boarding schools, away from home, from their families and from their culture. The quest for total assimilation inflicted the most destroying policies towards a peoples’ culture, turning the traditional rituals into forbidden practices. Some Natives started to unite in order to claim their rights, in a very small initial movement. The first League of Indians’ congress was held in 1919. It was only in 1947 that Indigenous people acquired the right to vote on provincial elections.

The period between wars saw the raising of Canadian literature. Over 750 novels were published from 1920 and 1940. In 1941, Emily Carr, combining art and literature, wrote a collection of stories from visits to Indigenous villages.

In the 1950s, the world was changing at maximum speed. Automobiles and factories spread all over Canada and fossil fuels were burning to keep the speed. The natural environment was nobody’s concern. Pollution, accumulated with nuclear waste, was not a problem yet until the 1960s, when the side effects of the destruction of nature started to appeal to measurement and commitment to the air, forests, soil, rivers and oceans.

Minorities, in the 1960s, began to acquire voices and speak for their conditions, demanding social justice. The time became known as “The Radical Sixties”, for the articulated reunion of disadvantaged groups that emerged with their positions and demands, such as the Natives groups. In 1961, the National Indian Council was created to promote a better understanding between Native and non-Native people and improve the life of Natives. The council lasted until 1968, and it was sub-divided into the Canadian Métis Society and the National Indian Brotherhood (BUMSTED: 1998, 339).

At the Centennial of Canada, the Natives manifested their dissatisfaction with their situation at the Expo in Montreal. Disbelief on the part of general public was a common reaction, for they assumed the Natives were exaggerating, after all the "good things" that had been done for them. A nation's celebration of its 100th year is a very important event. However, Homi Bhabha argues that "despite the certainty with which historians speak of the 'origins' of nation as a sign of the 'modernity' of society, the cultural temporality of the nation inscribes a much more transitional reality" (BHABHA: 1995, 1). Bhabha's comparison between nation and narration explains how nations are ideas constructed on each nations' citizens minds:

> Nations, like narratives, lose their origins in the myths of time and only fully realize their horizons in the mind's eye. Such an image of the nation – or narration – might seem impossibly romantic and excessively metaphorical, but it is from those traditions of political thought and literary language that the nation emerges as a powerful historical idea in the west. (BHABHA: 1995, 1)

The continual search for natural resources in Native land led the Native militancy into mainstream politics. In 1969, there was a White Paper proposition to cancel the Indian Act and turn Natives into regular Canadians. The government did not consult the Natives for their opinion; the resolutions were simply imposed on them. The lack of acceptance impressed congressmen who thought this was a great step in the ending of differences in the treatment of Natives. Of course the question laid a number of issues relating to the unfair treatment Natives had always received. The Natives produced a manifesto about the tragedy of their lives. The White Paper was retracted in 1971.

Poverty among the minorities characterized racial discrimination. In the late 1980s, multiculturalism and sexual equality were the great demands of the time. The Canadian Multiculturalism Act from 1988 recognized Canada's compromise with the preservation of the cultures and lifestyles of ethnic groups. The Canadian Constitutional Act of 1982, sections 25 and 35, recognizes, respectively, Indian (First Nations), Métis, and Inuit, as Aboriginals peoples in Canada.[6]

The proposition of the Meech Lake Accord to change the status of Quebec, recognizing its "distinct society" raised various discussions. Elaborated in 1987 and due to be approved by June 1990, the denial of Native congressman Elijah Harper, because the accord did not assure

[6] Information taken from the following web-site, visited on February 2nd, 2007: http://en.wikipedeia.org/wiki/Aboriginal_peoples_in_Canada

Natives' rights, turned the country's concern to the long term rejected Aboriginal populations in Canada. Confrontation followed the legal process. In the summer of 1990, the Mohawks from Oka, in Quebec, had the Government call the federal armed forces to control their protests against the construction of a golf club on their ancient cemetery.

The Canadian society suffered tremendous change from the late 1980s to the 1990s. Suicide rates among male Natives were the highest in the country; in 1989, estimates showed that 32,000 women had been raped; and the number of divorces had tripled in 15 years, which meant that over half of the Canadian children would experience broken homes (BUMSTED: 1998, 391). "Racial and sexual excesses that might have gone unrecorded in previous generations were now openly publicized" (391), meaning that people did no longer accept violent acts against women and minorities. Nevertheless, drugs were widely available and alcohol consumption was frequent.

The condition of Natives was deplorable. The reserve life was almost impossible, making Natives move into cities, where they found social disapproval. Emma LaRocque, Native scholar, claims that "The tentacles of colonization are not only extant today, but may also be multiplying and encircling Native peoples in ever-tighter grips of landlessness and marginalization, hence, of anger, anomie, and violence, in which women are the more obvious victims" (LAROCQUE: 1996, 11-12).

Canada managed not to become Balkanized, leaving the unresolved issues to be dealt with slowly. The average white Canadian has a decent life, even when job opportunities are shrinking as in any country. The older generations can afford a comfortable retirement, plan trips and have a stable life, which is not exactly true to the native population.

The twentieth century was brief, as the historian Eric Hobsbawn characterizes in his book *Era dos Extremos*. The general feeling was that the planet was spinning faster than ever before. These feelings were based on the many transformations that changed the world completely in the last hundred years. Hobsbawn highlights that around the third quarter of the twentieth century, the key word to describe the mental territory was the preposition "post", along with its various terms, such as post-structuralism, post-colonialism and post-modernism. In addition, the historian comments that: "To 80% of humanity, the Middle Age suddenly ended in the mid-1950s"[7] (HOBSBAWN: 2005, 283). On the introduction to *Era dos Extremos*, Hobsbawn states that:

[7] Hobsbawn's quotations are translation done by me from the Portuguese

> At the end of this century, for the first time, it became possible to see how can be a world in which the past, including the past in the present, lost its role, in which old maps and letters that guided human beings on individual and collective life do not represent the landscape in which we move, the sea in which we sail. In which we do not know where our journey takes us, or even where it should take us. (HOBSBAWN: 2005, 25)

As late as 1998, the Minister of Indian Affairs, Jane Stewart, expressed officially the regret of the government for the residential school abuses and announced that an amount of money was to be paid for those who had suffered those abuses. Neither this acknowledgement, nor the money, would compensate or redress the oppression suffered by the Natives. Nevertheless, it shows a concern and a possibility of dialogue.

By 2001, about 3,31% of Canadians belonged to one or more Indigenous groups and 295.032 Native Canadians lived on reservations or Indigenous villages (Canadian government: 2006). In the epilogue to her book *Canada's First Nations*, Olive Patricia Dickason remarks:

> If any one theme can be traced throughout the history of Canada's Amerindians, it is the persistence of their identity. The confident expectation of Europeans that Indians were a vanishing people, the remnants of whom would finally be absorbed by the dominant society, has not happened. (DICKASON: 2002, 429)

The tenacious Natives of Canada, Bumsted referred to earlier on this chapter, managed, somehow, to preserve their identities. This brief historical setting intends to contextualize the texts that will be analyzed in this work. The development of colonization and the policies towards Natives in Canada are not at stake, but the construction of Indigenous identities through the acknowledgment and understanding of a colonial past which is a major issue among Native Canadians and it is represented in the literature produced by one of this minority's voice: Lee Maracle.

3- CHAPTER TWO – EXCLUSION IN CANADA: AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL CHALLENGES IN LEE MARACLE'S *BOBBI LEE – INDIAN REBEL*

Victory
No hurt burns my spirit
No pain thirsts my eyes
No lies poison my mind

Lee Maracle

This chapter discusses the autobiographical practices that characterize Lee Maracle's *Bobbi Lee – Indian Rebel*, first published in 1975. The corpus of this chapter, however, is the second edition of Maracle's autobiography, published in 1990.

As a genre, autobiography has functioned for centuries as an effective literary practice for the writing of life narratives, in various forms. Part of the autobiographical genre's importance lies in the content of each life narrative. What distinguishes this genre are the possibilities of allowing readers the contact with personal experiences of people from distant places and different backgrounds; or learning about those who are not far, but keep a different perspective of life, which is unreachable by mere observation. Uma Narayan has described in simple terms what she believes characterizes an autobiography:

> Giving such an account of oneself has much to recommend it, for all of us. It enables one to see, with humility, and gratitude, and pain, how much one has been shaped by one's context, to sense both the extent and the boundaries of one's vision, to see how circumstances can circumscribe as well as inspire, and to become self-aware to some extent of one's perspectives on things. (NARAYAN: 1997, 3)

The autobiographical genre implicates a writer who, at the same time, is the "observing subject and the object of investigation, remembrance, and contemplation" (SMITH and WATSON: 2001, 1). The autobiographical subject is at the center of the genre and manifests the mechanisms of narration with an almost absolute control. The activities related to the writing process of an autobiography mentioned above, such as observing, investigating, and remembering are personal and subjective constructs of the genre. Certain elements function as almost essential components of autobiographies, as the critic Marie-Françoise Chanfrault-Duchet proposes:

> In the life-story, the narrativisation always takes the form of a life course – facts and events selected as relevant are organized within a path, marked out by rites of passage: birth, school,

> first communion, first love, examinations, first job, marriage, birth of children and so on. (CHANFRAULT-DUCHET: 2000, 65)

Narration implies situating and describing the agent/narrator. Since the first notorious historian in the western world, Herodotus (5th century BC)[8], it is known that every text is written by someone, who has an identity that distinguishes this person from any other person in the world. As a result, a text is always situated in time and inserted in a context of itself. Herodotus, in his *Histories*[9], described the war between the Persian Empire and Greek city-states, stating clearly who he was, a Greek, in opposition to the Barbarians he also described. This way, Herodotus presented a reflection about the difference among men from different areas and backgrounds.

Every narrative, in its basis, reflects the positionality of orators or writers. Sneja Gunew highlights that postmodernist and postcolonialist theoreticians "have undoubtedly precipitated a widespread acceptance of the fact that positionality – where you stand in relation to what you say – is central to the construction of knowledge" (GUNEW: 1995, 1). In accordance, feelings, reasons and values that inform one's judgment of things are expressed in each sentence pronounced or written. In autobiographies, this contextual analysis enriches the narrative in a significant way.

An autobiography is a text that partakes of features that are characteristic of both history and fiction. History, here, shall be understood as facts that form the continuum of human experience, inserted in autobiographies via memory. Three elements remind the reader that an autobiography has fictional ingredients. These elements are: the fact that memory is not exact; writers' decisions over which events should be explored and which events should be forgotten or excluded during the writing process; and the writers' right to use imagination.

In short, any single text is constructed by one's perspectives and specifically one's personal memory of events registered in the narrative. The role of memory in the autobiographical genre encompasses crucial elements, for "Memory is thus both source and authenticator of autobiographical acts" (SMITH and WATSON: 2001, 16). The responsibility of

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[8] Information taken from the following web-site: http://www.herodotuswebsite.co.uk/WhoHe.htm visited on April 26th, 2007.

[9] Information taken from the following web-site: http://www.herodotuswebsite.co.uk/intro.htm visited on April 26th, 2007.

the autobiographer's memory in constituting the corpus of the text and providing its legitimacy turns the subjective human capacity of memorizing into a material form: autobiography.

The mnemonic act is fundamental to the narrative practice and it is characterized by its social function (FLORES: 1972, 12). It communicates information in the absence of the action or the subject itself that is expressed in this communication. Language is, of course, the means by which the process can be accomplished. Language is, then, the necessary tool for the acquisition of the mnemonic knowledge.

Dealing with memory is a complex experience. Collective memory plays a major role in the relations of power in every society. Silences in history represent mechanisms of collective memory manipulation (LE GOFF: 1982, 12). In addition, memory becomes an apparatus of power and as Jacques Le Goff has theorized: "the memory is an essential element of what is commonly called 'identity', individual or collective, which's search is a fundamental activity of individuals and societies of the present, in fever and anguish" (LE GOFF: 1982, 57)[10]. Search for identity through memory and by the medium of language is one of the central goals of autobiographies.

Since "memory is selective and untrustworthy" (SMITH: 1995, 85), and being memory the main vehicle and source of autobiographers, critic Sidonie Smith refers to the importance of the meanings aimed at by these writers, and states that "Autobigraphy is always an intricate web of historical facts and fiction" (85) for the experience revealed in the text is already an "interpreted phenomena" removed from "any pure facticity"(85):

> And each specific autobiographical subject speaks not from a single location within the community but simultaneously, from multiple locations determined by gender, race, class, nationality, ethnicity, religion, and sexuality among other markers of identity. (SMITH: 1995, 85)

Autobiography and identity construction are intrinsically connected. Stuart Hall argues that the subject is becoming fragmented, for subjects are formed of various identities, sometimes contradictory or unresolved; the process of identification became provisional, variable and uncertain (HALL: 2005, 12). Hall also states that "the fully unified, complete, secure and coherent identity is a fantasy"[11] (13).

[10] My translation from the Portuguese
[11] My translation from the Portuguese

In the autobiographical act, the subject initiates a designing of who he/ she is in order to describe his/ her life. In this sphere, the markers of identity play a significant role in the autobiographical genre. Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson argue in their book *Reading Autobiographies* (2001) that "identities are provisional" (SMITH and WATSON: 2001, 33) for "What may be a meaningful identity on one day or in one context, may not be culturally and personally meaningful at another moment or in another context" (33). There is a constant flux of social and symbolic systems that underlies the formation of identities, implicating their subjectivities and fragmenting them.

This fragmentation of subjectivities is a consequence of conflicting ideologies that form the social realities of individuals. In the specific case of marginalized groups, the mainstream ideology contradicts minorities' ideologies and the conflict creates an even more complex subject. Postcolonial contexts always report conflicting ideas, the shock of cultures. Felicity Nussbaum claims that:

> One consequence of the subject's entering into the culture's language and symbol system is a subjectivity placed in contradiction among dominant ideologies while those ideologies simultaneously work to produce and hold in place a unified subject. (NUSSBAUM: 1998, 162)

For Nussbaum the self is an "intersection of competing discourses" (NUSSBAUM: 1998, 162), and the fragmentation of autobiographical selves resists unifying subjectivities. Nussbaum suggest that "a model of multiple discursive formations which calls a historically located individual subject into being proves more flexible for producing new ways of regarding gender, identity, and narrative" (162).

However, the subjectivity of autobiographers revealed in their texts is not achieved only by individual meditation and reflection. The social structure around the individual and the context described help understanding this subjectivity. The communion of elements is "what we have called 'intersubjectivity' – the ways in which all selves are structured by interactions with others, and more general attention to the ways in which the self is framed and created by the social" (COSSLET *et al*: 2000, 7). Through the communication and cooperation with others, in intersubjectivity, the writing self is found.

For a long time there were specific groups of autobiographers, members of the dominant classes, as self-made men, or historical characters. As Tess Cosslet, Celia Lury and Penny Summerfield have argued:

> The traditional construction of the ideal autobiographer as a unified, transcendent subject, representative of the age, has favoured privileged white male writers who can fit into this role more easily than the marginalized and disposed. (COSSLET *et al*: 2000, 2)

The patriarchal structure of Western culture that prevailed for centuries has lost space with the advancement of literacy among previously excluded communities. Women conquered the right and prerogative of leaving the private sphere of homes and changed the way the world was seen. In Janice Gould's opinion, literacy in Western culture "means more than the ability to read or write. It means, as well, the ability of an individual to generate those texts that constitute a canon of knowledge and experience" (GOULD: 1995, 806). Soon literate women felt the need to tell their life-stories; women who dealt personally with racism, poverty and gender discrimination aimed at constituting a new canon. Still, as critic Gayatri Spivak states:

> Both as object of colonialist historiography and as subject of insurgency, the ideological construction of gender keeps the male dominant. If, in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow… (SPIVAK: 1997, 28)

In this case, the challenge of women post-colonial writers is daring. The text above was first published in 1988, and recent theories have been trying to confront Spivak's opinion towards the subaltern's possibility of speaking. The autobiographies by women offer a different perspective of life, enlarging the previously male dominated circles of literary production. Critic Susannah Radstone states that:

> When women pick up their pens to write autobiographies, the shape their words take and the way their words are read form part of a wider literary, cultural and social histories – histories of those who have written before; histories of those who have read before. (RADSTONE: 2000, 202)

Women's autobiographies have been crucial in the revision of women's issues, such as critics Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson list some of these issues: "growing up female, coming to voice, affiliation, sexuality and textuality, the life cycle" (SMITH and WATSON: 1998, 5). In addition, autobiographies written by women serve as mirrors to other women who will hear their "own unvoiced aspirations" (5).

The words women inscribe in paper, besides describing their internal processes and their lives, will last, becoming part of history and the literary canon, and acquiring new meanings by each reading of their works. The critic Trinh Minh-Ha sees this movement in the following way:

> In trying to tell something, a woman is told, shredding herself into opaque words while her voice dissolves on the walls of silence. Writing: a commitment of language. The web of her gestures, like all modes of writing, denotes a historical solidarity (on the understanding that her story remains inseparable from history). (MINH-HA: 1999, 264)

Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson also state that "Women's autobiography is now a privileged site for thinking about issues of writing at the intersection of feminism, postcolonial, and postmodern critical theories" (SMITH and Watson: 1998, 5). A woman's autobiography discusses gender relations for, once entering the autobiographical world, women attempt to change their position in society, and insert themselves in history. This change on women's status can be achieved by denouncing oppressive practices. Linda Anderson claims that:

> The idea that autobiography can become 'the text of the oppressed', articulating through one person's experience, experiences which may be representative of a particular marginalized group, is an important one: autobiography becomes both a way of testifying to oppression and empowering the subject through their cultural inscription and recognition. (ANDERSON: 2004, 104)

Autobiography, then, gains a new design, which is meant to express the consequences of exclusion. In the contemporary world, women with post-colonial backgrounds adopted the practice of writing their own life narratives in order to tell their stories of survival in a world their voices were unheard and their places in society were denied. As critics Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson state: "For marginalized women, autobiographical language may serve as a coinage that purchases entry into the social and discursive economy" (SMITH and WATSON: 1992, xix). When marginalized subjects use autobiographical practices, they are able to break official histories, bringing forward unofficial and eccentric histories (SMITH: 1995, 86) to debate.

Minorities usually have very little voice in their communities because of their marginalized position in society. When women autobiographers break the patriarchal structures and express their condition, the scope of their works reaches and broadens the communities' mentality. The value of these writings is undeniably precious, since, once again, in the words of Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson: "Autobiography by women and people of color introduce stirring narratives of self-discovery that authorize new subjects who claim kinship in a literature of possibility" (SMITH and WATSON: 1998, 5). A "literature of possibility" expresses a world of possibilities, where minorities' demands are heard, respected, and lead to changes in society. The critic bell hooks understands that feminism should encompass the struggles against sexism

with struggles against racism, for both represent the fights of the oppressed people. In addition, bell hooks argues that "women must explore various ways to communicate with one another cross-culturally if we are to develop political solidarity" (hooks: 1997, 406).

Theorizing autobiography has been a common literary trend for at least half a century. The wide scope of the genre provides innumerous possibilities for the apprehension of the life experiences, and insertion of formerly silenced voices into the literary field, as mentioned before. A concern that should always remain in the analysis of the genre is the importance of the context. In the case studied here, the position of the autobiographer as a woman and part of an ethnic group is extremely relevant. As Stuart Hall says:

> The term ethnicity acknowledges the place of history, language and culture in the construction of subjectivity and identity, as well as the fact that discourse is placed, positioned, situated, and all knowledge is contextual. (HALL: 1989, 226)

Theoreticians of ethnicity flourish in the contemporary world due to the very relevant theme of identity formation in a world where various ethnic groups share common spaces, including that of literature, and explore a wide variety of discourses. Homi Bhabha states that the "move away from the singularities of 'class' or 'gender' (…) has resulted in a useful awareness of the multiple subject positions – of race, gender, generation, institutional location, geopolitical locale, sexual orientation – that inhabit any claim to identity in the (post)modern world" (BHABHA: 1994, 269). Bhabha adds that the crucial innovation should be focusing on "interstitial" moments, those produced when differences are articulated and generate both sites of contestation and collaboration (269).

Lee Maracle, Canadian author of indigenous descent, born in 1950, had her first book published in 1975. *Bobbi Lee, Indian Rebel: Struggles of a Native Canadian Woman*, her autobiography, was edited by a white man, Donald Barnett. This first book, the autobiography of a twenty-five year old woman, tells the readers about Maracle's childhood and life as a young woman.

In *Bobbi Lee*, Maracle expresses her feelings of not belonging. Canada, her country of origin, treats her as a foreigner, excludes her, even though her ancestors had been there for centuries before the first Europeans set foot in Indigenous lands. Maracle's autobiography confronts the dominant Eurocentric discourses, portraying a different scenario, as Linda Warley argues:

> Aboriginal life stories challenge official histories, which have tended to ignore, denigrate, or distort the perspectives and experiences of Aboriginal people. They are a valuable cultural archive in that these narratives present a different source for, and representations of, "truth". (WARLEY: 1996, 65)

Maracle's book falls into the category considered by Sidonie Smith as a "bicultural" work, for:

> Although there were indigenous forms of oral and pictographic personal narratives in Native American cultures, only after contact with white Americans did written autobiography by Native American women emerge. Thus whether written solely by a literate Native American or through collaboration with a white amanuensis/editor, the autobiographical act is bicultural. (SMITH: 1995, 87)

In 1990, a second edition of the autobiography was published with additions. Maracle inserted an introductory report, a foreword by Jeannette Armstrong, a dedication to Don Barnett, the editor of the first edition and who died in the same year that edition was released – 1975 – and a long epilogue. Sophie McCall comments that "Lee Maracle's additional frames in the edition of *Bobbi Lee* fundamentally change the reader's comprehension of the unchanged text" (McCALL: 2002, 2). McCall questions the interferences of the white editor in Maracle's text, arguing that "despite the best of intentions, *Bobbi Lee* failed to become the shared resistance story that the two interlocutors had first envisioned" (6), even though, at a moment, Barnett and Maracle believed they were fighting at the same front against capitalism, imperialism, and trying to express resistance. Maracle herself states in the prologue of the 1990 edition that "The first *Bobbi Lee* was the reduction of some two hundred pages of manuscript to a little book" (MARACLE: 1990, 19).

Reductions were common among editors of Indigenous autobiographies, as in the case of Maria Campbell's *Half-breed* (1973), in which one third of the original text was cutout, including the passage that described her rape by a member of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. Campbell's rape incident was published much later, in *The Book of Jessica* (1989). Nonetheless, Molly Mullin recalls that "in many narrated autobiographies, much editing, translating, reordering, and even adding has gone before publication" (MULLIN: 1995, 612).

The corpus of this chapter is the second edition of *Bobbi Lee Indian Rebel*. The introductory report, mentioned above, was written in the Oka Peace Camp, on September 9th, 1990. The goal of the manifestation held in Oka was to stop the construction of a golf club on an

ancient Native graveyard. The text begins by stating the following: “The tension is thick, heavy with the reality that here on the eastern end of the country there have been 400 years of colonial battering” (MARACLE: 1990, 5). In the interview with Jennifer Kelly, Maracle voices her perceptions over the Oka crisis:

> There’s a real interest in what happened during Oka, but certainly, it was our day of awakening, I think. I hesitate to call it a day because really, it’s a short time in our long history, but it was a moment of awakening, it was a moment of recognition that we were not destroyed, that you cannot destroy culture, you cannot destroy the spirit of people. You cannot destroy our need to be, ourselves. It doesn’t matter how overwhelmed you are, I mean, we are half a million in 26 million people; we’re surrounded; we’re besieged; we’re constantly at threat; and every effort has been made to destroy what’s there, and it’s being revived faster than before, as a result of Oka. And I think what Oka told us all is that we’re worthy of great being, not just surviving. (KELLY: 1994, 77)

When the Oka crisis happened, fifteen years had passed since the *Bobbi Lee Indian Rebel* was first published and very little seemed to have changed in Native life conditions, but Maracle is definitely a different person – the tone of her writing matured, her voice is more assertive. In the report included on the second version, Maracle presents her view in the processes of nature:

> Creation is not passive. The birth, re-birth process of the earth, her storms, eruptions, tidal waves, floods, droughts and the coming of periodic ice ages attest to a total lack of passivity. The birth process of the plant and animal kingdom is not passive. Individually, every living thing on earth must labour to re-create itself. Seeds burst from the shell to regenerate and the process of birth for mammals is accomplished only with much blood shed.
> The re-birth of any social order is not passive. We cannot live in this world the way it is. (MARACLE: 1990, 8)

Maracle’s inconformity is evident in this passage. Describing how nature functions to generate life, in a simple way, Maracle shows an intimate connection between her and the natural processes of Earth. The “lack of passivity” in nature is an analogy to the way her people should behave in order to promote change and stop the destruction that their land has been suffering for centuries. The political tone is clear: action is necessary; at that moment, action meant manifestations against the building of the golf course.

Nevertheless, peace is also a wish; a strong wish for Maracle. She declares there is no peace in Canada, and she is very clear about what she understands as peace:

> Peace: freedom from conditions which annoy the mind. It annoys our minds to sleep under the dome of imperialist lust which is constantly looking for newer and more effective means of attacking our homelands, clawing and digging at them, extracting the insides, covering our graves with roadways, golf grounds, housing projects, offices, or what-have-you.

> We are absolutely opposed to anyone, organized with machine guns, assault rifles and tanks invading another people's territory to play shootemup cowboy. (MARACLE: 1990, 9)

Maracle is for action, although she considers that action and violence are different things. Her position towards violence is clear: she opposes it. The "imperialist lust" is exemplified by the extraction of goods, by housing projects that attack what Maracle calls "our homelands", the land in which the First Nations Canadians have always lived in harmony. In a broader sense, these homelands also represent the planet.

Imperialism is a term that expresses a number of relations in the contemporary world. Studies about imperialism have spread around universities and various scholars have been debating the practices, reasons and consequences of it. In the theoretician Edward Said's words:

> (…) "[I]mperialism" means the practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan center ruling a distant territory; "colonialism," which is almost a consequence of imperialism, is the implanting of settlements on distant territory. (…) In our time, direct colonialism has largely ended; imperialism, as we shall see, lingers where it has always been, in a kind of general cultural sphere as well as in specific political, ideological, economic, and social practices. (SAID: 1993, 9)

Canadian practices towards First Nations in the country show how imperialism has remained in effect. Since the 1970s, movements such as "Red Power" initiated their struggles for the rights of the first human inhabitants of the continent, in order to fight against the imperialistic structure they had been forced to conform to. Besides the manifestation in Oka, other measures have been put into practice. Writing about their lives' conditions is an important step, for, as Maracle herself states in a theoretical text, "Imperialism can always re-arrange the world in the interest of keeping a minority silent" (MARACLE: 1993, 153). Then, a way of confronting imperialism is breaking the silence with literature.

Jeanette Armstrong, in the foreword to *Bobbi Lee*, considers the book a contribution to the struggle of Native people as it works to: "uncurl from the somnambulistic fetal ball, survival state that psychological oppression had reduced our peoples to, in the aftermath of the totalitarianistic measures to dispossess our peoples of everything that is meaningful in life" (ARMSTRONG: 1990, 15). The harsh reality of Aboriginal lives and a mixture of Native and non-Native values create confusion in people's minds and keep them unmoving, inert. When these lives gain the pages of a book and readers share this reality, a movement is made towards an attempt to change.

As seen earlier in this chapter, through the acquisition of literacy and formal education, autobiography allows former voiceless communities to express themselves. Even using not very sophisticated language skills, Maracle is published and envisages new possibilities in hybrid discourses. As Felicity Nussbaum suggests:

> By stepping outside narrative conversion models and privately experimenting with other forms, the autobiographical writers at once form the private self necessary for an emergent market economy and produce a space for interrogating received assumptions about identity. (NUSSBAUM: 1998, 165)

The quest for identity in Maracle's autobiography begins, almost following the patterns mentioned by Chanfrault-Duchet, which is quoted in the beginning of this chapter, by a "Turbulent Childhood". *Bobbi Lee* unfolds family relations in a house in the mud flats of Vancouver. Describing her Métis mother, daughter of a Frenchman and a Native woman, and her white father, who was truly the father of only two of her mother's seven children, Bobbi Lee presents herself as not one of her white father's children. In a conversation with Jennifer Kelly, published in 1994, Maracle introduces herself stating that her blood father is Salish (KELLY: 1994, 73). She comments on how much gossip existed in the community about her mother going around with other men. Yet, once, while her white father was away working for long periods, as he used to be, a man tries to break into the house to abuse her mother and she holds an axe and tells the man she will cut his head off if he does not leave.

Domestic violence was part of everyday life in Bobbi Lee's home, and it is also a recurrent theme in Maracle's novels *Sundogs* (1992) and *Daughters are Forever* (2002). Bobbi Lee's parents used to fight a lot, and the father would spank the children often. The oldest brother, Ed, would be thrown against the wall, until he ran away for a week and the mother kicked the father out of the house for that reason. Spanking from both parents was part of Bobbi Lee's life.

During one of the father's long absences the children started working after school. The mother did not want to receive welfare money, she was too proud to declare she was unable to work and get enough money to raise her own children. However, when the mother finds herself pregnant, when she is almost forty years old, she gets sick and asks out loud "'Why are we so poor when we work so hard?'" (MARACLE: 1990, 32). As Maracle writes in the book:

> I felt she was asking me and I didn't have an answer. I just wondered alone with her how it was that no matter how hard we worked – my brothers caddying or doing other odd jobs, me ironing, etc. – we never seemed to have anything to eat but the fruit and vegetables that we canned. (…) we never had any heat in the house. I also began wondering why most people – white people – didn't like Indians and treated us badly, like we weren't as good as they were. And soon I began to wonder if, or how, we could change the situation we found ourselves in. We seemed to be caught in the same rut all the time … always runnin' around in the same miserable rut. But I was still far too young and inexperienced to understand the social and class nature of our oppression. (MARACLE: 1990, 32)

For a child, who is learning how the world functions, it can be hard to understand the whys of poverty and how discrimination works. When Bobbi Lee was eleven, her mother bought a better house and they moved from the mud flats. The new house had central heating, so the kids were protected from the cold. At that time, her mother had changed considerably, she became "moralistic", stopped drinking and "running around with men" (MARACLE: 1990, 33) and wanted Bobbi Lee to study the Bible.

Maracle describes that: "Three months after I entered school I became aware that I was an Indian and that white people didn't like me because of the colour of my skin" (MARACLE: 1990, 33). The other kids on the reserve said they did not like white people either; however, Bobby Lee's situation was difficult to deal with, since the father figure she had at home was a white man, while her real father was a First Nations Indian. Janice Gould, a critic of indigenous descent, suggests that:

> Perhaps it can be said that one of the goals of racism is to fix people in a racial category based on what we are taught to perceive as color. More frequently in the past than now, the Euro-American slotted people into color categories: white, red, black, yellow, and brown. These colors were a racial code. (…) We know, of course, that the point of these categorizations was to allow the Euro-American male to congratulate himself on his superiority over non-Euro-Americans. (GOULD: 1992, 83)

Racism made Bobbi Lee feel uncomfortable at school, she did not answer when asked by teachers, and she wished she had long blonde hair as one of the girls who teased her. It took a while and the meeting with a liberal teacher, with whom she discussed religion, for Bobbi Lee to become a little more relaxed at school. By that time, Bobbi Lee's mother had joined the Communist Party and subscribed to the *Soviet Union* magazine, published in Moscow. Bobbi Lee and her siblings would sit and talk about the magazine and she liked the Eskimo dwellings on the photographs.

In the sixth grade, Bobbi Lee became friends with a Jewish girl, Maria, and went to the synagogue with her, but she decided she did not want to "become Jewish – or any other religion

for that matter" (MARACLE: 1990, 36). At that time she improved her marks for the first time, becoming a straight "A" student. Having a Jewish friend helped her realize that people would not only discriminate Indians, but other minorities as well. The following fragment shows what Bobbi Lee learned about prejudice with this friendship: "Maria, however, was a nice girl, and very quiet. Everyone used to pick on her because of her being Jewish, quiet and a good student…I guess" (MARACLE: 1990, 36).

The teasing of other kids made it difficult for Bobbi Lee to even want to go to school. Even so, Bobbi Lee persisted and when she got a job in South Vancouver, as a live-in babysitter, she registered at the Argyle Secondary School. Her father had constructed a new house for the family and was working for a fishing company. Her mother had finished nursing school. Lee was a top student for a semester, proving herself how capable she was. Despite that, she had few friends and was discontent with her work, which she considered boring. This is the moment of her "Early Rebellion", the second chapter of the autobiography.

Bobbi Lee joined the school track team, for she would get out of some classes and school detention. She won three categories – 440, 880 and mile senior women's races – on the Vancouver Area School District Games competition. She later won three more races in the British Columbia Championships, and at the age of fourteen Bobbi Lee was B.C.'s champion in women's distance races. Unfortunately, her back would hurt, because of a mild accident years before, and it became a problem for her sport career.

Working was always part of her life, but at the age of fifteen Bobbi Lee and her brother started stealing small things and soon they "became typical delinquents" (MARACLE: 1990, 44). The first time she got drunk, Bobbi Lee was with Toni, a girl who moved in with her family when she was younger and baby-sat the kids becoming part of the family, as an older sister. On that particular day, Bobbi Lee, after getting drunk, ran away from some boys, jumped a fence and was taken home by the police. Three months after this incident, she asked her mother to go to a dance, and received a "no" for an answer. Bobbi Lee went to the dance anyway and when she got home, her mother spanked her. They did not get along after the fight and Bobbi Lee's rebellion increased. She would leave the house for days and not even call, and she started going out with boys.

"I was like that: fickle, intense, always on the move" (MARACLE: 1990, 46), says Maracle about her teenage years. She practically dropped out of school, and once she stayed

home for a week, crying all the time. Taken to a hospital by her mother, they were told she had a nervous breakdown and should see a psychiatric. Returning home, Bobbi Lee went back to school and changed her area of focus from Sciences to Humanities and started taking Drama classes, which she liked.

For a period, Bobbi Lee moved to California, to work in farms and be with her older sister Toni. There, Bobbi Lee met several Mexicans. In California, she realized the existence of the segregation between Mexicans and white people. Racism was a double-edged knife in Visalia, the town she lived, for the Mexicans had the pride of coming from an independent country with a strong culture and shared a mutual hatred with the white people, who denied the Indians' existence. Later in life, Maracle deals with the subject of racism:

> Racism is the social division of people along racial lines. It is rooted in the actual conditions of the people of the world. The ideological justification used to be racial superiority. Few people will argue racial superiority in today's world. Yet racism persists. It is a condition, not just an ideology. (MARACLE: 1993, 151)

An amusing part of the autobiography is related to food. Toni's husband, Art, was Mexican and Bobbi Lee felt awful eating Mexican food, because of the pepper in it. She had diarrhea for the first weeks and lost a lot of weight while in Visalia. This part of the autobiography expresses humor, a very common feature in Aboriginal literature. Maracle comments that whenever she took a bite of someone's sandwich, she would get sick: "I never ate any kind of pepper at home and Christ, I'd be sick for days. I wouldn't say a word, you know, just smiled; but while I was eating the stuff my guts would be on fire" (MARACLE: 1990, 57).

It was with the Mexicans that Lee started smoking hash and living with Lorenzo, Art's younger brother. In the U.S.A., Bobbi Lee had her first discussions about the Vietnam War. She stated to her fellow Mexican-Americans they had no right to be in Vietnam. She left back to Canada when Lorenzo asked her to marry him, in the year of 1966.

At home, Bobbi Lee found out that her twin sisters had suffered a terrible experience. When they were fourteen years old, while one of them was raped, the other was forced to watch. In the above-referred interview given to Jennifer Kelly, Maracle declares that "Eighty per cent of Native women are very likely to be abused sexually and physically in their lives" (KELLY: 1994, 87).

Bobbi Lee's older brothers had left their home and she was under suspicions of having back cancer. The suspicions turned out to be a minor slipped disk, and Bobbi Lee resented the

doctor for creating a case out of something he could have seen in an X-ray. Bobbi Lee had a roller-skating accident when she was thirteen and had to undergo a year of physiotherapy. In Maracle's words:

> Now the doctor thought it might be cancer. He sent me to the hospital and they did a bunch of tests – took fluid from my spine and so on. Then they sent me home and I had to wait about two weeks, thinking for sure that's what I had. It was weird, sort of unbelievable situation. I just couldn't imagine what it would be like to die (…)
> As it turned out, all I had was a minor slipped disk. Still can't figure out why that stupid doctor didn't take an x-ray and find it out earlier. (MARACLE: 1990, 67)

Still at the time of Bobbi Lee's return from the U.S., she explained to her brother Roger how it feels to be a foreigner:

> I told Roger about my experiences in the States, especially about how I was struck by the cultural difference. "You don't just integrate into a different culture or atmosphere in three months", I said. "It would take ten years, or even more: you don't realize at first how that difference sets you apart from the rest of the community, makes you a foreigner." (MARACLE: 1990, 68)

In 1967, Bobbi Lee goes to Toronto to rescue her brother Ed, who had left home a year before. This is the beginning of Bobbi Lee's "Hippie Life-Style". She returns, works, gets bored and goes to Edmonton with her friend Stacey. There, they stay with Stacey's brother-in-law, Norman, separated from Stacey's sister. The three of them developed a heavy-drinking habit, and one day, "the Children's Aid Society comes and takes the kids Norman was supposed to be looking after" (MARACLE: 1990, 78-79). Bobbi Lee remembers the blank look in Norman's face while signing the legal papers. This issue is largely explored in *Daughters are Forever*, Maracle's latest novel, published in 2002, which will be analyzed in the next chapter.

Hitchhiking for six days, Bobbi Lee and Stacey arrive in Toronto and stay in a boarding house that used to be visited by the "Morality Squad". The raids were so frequent, that the girls would only arrive around 5 o'clock in the morning and sleep during the day to avoid trouble. Violence and death were everywhere, and so were drugs. Bobbi Lee lived with Doug at the time, a black young guitar player and political activist. Stacey entered the world of prostitution and she and Bobbi Lee broke apart, after Stacey proposed to share Doug.

Bobbi Lee's political involvement began in Toronto, as well as her deepest dive into heavy drugs. She participated in manifestations and started reading communist materials. She also faced bureaucracy when she tried to receive aid from welfare: she was asked to prove she

was not a registered Indian, but she could not; then, she went to the Indian Affairs Bureau for assistance, but they asked her to prove she was a registered Indian. She gave up. As critic Susie O'Brien suggests:

> Bobbi Lee manages to run the situation to her advantage, using it to assert her independence from both juridical categories. By thematically representing the condition of liminality, Maracle is able both to expose the arbitrariness of official discourses of race and to stage the performance of an identity that refuses to be contained by them. (O'BRIEN: 1995, 91)

Racism returns to the scene when Bobbi Lee and Doug tried to rent an apartment. They had to take a white guy with them; otherwise they would be turned down. Bobbi Lee realizes the path she had taken and describes her feelings:

> I'd just think: "It's not my problem to worry about what's happening with other people, what they're doing. I just have to be concerned with me, control my own existence."
> But then in Toronto I started to lose control of my existence and that's what really demoralized me. Here I was, living this completely useless life, thinking about it, but not able to do anything about it, to get out of it. And it was hard to tell if I really cared – about anything. Like with Doug. I never got angry at him; I wasn't that emotionally involved to get angry. (MARACLE: 1990, 100-101)

This apathy towards life lasted for a short period, until one day she had so many drugs in her system she did not know how to get home. When she finally recognized her brother's building, she grabbed her suitcase and said she was going home, back to Vancouver. It was hard to hitchhike under the influence of drugs and afraid that people would notice it and therefore abuse her.

A half-breed man gave her a ride and asked her to stay with him and his pregnant wife until she had the baby, in order to help. This episode has a little detail: the man spoke to her in a Native language she did not speak, so they talked in French. The theme of Native languages appears in *Sundogs* and will be expanded in the next chapter. In this half-breed man's house, Bobbi Lee rested, and felt ready to continue her journey after helping deliver the baby with the local doctor.

During one of the rides she took, the men in the car tried to rape her, and she resisted it, ending up in the police station to press charges. The police officers asked information about her: "Anyway, they talked to me for a while, asking *were* I lived, who my parents were and all that kind of crap" (MARACLE: 1990, 115 – my italics). This fragment shows a feature of this specific autobiography: since Maracle was very young and had not finished her studies when

Bobbi Lee was first published, revision was not sufficient to eliminate grammar mistakes, such as writing "were" when "where" was meant.

Shortly after turning eighteen, and being home for two weeks, Lee moves to Porterville to live with Toni again. Spending time with her sister's children – Toni had four girls and was expecting a fifth child – helped Lee recover from the turbulent life she had led in the past two years. This connection between aunt and nieces is also dealt with in *Sundogs*, and will be discussed later. In Lee's words, "I just couldn't help getting a fresher, healthier approach to life being with those kids so much" (MARACLE: 1990, 119-120).

Bobbi Lee liked the small town life and could feel she was doing something productive. Her reading increased and after reading Malcolm X's autobiography, she made the following comment: "His ability to express himself really impressed me, but it also made me aware that my own vocabulary had dwindled" (MARACLE: 1990, 123). In addition, her learning process had re-started and she was becoming aware of the world around her, as in the fragment: "I learned a lot reading the newspaper too. There was a lot of interesting stuff going on in the world at that time" (MARACLE: 1990, 123-124). The Vietnam War, for example was an issue in Bobbi Lee's sister home:

> Toni was against the war and Art was for it. He'd say, "You're not an American; that's why you're against the war. Everybody's against the Americans!" Toni would answer, "Well, they should be! Your bloody army is tripping off everywhere, killing people, bombing little kids, even getting its own people killed. They stink!" But Art was a real patriot, getting up in the morning singing the National Anthem and things like that. It was a real contradiction: he wanted changes in the States, like a lot of liberal Americans, but he defended US imperialism. (MARACLE: 1990, 124)

After one of her twin sisters wrote her telling about the NARP – the Native Alliance for Red Power, Bobbi Lee went home for her mother was sick, with cancer. Rape was once again a nightmare to her twin sisters; a friend of Joyce's boyfriend had raped Joan. Being at home was not easy, mainly because of her "father". Bobbi Lee realized he was racist, and they would fight all the time, especially when Bobbi Lee started dating a boy who was half Indian and half black.

Becoming involved with the Red Power movement meant attending meetings and helping at demonstrations, as against religious schools that committed "cultural genocide" (MARACLE: 1990, 132), by not allowing Indians to speak or be taught in their languages, as described in the first chapter of this dissertation. In one of the meetings, there was a tape about how assimilation happens in various spheres of life; such as the way women do their hair. Bobbi Lee related to the

tape and remembered how she tried to curl her hair to go to school and it would last for little over an hour, and how she would pluck her eyebrows to fit white patterns.

One of the members of the movement was Ray Thom, who became Bobbi Lee's boyfriend. He was the first man to change her frozen emotions, but she still did not want to talk about marriage, and becoming a "baby manufacturer" (MARACLE: 1990, 139), like her mother. Ray bought her Fanon's *Black Skin, White Mask*, and she became interested in Fanon's "ideas on Native/settler relations and the connections between colonialism and neo-colonialism" (194). Later she picked Ray's *Quotations from Chairman Mao* and questioned the concept of "democratic dictatorship" (159). Her political self was maturing. The arguments they had would clarify gender and racial relations, as when Ray tried to convince Bobbi Lee about proletarian unity, and she tells him:

> "Look, do you want me to believe that those guys I had so much trouble with, who went over to the Reserve looking for Indian women – raping and plundering – are going to make a revolution to free us all from oppression? You gotta be kidding!" (MARACLE: 1990, 146)

When introduced to Marx, Bobbi Lee discovered her own personal racism. She did not wish to read what a "German honkie [white man] had to say a hundred years ago" (MARACLE: 1990, 160), and she felt "ignorant and isolated" (160). In the movement, Bobbi Lee met many Natives who shared her opinions. Some were traditionalists, who wanted to live in the woods, in the old way, and were against technology (196); but they all fought a common battle for the improvement of their lives. Bobbi Lee's first public speech was in a manifestation outside a courthouse, in which the judge had said he would teach Indians a lesson for stealing so much. The most difficult thing for her was not swearing, which she managed to do for half an hour, saying one bad word only. Her speech covered the following issues:

> During my talk I said we didn't want racist judges like this Mahon trying Indians; that Naheny should get a retrial because he didn't get a fair trial and the sentence was ridiculous; and Indians were forced to steal in the first place because they were oppressed, couldn't get jobs and so forth. (MARACLE: 1990, 165)

Ray and Bobbi Lee moved to Ashcroft, where Ray's parents lived. They were tired of Vancouver. In addition, there was a white man, Gordie, in the Red Power Movement, married to a Native woman, and they did not like having a white man in the meetings, however since no one told him to leave, he remained there. Life was simple in Ashcroft and there was not much to do. In a few months, Bobbi Lee and Ray were abusing alcohol and planning on moving back to the

city. The first version of *Bobbi Lee* ends when Bobbi Lee and Ray return to Vancouver, enroll in the movement again, and finally tell Gordie to leave them alone, and think about what they will do with their lives.

In the Epilogue, written for the second version, Maracle continues her saga and fills some gaps left in the first edition. She mentions that in 1975, she "had begun the long process of unraveling what it would take to get back to the little girl and the woman that lived inside me but who was paralyzed by huge amounts of garbage collected for some twenty-five years" (MARACLE: 1990, 199). The tone of the text is calmer than on the previous two hundred pages, while the style and the form show some improvement, becoming easier to read and to understand. There is maturity in the Epilogue; a different Lee writes about her life. She has married Dennis Maracle and is now Lee Maracle. In addition, she has finished her education, and became a writer. This Lee apologizes for not having inserted her grandma, T'a'ah, in the text. Maracle defines who she is now in a simple sentence: "[t]he inside of me was indigenous, but the outside was covered with a foreign code of conduct, its sensibility and its cold behavior" (200).

Bobbi Lee's visits to libraries as a teenager, before her rebellion made her think about the reason why there were no books about Indians on the shelves, and she wondered if they were not interesting enough to be written about as a people. Reading a book on parapsychology, she saw the description of what happened in Indian healing ceremonies, forbidden by law, and it hurt her to need a European to validate her culture (MARACLE: 1990, 204). Linda Warley mentions that non-Native readers "are required to recognize that familiar representations of Native cultures and people have frequently been misrepresentations created and managed by the dominant culture" (WARLEY: 1996, 65) and Bobbi Lee's internal conflict in this topic can be easily comprehended, for her people's representations have been produced by outsiders, with their limited knowledge of her culture.

Regarding misrepresentation, Homi Bhabha states that "beyond the academy, and often in tension with it, there is a crisis of representation within minority communities around the knowledges that circulate in their name, and the 'aid' agencies that are set up to legitimate their disadvantaged existence" (BHABHA: 1994, 269). The aid agencies play the role of the colonizer in the communities, inscribing laws and titles, as discussed earlier in this chapter. The crisis of representation can only be dismantled by the continual production of literary and critical texts by Natives that present their perspectives and their truth, as Maracle does in her autobiography.

Also in the Epilogue of *Bobbi Lee Indian Rebel*, Maracle's first pregnancies are described. It took her three and a half months to discover she was pregnant for the first time, and she only looked for a doctor after dreaming of it (MARACLE: 1990, 205-206). She described labour as a "poetic ceremony of creation" (MARACLE: 1990, 211). The baby girl would go everywhere with Bobbi Lee and Ray.

In 1970, young Native people were uniting all over Canada: "We are all Indians, one people with many cultures" (MARACLE: 1990, 208). Maracle mentions Martin Luther King Jr. and how connected the indigenous' and blacks' conditions were. Around 1972, the Native Study Group was born, and they started discussing Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth*. They later joined the Liberation Support Movement, where Maracle met Don Barnett. Her reflections lead her to some crucial conclusions such as: "Capitalism is a masterful order in which the poor, the labourers, are reduced to embracing the very culture that keeps them on the bottom" (207). This mature woman was, at this point, able to answer her mother's question mentioned in the initial part of this chapter: "'Why are we so poor when we work so hard?'" (32).

In a visit to China, planned for two years and sponsored by the Chinese government, Maracle experienced a totally different perspective of the world. As she has written: "They don't look spiritually hungry like people here do, even in their dissatisfaction their faces register a kind of long-sighted confidence in humanity" (MARACLE: 1990, 224). The difference between China and her own country is extended:

> For in Canada, the land itself is colonized and exploited mercilessly. She continuously struggles to birth fish in spring to be over harvested in the fall, young trees meet the chain saws cutting edge in too great numbers. Bald mountains stand, lonely sentinels of human destruction in the holy name of profit. (MARACLE: 1990, 225-226)

The consequences of colonization left scars in Canadian culture and society. There is a long path to be tracked in order to achieve peace and harmony, not only between human beings, but also between humans and nature. As Maracle posits: "North Americans are very good at accusing other countries of atrocities and hiding from its own" (MARACLE: 1990, 227), these atrocities are the wars, the destruction of the natural environment and the discriminatory practices.

As an Aboriginal Canadian, Maracle perceives the following feedback from mainstream society: "Everything we do seek redress for loss of life, time, land, is interpreted by the larger society as 'going too far'. We are constantly reminded in such ways that we don't deserve

anything but poverty, neglect and loss of human dignity" (MARACLE: 1990, 227). Maracle, this new woman, who has grown and matured, ends the second edition of her autobiography with a quest to her readers: "You need to challenge your friends, your family whenever they utter inhuman sentiments about some other race of people" (241).

Maracle published her second book in 1988, *I Am Woman: A Native Perspective on Sociology and Feminism*. Her career as a writer unfolded shortly after the second edition of her autobiography, discussed in this chapter. Besides the already mentioned *Sundogs* and *Daughters are Forever*, Maracle other works are: *Sojourner's Truth* (1992), a collection of short-stories; *Ravensong* (1993), a novel; *Bent Box* (2000), a collection of poems; and *Will's Garden* (2002), a young adult novel.

Regarding Maracle's internal questioning about the non-existence of books written by her people as a teenager, her autobiography represents the possibility of inscribing First Nations' Canadians in the literary world, making them known not only in Canada, but everywhere, and keeping the records of a specific time in human history. Sidonie Smith proposes that, since a number of works by women of Indigenous descent has proliferated, "through autobiographical acts, women become not merely subject to the dominant history of America, but history-making subjects who re-write their relationships to the history of this country, including its history of multiple oppressions" (SMITH: 1995, 89). Even writing about the U.S., the theory presented by Smith is applicable to Canada because of the similarities Aboriginal Canadians and Native Americans share.

Bobbi Lee poses real problems for the Canadian society. As Maracle's first published book, this autobiography marks the beginning of a writer's career. The use of autobiography as the inaugural genre for Maracle represents an ambiguous task, since telling about personal experiences can be easier in the sense that the genre does not demand much from imagination. Nevertheless, autobiographical writing is a challenge, as described by James Olney:

> Autobiography is both, the simplest of literary enterprises and the commonest. Anybody who can write a sentence or even speak into a tape recorder or to a ghostwriter can do it: yet viewed in a certain light it might fairly be seen as a very daring, even foolhardy, undertaking – a bold rush into an area where angels might well fear to tread. (OLNEY: 1980, 3)

Being familiar with Maracle's background and her first work, the next step of this dissertation will be the analysis of her novels *Sundogs* and *Daughters are Forever*, in which many issues explored in *Bobbi Lee* are recalled and fiction plays a significant role in the

unfolding of the history of oppression that this chapter has began to deal with and discuss it in the line of feminist and postcolonial studies.

4- CHAPTER THREE – THE POWER OF FICTION IN LEE MARACLE'S NOVELS *SUNDOGS* AND *DAUGHTERS ARE FOREVER*

> *What are the difficulties and pleasures of writing in a language and to a culture different from your own?*
> *How does the spiritual become political?*
> *What are the implications of working in the genres of repressed traditions that are not recognized by mainstream culture as legitimate?*
>
> The *Telling It* Book Collective

Lee Maracle's novels *Sundogs* and *Daughters are Forever* share a similarity with the author's personal life, described in her autobiography. Nevertheless, the novels written by Maracle have their own specific characters and are narratives of lives different from the one of our author. As critic Tonya Blowers states:

> Autobiography is a declared attempt to represent the life of the author; the novel may well represent that life to some degree, introducing characters who might be composites of aspects of the author's personality, but it makes no claims to correspond in any direct way to the author's life. (BLOWERS: 2000, 105)

Novels can resemble autobiographies. Liz Stanley claims that "The complex intertextuality of fiction and autobiography is as old as the novel" (STANLEY: 1992, 59). Novels are fictional works that, of course, use the device of mimicry of reality and tell a story to the readers, revealing aspects of the author's perspectives towards the world. At the same time, the novel is a narrative of a time and conditions or situations of the determined setting proposed by the author. The intertextualities are undeniable in Maracle's three works discussed in this dissertation.

In the interview given to Sneja Gunew and Margery Fee, Maracle describes the past of Indigenous Canadians as "not an unintentional holocaust" (FEE and GUNEW: 2004, 212). The term holocaust is strong, and Maracle knows most people resist calling what happened to the Native Canadians in past by this term. Nevertheless, Maracle adds: "The only reason that I write is to bring about a change of heart" (212), and she wanted to do so since she was five years old and faced racism for the first time. Maracle explains that she "would like to change that person's mind and heart about the way they see me, about the way they feel about me. But I had no power then, and I have power now. It's called a pen" (212 - 213). The acknowledgment of the power of writing is clear. Maracle is conscious of her desire, her will and her real power. It is through

words that Maracle will expose the traumas of colonial past, the situation of her fellow Indigenous people, and enhance changes.

The task is not easy: revealing the wounds of colonial past through fiction is also a challenge. A novel, to conquer readers' attention, has to provide a well-structured line of thought that interests varied people. Maracle manages to do so in these novels, for, as she states to Margery Fee and Sneja Gunew, "there are sixty thousand people in this country that diligently read my work" (FEE and GUNEW: 2004, 213). This way, Maracle represents an agent of resistance, whose text enriches literary studies and Indigenous cultural scope. Julia Emberley explains that:

> Both in their characterization and as writing subjects, Aboriginal women are writing themselves and their people into history as subjects to and of their own making. As agents of their own historical traditions, Aboriginal writers in Canada are claiming an unambiguous self-determination to tell their own stories, and are doing it in their own way. (EMBERLEY: 1996, 100)

This "own way" will be henceforth explored in the analysis of the first and the latest novels written by Lee Maracle in the time length of ten years (1992 – 2002), along with the intertextualities between autobiography and fiction. The main themes Maracle deals with in each book discussed here vary, although a common thread relates these works since Maracle's position as Indigenous feminist writer in postcolonial Canada remains the same on all three works.

4.1- *SUNDOGS*

In *Sundogs*, published in 1992, the young narrator, Marianne, a twenty-year old Native student of sociology, tells the reader how her maturing process took place and how she, a girl who lives in Vancouver, not in a reservation – thus detached from her heritage – discovers her ancestry and the indigenous person within herself. As reviewer George Lyon suggests, this young narrator discovers "how completely she has become estranged from her own Native heritage without either being able to enter white society or, in fact, truly desiring to enter it" (LYON: 1995, 1).

Sundogs, this first novel written by Maracle, unfolds family relations which take place in contemporary urban Canada, in the very last decade of the twentieth century. There are no chapter divisions, but marks (✹ ✹ ✹) in the body of the text, between paragraphs, when the focus of the narrative changes. The text is permeated by constant flashbacks from Marianne's childhood. The narrator's comments and opinions create a fragmented narrative that altogether composes the larger picture Maracle portrays.

Marianne lives with her mother and generational conflicts are revealed by the mother's behavior, from the point of view of the young narrator. Maracle, in an interview to Jennifer Kelly, says that "We need to know that a part of our culture is that each generation brings something new" (KELLY: 1994, 75). The following passage from *Sundogs* shows how the mother expresses herself:

> (…) Momma turns the TV on and tells the Minister of External Affairs that he dare not plunge this country into war over Iraq, Iran, or any-place-else, because neither her sons, nor her grandsons, nor any other relative of hers in this country, distant or close, is going to traipse halfway around the world to kill other human beings, thank you very much. (MARACLE: 1992, 56)

Being the youngest of five children, Marianne has many nieces and nephews who take part in the novel as characters that connect topics such as family, ancestry, friendship, empowerment and art in the narrator's everyday life. The novel begins with the birth of Marianne's twin nieces. After describing her house and commenting on her mother's political views, Marianne and her mother run to the hospital to accompany Rita's labour.

In the hospital, a series of significant issues are dealt with: religious syncretism, divorce, abortion, hypocrisy, alcohol abuse, Native populations' sub-employment, and education. Starting by contrasting traditional values and ways with Western influence, one of the mother's first comments is: (...) "at one time, pregnant women were watched over night and day. Now they are left alone as though having a baby were as simple as going shopping.(…)" (MARACLE: 1992, 25). Marianne's mother, in her strong beliefs, knows the order of the world. She knows the troubles and the solutions, and she questions the system, being politically active at least at home, making her children learn and think. She lets her children think for themselves and have disagreements, but she does not excuse alienation from current issues regarding the world in which they live.

No matter how open-minded parents seem, as an older generation, there are clear gaps in their dealings with their children. Sometimes, Marianne's comments identify these differences without any profound change in mentality or just by leaving another evidence of the role of elders in a quite artificial environment from the one where this "Métis" mother grew up and had her children a few decades ago. Marianne describes her mother's conception of birth in the next lines:

> (…) She [the mother] still thinks birthing is the private sanctuary of women. The whole idea of men watching their wives give birth is intended to discourage couples from having more children as far as she is concerned. She has this clear line drawn between what is men's business and what is women's. Any crossing over, back and forth, is going to disturb the natural order of things and she doesn't like it. (MARACLE: 1992, 27)

"The natural order of things" is a quite common line when the issue is culture, knowledge, popular contribution to culture, and what is accepted by the dominant culture. Tradition is a concept that leads to a discussion of different points of view when different cultures come together in the process of colonization. Interaction between human beings with different cultures, histories, backgrounds, and most importantly, completely distinct worldviews, is always a complex subject. The specific issue of culture formation, transformation, or restoration is an expressive part of Indigenous literature, as seen in Maracle's *Sundogs*.

The daughter-narrator's physical description of her mother pictures her in the following fashion: "(…) Her brown, silvering hair is short, wild and wavy and her skin is lighter than the rest of us. The lightness of her skin sharpens the dramatic darkness of her eyes, especially if she is laughing" (MARACLE: 1992, 32) Having a clear mixture of bloods, the "Métis" mother reproduces some of her Christianity beliefs, acquired from her life of double teachings from sides of the families or an out sprout of colonialist policies on Indigenous education, as seen in the fragment below:

> "I hope everything goes well," she says as she grabs her rosary of purple crystals and retreats to her Catholic prayers. Momma is not a devout Catholic. She does this only when she is forced to rely on white folks and when she is in public; otherwise she counts on her indigenous sense of the sacred – something I know little about. Convenient. Running around burning sweet grass or sage in a hospital wouldn't go over well. Still I am annoyed by the rosary. (MARACLE: 1992, 29)

The passage also portrays Marianne's acknowledgment of the little intimacy she has with her background, as well as the encounter between Indigenous and white communities, for the

mother's prayers with the rosary only takes place because she has to trust white doctors and because she is in a public situation. How did the mother learn the Christian ways? Simple answer: through colonization. Even though, this issue is not discussed in the novel, the residential schools represent a major component of colonization and Indigenous children were forced to go to those schools, becoming reproducers of Western thought and religion, emphasizing the white settler's control and law over Native rights.

The residential schools can be considered an ingenious tool used by the colonizer: ingenious and cruel. Erasing the educational process started at home by parents and later by the community, Europeans managed to disengage the young Natives from everything that was natural and Indigenous, creating an artificial new and "better" knowledge that turned the life in harmony with all natural elements – the way they had always lived before – an impossibility, for they would no longer learn the Native way of life, which can only be acquired by experimentation *in loco*.

Language, as part of culture, was also erased at the residential schools. In the case of Marianne, in *Sundogs*, she did not speak any Indigenous language, but her older brothers and sisters did speak their father's Native language. Since Marianne barely knew her father, the mother, who spoke a different language from her late husband, did not teach her any, for they moved to the city and she would need the proficiency in English to survive in the new environment. Language for Indigenous Canadians is an extremely important issue. Jeannette Armstrong tells how important for her was to hear her grandmother in their native language, a true privilege, as the following passage demonstrates:

> It took a long time for me to realize the value of having a grandmother who could speak to me in the total purity of our language, the total purity of the words which have been handed down through thousands of years from mind to mind, from mouth to mouth, encompassing actions generated for I don't know how long – thousands and thousands of years. I was given an understanding of how a culture is determined, how culture is passed on. It *is* through words, it *is* through the ability to communicate to another person, to communicate to your children the thinking of your people in the past, their history, that you *are* a people. (ARMSTRONG: 1990, 25 – 26; italics from the original)

In *Bobbi Lee*, when the Indigenous man whose wife is pregnant gives Bobbi Lee a ride, returning from Toronto, he tries to speak a native language Bobbi Lee does not know. This comes as intertextuality in *Sundogs*, for Marianne does not speak any native language as well. Margery Fee highlights the sad fact that "Many indigenous people with eight indigenous great-

grandparents live in cities and no longer speak their aboriginal languages" (FEE: 1999, 242 – 243).

Maracle characterizes native languages in the following words: "you can't translate our language into anything but poetry really" (FEE and GUNEW: 2004, 211), in the same interview by Margery Fee and Sneja Gunew. Maracle adds that, in the boarding schools, where speaking indigenous languages would follow punishment, "generations of crippled two tongues, not speaking the language and not speaking English" (218), as her great-grandmother called them, were created. Maracle believes that: "my whole journey is to master this language [English] and turn it to account to make it work for us" (218).

Renate Eigenbrod comments that: "Even if the Indigenous language is no longer known, an Indigenous author's awareness of the presence of an Indigenous language will influence the choice of language as a strategy" (EIGENBROD: 2005, 142). In *Sundogs*, this strategy is seen in some of Marianne's family members, who had a typical way of saying things. As Marianne remarks, they spoke "in riddles", as if they had the thought ready for a long time, or if they knew a different language system that functions that way, showing clever answers and deep knowledge in their words, such as her aunt Mary would do. At the end of the novel, Marianne decides to learn her mother's Native language, after her deep dive into her Indigenous self and her heritage.

Sociologists and anthropologists study both public and private spheres to conceptualize human behavior. The public spaces are controlled or function under certain rules of sociability, which state what can and what cannot be done in these spaces. As Marianne signals, relaying on the Indigenous sense of the sacred, by burning sweet grass, is not accepted in a public space, while relaying in Christian values and habits, such as praying with the rosary, would be accepted by the general public as something normal to do in a hospital.

The subject of acceptance or not by the public reveals some aspects of colonization in the Americas. The Native populations had to conform to European patterns of behavior, always taken as common sense. The disturbance the burning of sweet grass would bring to a hospital can be clearly understood. In reservations it would not be disturbing, as it did not upset the life in harmony with nature that the Native populations of America led for centuries before colonization.

Colonization is one of the main themes developed by Lee Maracle, not only in this novel, but also earlier in her autobiography and in her following works. The voice of the Native, that was not heard for the last five centuries is becoming loud enough and is calling the attention of

the reading public for the conditions in which these peoples were forced to survive. For decades, scholars have started noticing the slow rise of such voices. As Jean-Paul Sartre argues in his preface to Franz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*:

> (...)The European elite decided to fabricate a native elite; they selected adolescents, branded the principles of Western culture on their foreheads with a red-hot iron, and gagged their mouths with sounds, pompous awkward words that twisted their tongues. After a short stay in the metropolis they were sent home, fully doctored. (...)
> Then it was over: the mouths opened of their own accord; the black and yellow voices still talked of our humanism, but it was to blame us for our inhumanity. (SARTRE: 1961, xliii)

Sartre expresses the role of the residential schools and the "brain-wash" process implemented by the colonizers all around the world. The work of revealing the exclusion, the unfair domination and the actual conditions in which colonized peoples were left started with Frantz Fanon, and his legacy is well preserved. Maracle, who has read Fanon, portrays the Indigenous situation in Canada through literature, opening her mouth and telling her story.

Sundogs denounces a number of excluding practices and racist attitudes. Throughout the book, the reader is exposed to contemporary issues that reveal the difference in the treatment of Canadian citizens of Indigenous descent from those of white descent. The narrator's personal comment on her identity's reality presents her in a state of liminality, in-between two cultures, two worlds: "I should know by know that nothing in this world is simple for us. Everything is connected to some sort of injustice in my mom's mind. My insides rage. At home, I am not Indian enough and at school I am too much Indian" (MARACLE: 1992, 25).

In the same hospital where Rita, after giving birth, talks to the women of her family about divorce, Marianne is shocked by her sister's thoughts. How could a woman give birth to her husband's twin children and think of divorce at the same time? This crisis pictures the hypocrisy of her sister's Catholicism as the next fragment demonstrates:

> (…) Rita cheats on her husband. Bill drowns his suspicions in alcohol, hides his inadequacy in beer halls and loud laughter. Children pine for their fathers and endure the icy wind of step-fathers. Me, I volley between feeling sorry for Bill and denouncing Rita and her bigoted Catholicism that does not allow her to abort an unwanted child, but somehow enables her to be comfortable with adultery. (MARACLE: 1992, 40)

The narrator also criticizes Western knowledge and the Academy when she studies in class the topic of divorce, and the theory behind this common practice. She comments:

> Second-year sociology is full of theoretical grandstanding about the why of divorce, alienation of a social nature and so forth. About the only things these guys guess right is the problem. They have no idea about the why of things or the solution. They can't even face a single human emotion when they rattle about divorce. It's as though it were some grocery item in their intellectual store which they purchase along with the piece of paper which gives them the right to peddle the items they bought. "Few citizens link divorce with increased alienation or the socialization process and its incumbent breakdown…" that's OK, C. W., even fewer people link divorce with sadness or sexual dissatisfaction, but then, human sadness is not the subject of sociology. Nor is any other emotion, for that matter. (MARACLE: 1992, 41)

University education in formal European curriculum follows a pattern of theoretic discussions about what men in the past have thought on the subjects studied. As reviewer Laura Murray has suggested, "The tension between Marianne's constant meditation on sociological problems and her alienation from an academic sociology that does not adequately address those problems is a central concern of the novel" (MURRAY: 1994, 1). Theory detaches itself from emotion, and thoughts are formed based on what was thought previously about the theme. James Henderson has described the academic system in relation to Indigenous beliefs using the following words:

> In Canadian universities and colleges, academic curricula support Euro-centric contexts. When most professors describe the "world", they describe artificial Eurocentric contexts and ignore Aboriginal worldviews, knowledge, and thought. For most Aboriginal students, the realization of their invisibility is similar to looking into a still lake and not seeing their images. (HENDERSON: 2000, 59)

Invisibility, as a reality in the academic world, can cause a great number of consequences. First, one of this invisibility's cause is exclusion, as Julia Emberley posits: "Except for a few isolated examples, Aboriginal peoples in Canada have been systematically excluded from attaining higher education and thus entry into the professions" (EMBERLEY: 1996: 100). Marianne is privileged, for being at the university, at the age of twenty, in comparison to her fellow Indigenous young people and the autobiographical Bobbi Lee herself.

Second, the conflicting worldviews seen in Western formal education by Indigenous people can lead to mental breakdowns. Marianne's questioning about the sociology she is learning at the university fits what Viola Cordova describes: "As indigenous perspectives and knowledges find their way into university system, they question the very foundation of traditional Western Knowledge" (CORDOVA: 1996, 14).

Because of this invisibility, some Native students give up studying about a world they feel they do not belong to; others rebel completely. Some might finish this Eurocentric education in

order to get a degree and be able to use the same tools of those who ignore the Indigenous peoples and become a token of their people, a warrior of the mind, a new intellectual who can turn the spear and change these views from inside. There are those who write and express their feelings in theory and fiction, denouncing the process they were submitted to. In this sense, Maracle, in her essay "Oratory: Coming to Theory", refers to the theme of European formal academic education arguing that:

> For Native people, the ridiculousness of European academic notions of theoretical presentation lies in the inherent hierarchy retained by academics, politicians, law makers, and law keepers. Power resides with theorists so long as they use language no one understands. In order to gain the right to theorize, we must attend their institutions for many years, learn this other language, and unlearn our feeling for the human condition. Bizarre. (MARACLE: 1994, 10)

The significant role of the academic world, in *Sundogs*, exceeds the philosophical realm, questioning institutional policies towards marginal groups of society. The following fragment of the novel, which comes as a separate piece of information, or as a micro-chapter, added to the story, demonstrates prejudice in the treatment of Indigenous students:

> "Excuse me, but could we talk after class in my office?" my instructor says with great care.
> "Yes." I know what it's about and already I am bored.
> "This paper you wish to write requires an acute understanding of Mill's concept of utilitarianism – are you sure you are up to that?" Momma, it was never so simple as cultural genocide. You see, they not only invalidated all of our thoughts and our thought processes, but they also cancelled out our ability to get a handle on theirs. Two other white boys in my class are doing the same paper. I know their papers were accepted without question. (MARACLE: 1992, 88)

Sundogs discusses a crucial moment for indigenous rights in Canada: the Meech Lake Accord, also known as the Oka crisis. Elijah Harper, indigenous congressman, does not accept the accord for it will not preserve indigenous rights. His denial is shown on TV all over the country and followed by Marianne's family members, friends, and the white public as well. In order to stop the accord, Harper speaks on live TV, holding an eagle's feather. In June 12, 1990, he states that: "We need to let Canadians know that we have been shoved aside. We're saying that aboriginal issues should be put on the priority list"[12]. The CBC archives explain the episode in the following manner:

> Manitoba premier Gary Filmon asks the legislature to start the debate on whether to support or block the accord. Because of time pressures, he asks the MLAs [Members of the Legislative

[12] Statement taken from the following web site, visited on November 14, 2006:
http://archives.cbc.ca/IDC-1-73-1180-6496/politics_economy/meech_lake/clip8

> Assembly] to waive a two-day waiting period formality. But MLA Elijah Harper, frustrated with the exclusion of Native issues in the accord talks, refuses. With an eagle feather raised, Manitoba's lone aboriginal MLA voices his opposition to Meech. This procedural interruption has grave consequences for the Meech Lake accord. With the June 23 deadline quickly approaching, the Manitoba Legislature would have only nine days to come to a consensus as to whether they should block or support the contentious accord – an impossible task. Shortly after Harper's protest, Newfoundland's Clyde Wells announced that he would not seek a vote of approval in his legislature. The Meech Lake accord is dead.[13]

This episode touches Marianne deeply and she changes her views and perspectives, particularly in her search for her indigenous roots. In the novel, this significant episode marks a new phase in Marianne's unfolding as a young Native woman. She takes a job in an Indigenous office, and her connection to her heritage broadens. In addition to this event, one of Marianne's classmates from the university, who had never spoken to her before, as an evidence of the Native's invisibility, invites her for coffee.

This white boy, James, seems quite interested in Elijah Harper's speech and feels a need to be better informed, because Elijah Harper's denial seems to be the first time an Indigenous person is able to affect white Canada and call attention to this ethnic group that has been silenced for centuries, merely watching their lands, languages and culture be taken from them.

Laura Murray comments, in her review of *Sundogs*, that: "James self-indulgently claims that his ignorance of Native politics is no crime. No, Marianne thinks, her mother wouldn't let him get away with that" for the mother would excuse "ignorance and stupidity in children and physically retarded people" (MURRAY: 1994, 1-2). Still, the significance of the events is remarkable, and as George Lyon claims:

> Maracle demonstrates how the actions of Harper and the Mohawks served not only to allow Natives to feel a new pride and sense of their own definition, but to realize that that definition would not come without effort, an effort that could not merely be produced at demonstrations, in legislative halls, or on battlefield. (LYON: 1995, 1)

At the moment of the crisis, Marianne was beginning a romance with a work colleague, Mark, who simply disappears, ignoring Marianne after she does not move in with him right after their first nights together. The sudden relationship's break up serves to bring closer together Marianne and her oldest sister, Lacey. Known for her very strong political beliefs, Lacey and her husband start taking Marianne out to Happy Hours, and the young woman learns much from her sister about love, relationships, and politics.

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[13] Information taken from the following web site, visited on November 14, 2006: http://archives.cbc.ca/IDC-1-73-1180-6496/politics_economy/meech_lake/clip8

Lacey's daughter, Dorry, is the closest friend Marianne has. Her niece's artistic talent adorns Marianne's bedroom since the first pages of the novel. Dorry paints beautiful watercolours. These paintings represent indigenous scenes. Art connects niece and aunt, for Marianne stops eating out on her lunch hour to save money and buy oil paints, canvas and more materials for Dorry, since no one else in the family could afford such items. This act creates in Marianne a duty to her family she had never realized she should have. Before buying the paints, she looks at her hands and sees semi-precious stones adorning her fingers, all gifts from her family, and she perceives it is time to take a step into adulthood returning such gifts.

Dorry's first painted canvas, after Marianne buys supplies, is given to her sponsor, as the passage below portrays:

> Within days of obtaining the oil paints, she brings me a canvas. A solitary Native woman cradles a small child. The woman is a vague portrait of woman-shape, a little abstract and painted in bold blues, reds and yellows. She is surrounded by midnight blue dark. Streaks of yellow emanate from someplace past the canvas's beginning. Moments of hope in a melancholy scene. She finishes the painting and gives it to me. It inspires me to spend money on more canvas, and this moves Dorry to spend every waking moment of her free time painting, creating, re-creating our lives in dreams of colour and shape.
> Canvas after canvas rolls out, full of hope, dreams and aspirations, all painted against a stark and brutal reality. Dorry knows something about the world we live in that has gone by me. At night we talk about her work. She understands the significance of every brush stroke of colour on her canvases. Where she got this knowledge of our lives and her vision of the future is beyond me. (MARACLE: 1992, 84)

Dorry paints later a black woman silhouetted by an indigenous woman. There are people protesting in the background and Marianne asks Dorry about the painting:

> "What are they protesting?"
> "Apartheid."
> "Do you know what that is?"
> "Oh yeah, Gramma argues with de Klerk all the time. She hates apartheid. It's when they leave us out because we aren't like them – white." I laugh. First, because she answers my unspoken question. Black in South Africa and us are the same for Dorry. (MARACLE: 1992, 84)

The number of contemporary issues discussed in *Sundogs* increases as the narrative continues. Stuart Hall uses the term "black" to characterize contemporary identities of various communities. Hall explains that:

> What these communities have in common, what they represent through the apprehension of the 'black' identity, is not that they are, culturally, ethnically, linguistically or even physically, the

> same, but that they are seen and treated as 'the same thing' (which is, not-white, as the 'other') by the dominant culture. (HALL: 2005, 86)[14]

Maracle compares the situation of African people, especially South African, with the Indigenous Canadians' situation, linking the exclusion of Native people from mainstream culture in their own native grounds. Dorry reproduces her understanding of these comparisons in her painting.

Still regarding the connection between aunt and niece, Marianne reflects on the concepts of equality and empowerment, which have been proposed by minorities in the last decades of the twentieth century. She thinks that:

> The tone of her [Dorry's] voice changes when she talks about paints and art. I become the innocent and naïve child and she the expert. I don't know why this feels as good as it does but I don't bother questioning it. I like it. Equality is not simple. It is knowing when you are not equal to the expertise of those you know are usually less experienced in most other things. It is creating the condition for the less experienced to feel powerful; no, not just feel, but be powerful. It is empowering others through their own expertise to teach and instruct, rather than always making sure you are the teacher. (MARACLE: 1992, 86)

Empowerment has become a term widely used by Post-colonial theoreticians to describe the necessary tools to overcome oppression. Power relations between colonized and colonizer have always been clear: the colonized obeys and submits to what the colonizer states as truth for them. The process of changing this dichotomy began in the second half of the twentieth century, with Civil Rights movements and the voices of oppressed peoples gaining broader reaches. In her article in *Returning The Gaze*, Maracle conceptualizes empowerment. In her terms, "Empowerment is the personal quest for oneness with nature, oneness with people, the seas, the skies, and time" (MARACLE: 1993, 157). This is exactly what Dorry experiences with her paintings and what Marianne learns from her niece.

In Maracle's books, families do not, necessarily, live harmonious lives. There are problems, not only economical, but also relational. In *Sundogs*, a theme dealt already in *Bobbi Lee* reappears in fictional form: domestic violence. Rudy, Marianne's favorite brother, beats his wife and children, starting a new crisis in family relations. His behavior was condemned by his mother, sisters and brother. They take in the wife and treat her, protecting her from more violence. The next passage shows the impact of the episode over the family:

[14] Hall's quotation is a translation done by me from the Portuguese

> "Come on in, Dearest." It's Paula. Both daughters-in-law share the same "Dearest" title, but I know this is Paula. Only a major domestic fight would drive a woman from bed on a Saturday morning at 7:00 a.m. Monique has never hinted at dissatisfaction with her double-income, no-kids life with Joseph; so this would be Paula.
> They are all a mess; both kids have bruised faces and Paula is gushing blood. (MARACLE: 1992, 65)

Monique, Marianne's sister-in-law mentioned above, married to Joseph, cannot have children, what hurts her deeply. This character plays also another small, but significant, role: her physical features are Indigenous, but she was raised in a foster home by white parents, therefore, like Marianne, she does not speak a native language. There is also the even harder fact that she has no idea to which First Nation she belongs to, being one of those people without history or past; the sort of individual the colonialist policies of assimilation created.

The domestic violence episode leads the family to discuss buying a house for the mother, her daughters, her daughter-in-law and all their children. A curious argument for Westerns arises from this proposal, for buying land being indigenous seems to be a paradox in Marianne's mind. She thinks that "Indian buying back stolen land" (MARACLE: 1992, 50) is too much: "Us? Buy a house? The whole notion is painful, absurd. Here we are, a bunch of rag-tags trying to create a life from the ashes of a stolen land, stolen dreams, and our mother suggests we just bypass all that grief and buy back some of our stolen goods" (49). Each member announces how much money they have and another question arises: who will give a sixty-year old woman a mortgage? They decide Rita should be responsible for the mortgage and they start looking for a house.

Domestic violence, as a theme, will be largely dealt with in *Daughters are Forever*. Still, in *Sundogs*, there are other references to violence. One of the episodes described as a flashback from Marianne's childhood, took place in the reservation, before the family moved to Vancouver:

> (…) Stormy [village boy who lived near the family] had locked the local white bully in the shed back of Olly's place with the pigs still in it. "That is *not* our way. Doesn't matter how that boy conducts himself. Nothing to do with us…" [mother's speech] (…)
> It all would not have been remarkable except that Stormy was seventeen. My mother's wrath was legendary. She was afraid of no one, certainly not Stormy. She landed the first blow and poor Stormy, caught by surprise, found himself backed up in retreat, his large arms fending off a continuous shower of blows as best they could, while my mother's mouth machine-gunned out a lecture on cultural genocide – "What is our world coming to when we behave precisely as they do?" – for a good ten minutes without pausing for breath or repeating herself once. I chugged out the door on the edges of her skirt as always and witnessed the wonderful chaos my mother could create over cultural integrity. (MARACLE: 1992, 52-53)

This quotation shows the mother believes in a "no pay-back" policy, for it would destroy the culture and the integrity of their people. The mother, as well, even punishing her children

physically when necessary, does never yell at them. When the family questions her about the topic, they learn something very special and poetic about their culture and their habits:

> "Momma, I have never heard you yell." Surprise registers on everyone's face. Obviously I wasn't paying much attention, but Momma answers, "Never will, either. Imagine behaving as though you were our earth mother herself, storming and screaming like the wind as though you had a right to. No. Not me. I am the mother of my lineage and that is it. I catch any of you being that presumptuous and I'll tan you; don't care how big you are."
> Auntie Mary is more poetic. "Wind is voice. Voice is wind – the instrument of earth sound. To elevate the voice to the song of earth storm is the worst sort of violence. Screaming winds cleanse earth, but human cannot heal the spirit the same way. Earth heals all of filth; only the earth can truly cleanse."
> "What's the difference between tanning our hides and yelling?"
> "Tanning your hide is preventative, a deterrent to further nonsense – consequences – but yelling is elevating your voice to the howling wind of your mother – dangerous, a breath sharp enough to tear holes in a child's little spirit. A tanning only hurts the body." (MARACLE: 1992, 55-56)

A tragedy falls over the family, when a car accident kills Dorry. Marianne suffers terribly the loss of her niece and friend. She decides to join the Okanagan Peace Run, in which runners will carry a feather around several villages, including indigenous areas, until they meet the army that will try to stop the manifestation against the construction of a golf club on an ancient Indigenous Cemetery. She prepares to leave and do something she will be proud of, something for her people and for herself. Dorry's brother, Paul, will accompany Marianne in the run.

The journey is permeated by many events. Marianne relates to her nephew, as never before; her body feels the effects of the run; and she meets a great number of indigenous young people on the group. They also face protests and racism in certain towns. Some people wait for them with rocks in their hands to throw at the runners. Racism permeates this part of the journey deeply.

"Running is a solitary thing. It is a thing of the spirit and deeply personal" (MARACLE: 1992, 177), describes the narrator. Her running thoughts reconnect her to nature and to an understanding of family, which she portrays now as "a spider's web of continuum" (179). The worthiness of participating in the run involves all she sees in a sacred net and she finds love again, in a totally new manner:

> I fall in love. No lust in this love to confuse and disorient – pure love, sweet and worthy. Every man and woman on the run takes on worthiness. We are worthy. We are sacred. Life is sacred. Eagle whispers from my feather across the hot breath of my effort, creation is sacred, and my body changes. It rearranges my pattern of thought, tears up page of nonsense, utilitarian and cluttered. Rips the hierarchy of arrogant men from my mind. Stone comes alive. Grass, each blade my relative, speaks to trees who weep for their lost ones, grieve their genocide. We are besieged, the winged, the four-legged, plants and us – we are all besieged.

> The feather erases the state of siege from my mind. (…) Peace, freedom, freedom from grief, freedom, peace – peace the end of siege. (…) We want to experience the pure wonderment of creation. (MARACLE: 1992, 179-180)

This passage portrays the beginning of a connection between Marianne and her inner Native origin, silenced before. Marianne's journey for the heritage she had known little about is reaching its goal and the natural world around her becomes the medium to such connection. Her perceptions of stone, grass, eagle as relatives and the worthiness of each participant of the run as sacred are already evidence of her new identity, which is under constant formation, but that takes a deeper dive into the importance of her background. No one could ever provoke this change in her but herself; this search has to be individual, has to be truly experienced in order to make sense and be effective.

The title of the book is explained in the following fragment:

> Sun calls us to life. It's that simple. Small things built on vast planes. What was that story that Minnesota boy told us about sundogs? "Impossible images reflected under extraordinary circumstances." Sundogs. Twin suns; twins image my family, my mountain home backdropped by twin mountains with twin peaks, made of twin sisters. My mountains, an impossible image, mirror my family under extraordinary circumstances. My nephew and I twin, mirror lineage and battle stones hailed by hateful citizens under extraordinary impossible shelter of a single feather. Sundogs, two suns, one a mirror, the other pure fire, magnificent fire. (MARACLE: 1992, 191)

Another possibility of "sundogs" or twin images presented in the book is the two "Mariannes", one from the beginning and the other from the end of the book.

After the run is cancelled because of the rock throwers, Marianne returns home safely and her goal is achieved. Her internal search for meaning in life finds an answer, and she narrates: "I found the self I need to believe in" (MARACLE: 1992, 199). The book's proposal is explained in the paragraph below:

> The European world may be huge, full of loud machines and big houses, but it can't even nurture its own. It may influence the desperate need for nourishment of the spirit in negative directions, but it can only starve the soul. It can create rock throwers, golfers on graveyards, mercenary soldiers who will trot off to the Middle East to kill humans they have never seen, but it cannot nurture. It can create chainsaw-packing tree hackers, but its hierarchy, its obsession with profit, cannot afford to create compassion, the food of the human spirit. That's the sociology of being Canadian. Undernourished and mal-fed. Canadians are fed lies that blind them to their own truth, and the light of human worthiness is doused by notions of superiority that inflame their distorted character. This process creates an artificial and tenuous loyalty to hierarchy which is essentially murderous. The undernourishment cycle diminishes worthiness and translates itself into racism. It moves the population to a finite tangent of dehumanized proportions and misdirects their life journey. In the end, the philosophy, the very sociology of the madness they create, lead to the desperate need to reclaim their humanity. The rock throwers reclaim theirs by entrenching

> themselves deeper into their own life. Our supporters spiral the extraordinary opposite and fight the influence of profiteers. What a time you were born, Marianne. (MARACLE: 1992, 200-201)

This paragraph leads the reader into the vast scope of post-colonial issues. The already mentioned Caribbean author, Frantz Fanon, in the chapter entitled "On National Culture", from *The Wretched of the Earth*, describes colonialism as:

> (…) not simply content to impose its rule upon the present and the future of a dominated country. Colonialism is not satisfied merely with hiding a people in its grip and emptying the native's brain of all form and content. By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures and destroys it. (FANON: 1967, 37)

The recovery of Native's real past is an extremely hard venture. Fanon addresses the native intellectuals and highlights the use of language and techniques borrowed from the stranger in the land to express his or her own culture. When a native intellectual seeks a mainstream national culture as a weapon to fight colonial power, his or her native people see him or her as a foreigner and all he or she achieves are demonstrations of exoticism, which are often rejected by their communities. Marianne, before experiencing her culture and people, represented this dislocated intellectual, who holds the academic knowledge and masters the Western principles and theories, but is unable to reach her own people.

On the other hand, Dorry, as an artist, easily relates to her culture. Her understanding of the world comes naturally and her canvases show a pure and sensitive acquaintance of reality. The native in her comes first; in Marianne, there is a need to seek the native identity to accept one's self. As Tess Cosslett argues, "The 'self' has been put under pressure from within, by psychoanalysis, as a delusory product of unconscious processes, and from without, as a delusory product of ideologies or discourses" (COSSLET *et al*: 2000, 6).

The literature produced by native authors denounces and exposes the conditions in which they live. A novel, by its form, develops a story that has many little stories in itself. The scope achieved by Lee Maracle with *Sundogs* is very ample and it touches various aspects of Indigenous reality in Canada: poverty, alcoholism, prejudice, violence, struggle for rights, search for identity, generational conflicts, among others. This type of post-colonial discourse can be inserted in Helen Tiffin's definition as:

> (…)The operation of post-colonial counter-discourse is dynamic, not static: it does not seek to subvert the dominant with a view to taking its place, but to evolve textual strategies which continually 'consume' their 'own biases' at the same time as they expose and erode those of the dominant discourse. (Tiffin: 1987, 96)

Marianne is an example of a new identity formed in liminality, the space in-between two cultures and even as aware as she is of her heritage towards the end of the novel, the contact and extreme influence of the Western world cannot be denied. The narrator of *Sundogs* functions as the "Métis" urban woman conceptualized by Kathleen Tucson:

> For urban Métis women no easy solution exists for their numerous and complex problems. Confronted with the racism, classicism, and sexism developed over three centuries of exclusion from Euro-Canadian and Native Canadian societies, they are finding their hope lies not in inclusion but in a new-found identity formed on the margins rather than in the center. Because they are not part of either culture, they can draw on the strengths inherent in both cultures to form their own ethnic identity. (TUCSON: 1998, 41)

Jean Paul Sartre, quoted in the beginning of the text, is quoted again for his words in on natives' actions, in 1968, remain accurate:

> Then came another generation, which shifted the question. Its writers and poets took enormous pains to explain to us that our values poorly matched the reality of their lives and that they could neither quite reject them nor integrate them. Roughly, this meant: You are making monsters out of us; your humanism wants us to be universal and your racist practices are differentiating us. (SARTRE: 1961, xliv)

Sundogs presents issues and realities pertinent to its time: the twentieth century. From the early years to its closure, the twentieth century discussed the processes of human beings inscribing themselves in History, for example: the colonial takeover of America, Africa and Asia; the internal movements of the mind, as the construction of identity; culture's concept and production; wars, fights for one's rights or protests against injustice; and the concept of freedom. Laura Murray states in her review of the book: "I would recommend *Sundogs* because of its intelligent portrayal of the complexities of Native communities and recent Native politics" (MURRAY: 1994, 2).

Lee Maracle represents one of the voices from the margins that is finally able to speak about what it means to be treated as inferior, denied her own culture and condemned to live under rules designed by strangers who stole her land. Maracle's "sharp voice of defiance" is "challenging oppression and striving to find some sort of spiritual foothold" (CALDWELL: 2006, 1). In this inaugural novel, Maracle calls the attention to what is taking place in the last decade of the twentieth century. The twenty-first century's legacy should be promoting a better world for its people, taking into account the processes started in the previous one.

4.2- *DAUGHTERS ARE FOREVER*

The next novel analyzed in this chapter is *Daughters are Forever*. Published in 2002, this novel differs tremendously from *Sundogs*. The style changes completely. There is no longer a first-person narrator, as Marianne or as Maracle's autobiography, presented in the second chapter of this dissertation. Maracle writes this novel after maturing and improving her writing skills. She seems to be a different author from the two previously discussed works, except for the themes present in the three texts. The novel has the following dedication: "To my daughters Columpa and Tania – you so deserved the best" (MARACLE: 2002), and is divided in four parts, containing subdivisions in a similar style of those from *Sundogs*.

The novel *Daughters are Forever* deals with a middle-aged Indigenous woman, in her mid forties, who seeks reconciliation with her two daughters. The first part of the book, however, begins with beautiful passages about the mythical formation of human beings on "Turtle Island", North America in the Indigenous tradition:

> Westwind crept. He slid his way across the land. He breathed softly in those moments when, touching new grass, his lust-breath warmed to the newness of plant life stretched before him. The scent of all this green ran red with desire through his being. Along the trail of new life, berries were born of flowering green. He played with them. Brightly coloured lush fruit chuckled, kissed the wispy touch of Westwind. Bees danced above the flowers. Red, white, pink and purple on green painted an easy picture of seduction for bee and wind alike. It took him generations to become familiar with stone, grasses, the four-legged, winged and tree people. (MARACLE: 2002, 11)

The narrative strategy of this passage is based on Indigenous storytelling, with natural elements, such as Westwind, playing the most significant roles. As described by Peter Beidler, "Native American women's fiction finds its origins in oral narratives now for the most part lost" (BEIDLER: 1995, 616). These early oral and dramatic narratives concerned legends and myths. Barbara Godard states that Native women strategically use a "miscellany, of traditional oral narratives" (GODARD: 1990, 193), and in this way they are "creating new genres" (PERREAULT and VANCE: 1990, xviii). Maya Khankhoje, in her review of *Daughter are Forever*, states that:

> This novel is patterned on Salish Nation storytelling and dream interpretation traditions. Its four-part structure mirror the four winds: North Wind provokes action, West Wind incites passion, East Wind ushers intelligence, and South Wind pleads patience. The author skillfully blends native personification of natural forces with Western use of metaphor to produce a seamless narrative that is as deep as it is engaging. (KHANKHOJE: 2003, 1)

In *Daughters are Forever*, Westwind is the first woman's lover, who plants the seed on her womb, so men start to populate the Earth. The winds, in general, manipulate the seasons and control life. The winds, played with the peaceful inhabitants of Turtle Island, until the newcomers' arrival, as the following passage shows:

> (...)Generation after generation of her descendents [sky woman's daughter, the first human created] peopled the Island. East, West, South and North winds played with Turtle Islanders for generation after generation, calling spring, summer, autumn and winter for millennia before the intruders came. Conjured by wind and women, Turtle Islanders built an understanding of the world rooted in the goodwill in their mother's touch, heard it in the sound their voices made. They saw it in the eyes of their mothers, the looks their mothers and fathers exchanged. (MARACLE: 2002, 13)

The importance of women in Indigenous societies has represented a challenge to colonizers and the change of this structure with the introduction of patriarchal societies by European invaders represented one of the great losses of Indigenous populations. Jeannette Armstrong, Native scholar, states that:

> The role of Aboriginal women in the health of family systems from one generation to the next was one of immense power. The immensity of the responsibility of bearer of life and nourisher of all generations is just becoming clear in its relationship to all societal functioning.
> In traditional Aboriginal society, it was woman who shaped the thinking of all its members in a loving, nurturing atmosphere within the base of family unit. In such societies, the earliest instruments of governance and law to ensure social order came from quality mothering of children. (AMRSTRONG: 1996, ix)

As Maracle says in *Daughters are Forever*: "Under the wind-play ships appeared…" (MARACLE: 2002, 17), and the newcomers are received by the women. Regarding this time in history, Canadian historian Olive Patricia Dickason claims that: "When Europeans arrived, the whole of the New World was populated not only in all its different landscapes and with varying degrees of density, but also with a rich cultural kaleidoscope of something like 2,000 or more different societies" (DICKASON: 2002, 11).

In the novel, the newcomers abuse and kill Turtle Island's women who receive them, and the few survivors start behaving with an incredible apathy, as if by not moving they would keep themselves from getting hurt or destroyed, and by being still they would be able to remain alive: "In the blood-filled throats of the fallen women, song froze. In the descendants of the women who bled their innocent perfection onto the breast of Earth mother, a rigid, pain-filled stillness replaced the body's natural desire to move" (MARACLE: 2002, 19).

The stillness is passed on to the future generations as the sole mean of survival. The Indigenous populations never expected the slaughter that followed the arrival of the newcomers. Their nature, their culture formation was peaceful; they could not foresee what was to come. Colonization was a concept that did not exist in Indigenous knowledge, for as Jeannette Armstrong, once more, argues:

> The concept of colonization of one group of people by another group of people lies outside the understanding of those of us whose language and philosophy strive for co-operation and harmony wherever possible with all things, as a necessary means to survival. (ARMSTRONG: 1996, ix)

Maracle chooses to silence about the gap between the arrival of Europeans and the present time, skipping the process of colonization, as if her readers already knew it. In this line of thought, Emma LaRocque argues that:

> The history of Canada is a history of the colonization of Aboriginal peoples. Colonization is a pervasive structural and psychological relationship between the colonizer and the colonized and is ultimately reflected in the dominant institutions, policies, histories, and literature of occupying powers. Yet, it is only recently that Canadian scholars from a variety of fields have begun to situate the Native/white relationship within the context of dominance-subjugation. (LAROCQUE: 1994, 11)

Maracle reviews this specific history of Canadian colonization, which is not often inscribed in the school history books, in her latest novel. The time changes in the novel, and after the very mythological and poetic first chapter, the next chapters narrate the story of Marilyn, the protagonist of *Daughters are Forever*.

There are more poetic, philosophical, and mythological passages throughout the book, as a sign of Maracle's intention to insert Indigenous wisdom in the novel and keep the atmosphere installed in the first chapter. The brief historical description presented in the first chapter is not abandoned along the novel. The following chapters depict the consequence of the colonization process the Indigenous peoples suffered. In addition, the main theme discussed, mothering, which reflects part of Maracle's personal experience as a mother, is also visited through the character of Marilyn.

Introduced to the readers as a small child, Marilyn wakes up in the middle of the night with the loud voices from her parents' argument. Eddy, her father, leaves the small house and is killed by a truck, right in front of their home, leaving the two women by all themselves. Westwind, returns as a character, and summons the wisdom from her ancestors, whispering to

Marilyn's mother, Anne, that "children are a gift" and "need attention" (MARACLE: 2002, 34). In addition, Westwind says that "Courage is cultivated by the nature of the attention we pay to children. At some point humans need to face themselves. To do so requires the courage to be conscious. This courage is not born, it must be nurtured" (34).

Mother and daughter stay still, as the women who had welcomed the first intruders. They stop feeling and life passes by them without them really experiencing its magnitude. "Their graceful resistance to movement was mistaken for stoicism, for grace, for conservation, for wisdom, for just about everything but what it was: residual shock" (MARACLE: 2002, 35). Nevertheless, the novel is not hopeless. In fact, the world keeps moving and its natural elements are bearers of change and processes, as the next passage shows: "Night is so imperative. In her aliveness she brings dreams of future. Night is the playground of our hope for tomorrow" (35). This passage presents the night as a female character. The winds, however, were male characters. This detail is an example of Indigenous view of the world, which differs from Western conceptualization, especially in the English language, in which the inanimate things have no gender; they are simply "it".

Time changes fast and Marilyn is a grown woman, in her forties, a social worker for counseling parents, especially mothers who had their children taken away for lack of care. This older Marilyn has problems breathing, air would not blow in her lungs as it should and she creates excuses for this apparently mild issue, telling herself that it is caused by the air conditioned room, pollution when outdoors, allergy, fatigue, or smoking. Actually, Marilyn does not want to even think about what keeps her breath so uneasy, for she knows deep inside it is her body telling her something is deeply wrong.

Marilyn's personal story reveals herself as the sort of mother similar to those she works with, something she tries to forget and erase from her memory. Her oldest daughter, Cat, was taken from her by social workers for ten days. Marilyn's despair leads her to hire a lawyer, and buy a gun, despite her husband's insistence on not buying it, to which Marilyn says she would die if she did not see her daughter from birth to maturity. As one of the few Native university students, she knew important native and white people who could help her. When she goes to the social agency, after some argument, Cat is retuned to her, a ten-month old baby.

Remarkably, the connection between mother and daughter, that had been magical before the separation, no matter how hard they both try, develops into a gap between them and they

never truly recover. In her dreams, Marilyn sees herself drinking and: “Each sip was followed by a firm knowledge that her girls deserved better” (MARACLE: 2002, 61). She visualizes her daughters being taken by social workers and trying to release themselves saying “Mommy, we’ll be good” (61).

For a time, Marilyn’s alcohol abuse was a great problem in her mothering. She would have ups and downs, clean the house madly after downs, and see her children taking care of her, bringing her breakfast, trying to keep the house clean when she was intoxicated, and always suffering from her poor motherhood. Whenever Marilyn tries to remember her kids playing, she is not able to, for she did not share consciously the precious moments of their development. She eventually gives up alcohol, but it was already too late to recover her girls’ childhood.

As a theorist, Maracle has demonstrated the reality of her novel. In her article published for the “Telling It” conference, she states that “Half of the women in our community are single, near-destitute mothers. Half of the children apprehended each year by the Ministry of Human Resources are our children” (MARACLE: 1990, 165).

Throughout the novel, Marilyn keeps having flashbacks from her daughters’ childhood, when Marilyn, alone, for her husband had left her when the girls were small, had to take care of Cat and Lindy, however, instead of behaving as the mother she later wished she had been, she tried to find release and comfort in alcohol, which led her to beat the kids quite often. The following fragment shows the pain in Marilyn when she let her memories control her mind:

> (...) She caught the image of the first time she told Lindy [her youngest daughter] she was good without following it up with “but you could”.... Lindy waited for the rest. She waved her hands, indicating that Marilyn should finish. “That’s all,” Marilyn whispered. “You’re so good.”
> “Oh my God,” Lindy squealed loudly to the crowd of strangers attending the reception for her play’s opening night. “My mom just gave me my first clean compliment.” (…) She [Marilyn] felt a stone settle into her guts. She scanned her mind, looking for its origin: was it shame or guilt? No? Well, maybe it was shame – shame of realizing she had never paid either girl a compliment without some sort of “do better” qualifier. (MARACLE: 2002, 96)

The time span of the novel is short, not more than a few days, barely a week. Marilyn sees some mothers, goes to Toronto to give a lecture, and meets someone new, a man that could become her lover, in an open ending of the book. External action is very limited in *Daughters are Forever*.

Nevertheless, Marilyn’s mental processes are very intense. Marilyn keeps thinking all the time about her life, her past, her personal reactions, about politics and love. The awareness of her

own body is strong as well: her breath is felt, paced and she is genuinely concerned about it. For moments, she feels like she cannot breathe, suffocating with thoughts; when she meets T.J., the possible lover, she can feel her fingers experiencing the emotions of her woman sex being called for life, after a long period of stillness.

Domestic violence and alcohol abuse is a common theme in Maracle's narratives, and a recurrent theme in Indigenous reality. Marilyn seeks forgiveness for her poor motherhood, by trying to help mothers in the same situation, and by doing an intensive mental examination of her past and present. One of the cases she works with at the office is that of Elsie Jones: Elsie lost the guardianship of her two oldest children, and the youngest, Marsha, eight months old, died of pneumonia, while Elsie lay unconscious, completely intoxicated.

The case receives special attention in the novel for it recreates social situations and reflects the state in which some Indigenous Canadians live. Elsie is visited by social workers, and the person in charge, a white woman, along with a photographer, take pictures of the disorder of the house, of Elsie lying intoxicated on the sofa, and of young Marsha sick in her crib. After this investigation, they call an ambulance for the baby, who dies hours later in the hospital.

Marilyn takes the case of the baby's death to court charging the white woman's decision to take pictures of the house's condition before taking the baby to the hospital. The judge, however, decides that the social worker could not be guilty for she followed the protocol. There is, at least, a small victory on this sad episode: the judge determines the protocol should change and instead of taking pictures before, if a child needs medical care, an ambulance should be called right away, and only then the other procedures of the social worker in the parent's house can take place.

Elsie represents a challenge for Marilyn, for the protagonist knows, deep inside, that this sort of behavior and consequence was not too distant from what could have happened to her as a young mother. The fact that her oldest daughter, Cat, was taken from her as a baby for a few days is a memory Marilyn struggles with everyday in her thoughts and in her heart.

In a session with Elsie, both women go to a parlor shop. Marilyn dyes her hair and Elsie has her nails done for the first time in her life. They talk about everything but Elsie's case, for the previous approach was not working well and Marilyn tries something totally new. One of the topics they mention is their grandmothers, and how they always seem to know so much about the world. Grandmothers are the keepers and transmitters of Indigenous culture, as Jeannette

Armstrong mentioned regarding language. The figure of the grandmother is present in all books discussed here: in *Bobbi Lee – Indian Rebel*, Maracle apologizes for excluding the importance of her grandmother from the first version of the autobiography; in *Sundogs*, Marianne's mother is Dorry's grandmother, who keeps the girl updated with the political situation, such as the connection between Apartheid and Indigenous Canadians; and in *Daughters are Forever*, Marilyn and Elsie recall their grandmothers in their talk, and later, Marilyn remembers the teachings of Ta'ha, her great-grandmother.

Elsie's childhood is another theme of Marilyn and Elsie's talk. Elsie describes an episode of her father's negligent parenting, when one of her brothers got hurt in the park and the intoxicated father did not know what to do, until he finally took the boy to the hospital, leaving behind Elsie and another brother by themselves, returning only very late. The inability of parents due to alcohol abuse is one of the themes discussed in this latest novel.

The insertion of almost theoretical sentences about the Indigenous situation in Canada, common in *Sundogs*, appears in *Daughter are Forever* as well. The following sentence expresses the episode mentioned above: "It would take time and effort to resolve the historic condition that had birthed massive child neglect among Native families" (MARACLE: 2002, 55). In a flashback, the novel shows an episode of Marilyn's childhood, when her stepfather saw her walking home, after detention at school, in the cold winter and kept driving by the young girl, not letting her get in the car, another example of the mistreatment of children.

Prejudice is at stake in this novel as well. In the beauty shop, Marilyn hears Noreen, the white hairdresser, comment that the grey colour of her hair would look well on her tanned skin. Her reaction is fast, she tells Noreen: "That's no tan, honey; this old body came with that brown" (MARACLE: 2002, 77) and reflects:

> Why do white people do that, she wondered, refer to the colour of your skin as a tan if they like you? A tan is something you get by working in the sun, or sitting outside bathing in it. Natives are born brown. A tan makes us dark red-brown. Yet somehow white folks have this need to refer to our natural colour as a tan, as tough this weren't really the way we are, as though we had browned ourselves on purpose and underneath it all we are really white. It's their way of humanizing us to themselves. Maybe it helps them to like us without too much justification or wrestling. It's so annoying. It makes liking them so difficult. (MARACLE: 2002, 77-78)

This quotation recalls Maracle's autobiography and her internal conflicts with white people. The passage is clear and shows the kind of comments that contain an implicit discrimination, in addition to the need to disguise this discrimination as well, in turning the

colour of the skin into a temporary attribute of the person, instead of dealing with the difference as normal.

In the parlor shop, the women talk about being blonde and wrinkling earlier, and say that they envy Marilyn's colour, which she doubts but takes as flattering, as something which is always nice to hear. Reflecting on the need to dye her hair, Marilyn reaches the conclusion that the ritual of denying the aging process by covering grey hair is a way of being accepted by society and she feels that: "The whiteness of her hair was a testament to the intensity of the meanness [of the life she had]. Her gorgeous black hair was whitened by hardship before the world recognized her beauty. Some piece of her wants the world to know just how mean it had been to her" (MARACLE: 2002, 81).

Preparing to go to Toronto makes Marilyn feel good, for when she lectured, and there were people listening, she knew there was hope. Her message was about self-determination, and she claims: "leave us to do this ourselves" (MARACLE: 2002, 90), for:

> Logic told her that because the problem had been created by the outside, the solutions had to come from inside. Nazi camp guards, she reasoned could not be counted on to solve the impact that the concentration camps had on the inmates. Likewise, the perpetrators of the terrorism on Native children could not be counted to ease the fears of Native mothers. (MARACLE: 2002, 90)

Coming from a large family such as the ones by Bobbi Lee and Marianne, Marilyn has six brothers and sisters, who do not communicate with each other. One of the reasons for this is "maybe, after suffering what seemed like an endless run of shoeless, coatless, cold winters and year-round hunger, they wanted the fullness of their bellies in recent years to be their only memories" (MARACLE: 2002, 94). Marilyn recalls her siblings when Cat calls her before the trip to Toronto, and the memory of her mother telling Marilyn and her siblings that no matter where they would go she wanted to know where they were. The passage above is followed by: "It struck Marilyn just now that reminiscing with her siblings might be dangerous for all of them. They would be forced to remember the sound of Willie screaming as their step-dad bounced him from one wall to another for infractions they, the younger children committed" (94).

The last two quotations are reminiscent of Maracle's autobiography. The scene Marilyn can picture in her mind is a copy of the scenes from Maracle's childhood, portrayed in *Bobbi Lee*. Quoting Tonya Blowers again, the critic says:

> It is often assumed that autobiography is based more emphatically on fact or reality, the novel on fantasy or imagination. (…) However, we all know that many novels read like autobiographies and, indeed, much of the frisson of the writing depends on this close but unaffirmed identification. (BLOWERS: 2002, 105)

The phone call from Cat to Marilyn, mentioned above, informed the mother about Lindy's – the youngest daughter – opportunity to be in a movie. This tiny detail brings sadness to Marilyn again, for she was always the last to know about Lindy, since Cat is the bridge between them. Cat had, very early, developed a sort of intense mothering skills towards her younger sister and her own mother. Marilyn calls Lindy and leaves a message. This act makes her realize she called her daughter in order to acquire energy for herself, and feels ashamed for being one of the mothers whose children live for them. She tries to remember a moment it was her who lived for her children, but could not, except for when the kids were sick or "contracted lice, the scourge of poor people" (MARACLE: 2002, 99), for "her youthful motherhood was haunted by near suicide and destructive drinking. The girls had paid" (99). Remembering and regretting were Marilyn's constant companions. Controversial mothering by Native young women also links the novel and the author's autobiography. Maracle paints the picture of Marilyn's parenting in a sad web of inadequacy:

> As a twenty-three year old, she had failed to see the sad little picture painted by her anxious child, fingers clinging to a window, waiting patiently for a dad, unmindful of the dreadful conditions in which he forced them to live. (…) She saw the small round face pressed up hard against the window as though by pressing hard she could will her dad to come home. She heard the unconditional love of father, rich with promise, in Lindy's voice. "I promise to be good, Daddy. I promise to be good, Mommy. Don't hit me, I'll be good." (MARACLE: 2002, 101)

Nevertheless, the Marilyn of the present time in the novel is aware that the Marilyn of her daughters' childhood was totally different, and "Marilyn heard her mind tell her to walk away from terrorizing these poor little girls. Her mind was disconnected from the hand holding the spoon" (MARACLE: 2002, 103). The consequences of such disconnection were Cat's maturing fast and missing the childhood every child deserves, and Lindy growing suspicious of her mother.

The aliveness of her children challenges the paralysis in which Marilyn has lived. The impossibility to recover from the wrong deeds from the past keeps Marilyn in a state of constant awareness of every single detail of her later motherhood, when her daughters were responsible for themselves and she became a side-character in their lives. The relationship between sisters was a living proof that the bond that should exist between mother and daughters was transferred

to a sisterly bond, for their connection with Marilyn had been lost in the alcohol bottles and in the wooden spoon tanning. Crying in the bath, alone with her memories before the trip, Marilyn is awakened by the phone and Cat's worried voice, saying Lindy called the mother and got no answer, so she called the sister to find out what happened. They end the issue having a threesome phone call, and on the next day Marilyn goes to Toronto.

On the plane, Marilyn remembers when she was sixteen and had an audition to a TV series, after she played George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion*. People told her to relax and be herself, but she realized that "Her self was wide-eyed, perfectly still and shell-shocked. Her self was long way from relaxed" (MARACLE: 2002, 120).

Marilyn arrives in Toronto and her friend Gerri takes her home, telling her about T.J., a friend of Gerri's who wants to meet Marilyn. Each Native mentioned in this part of the novel comes from a different nation and shares different cultures. Maracle describes briefly the main differences between the nations, mentioning the Eastern nations, who "seemed to be much more glib about white people and their ways than natives in the West" (MARACLE: 2002, 123). They talk about T.J. and the fact he has read some article by Marilyn in the *Womanist*, a feminist publication. The article reflected about the Oka crisis, widely discussed in *Sundogs*, and on the introductory report of *Bobbi lee – Indian Rebel*. There is a small fragment of the chapter on the Oka crisis, in *Daughter are Forever*:

> During Oka, even Westwind had grown quiet with the weight of the emotions every human child was feeling. There were those white people who panicked; in their hysteria they cast rocks at Natives as they crossed the bridge to their homes. There were those white people and Natives who pleaded for mercy in tones unrecognizable to the rock throwers. "Isn't this Canada? Isn't this a free country? They threw rocks at our Elders and our babies. Our Elders. Babies." (MARACLE: 2002, 132)

During the crisis, Marilyn and Cat went to the Peace camp and experienced the tension *in loco*, as did Maracle herself. The novel recalls a little of the history of Canada, and the pre-confederation acts of 1867 agreements with Natives with all the issues regarding land possession. Listening to Tracy Chapman on the radio, singing about domestic violence, Marilyn kept questioning herself about politics and the money involved with the legal order of things (MARACLE: 2002, 136). Waking up in the middle of the night on Gerri's sofa, Marilyn concludes she was sick when she was mothering her children, and her responsibility as a mother was completely impaired by her own illness, as described in the novel: "Illness in the mother has its own terror for children. The ancient Salish law says: adults are responsible for their own care

and the care of children" (140). Ignoring the wisdom of her ancestors, Marilyn parent's skills were weak and it was difficult for her to live with the awareness of her figure as a mother.

Time, in the mythological structure of the novel, plays an important role in the awareness versus the unconsciousness in Marilyn's mind, for: "Time is a critical illusion. It demarcates the difference between the physical and the spiritual world, between sanity and insanity, between life and death, consciousness and coma" (MARACLE: 2002, 141).

Before the Toronto lecture, Marilyn reads an old travel journal, recalls her political activities, and meets an old acquaintance. She also meets the "biggest Indian she had ever seen", T.J., and feels her body movements towards him clearly. They go to a café after the lecture with Gerri, and they talk about South Africa and Apartheid, issues which are also mentioned in *Sundogs*. After a while, "She fell in love with T.J.'s potencial" (MARACLE: 2002, 153).

Single mother, successful in her profession, Marilyn lacks not only her past relations with her daughters, but in her present life she lacks meaningful relationships with men. In the novel, five years had gone by until Marilyn experiences the rescuing that love brings to the psychological self. Once more the winds whisper in her ears:

> "Love is of the spirit. It is all about mutual rituals romancing stone, earth, fire and water. Love is about desire and its breath is fueled when we mount the ramparts to reach the top of the bridge separating our spirits. Love is the spirit breath whose rituals bathe us in courage" (MARACLE: 2002, 71).

T.J. is a possibility of satisfying desire, fulfill the body's order to exchange and communicate without language, for "No language is required for humans to express base desire" (MARACLE: 2002, 158). However, relationships are always complicated. In the university, Marilyn heard that "women from abusive families seek out abusive men" (161), as Marianne in *Sundogs* heard theories on divorce. Theorizing relations, Marilyn thinks that "Courtship is a ritual of deceit, she decided. No one would come up to her and say, 'Hi, I'm a dysfunctional jerk, would you like to be my victim?' If they did, she'd be gone in a minute" (161). As the text points out:

> The ritual is a process of seduction: obtain trust, cultivate love and begin the betrayal slowly, waltzing from one minute to the next. Make the victim believe it's because she did this or that; make her swallow the blame. In much the same way the adult world forces children to take responsibility for acts of violence by adults, their words of violation. (…) Confused, lacking voice, the victim is swallowed by fear. (MARACLE: 2002, 161-162)

The interest of Marilyn for T.J. is clear, it is hard for her to hold her desire when he leaves Gerri's house. Even after all the deception she had with her marriage, Marilyn hopes to find peace in love. She dreams and sees her grandmother telling her that "Meaning is important, but expression is more important" (MARACLE: 2002, 172) and that she should speak, give wind voice. She reflects on the English language and the expression "fall in love", for in her language it would be "You are my breath" (177). Marilyn feels good, knowing now she could feel this way for someone.

Remembering her "Ta'ah", or great-grandmother, and her wisdom taught much to Marilyn. She could feel the smell from her Ta'ah's house and listen to the riddles in which she spoke, about what Marilyn could do or not in contrast to the white kids she knew. Returning to the language topic, Ta'ah had commented that:

> "Ah. Woman. It is one of the few words in the white man's language that does not assault the spirit with the jagged edges of its sound. The word woman sounds so much sweeter to the ear than lady. This language has so many nasty sounds in it. The good part is white men never did wholeheartedly settle on the names they gave to life's beings. So they gave them many names. The trick is to choose carefully the names you use." Ta'ah liked the joke she found in this peculiarity of white men, and she laughed at it. (MARACLE: 2002, 185)

On the plane back to Vancouver, Marilyn could barely separate dream from reality, and she writes her thoughts in her journal and decides to change her position at work and start truly caring about the mothers like Elsie.

There is hope for Marilyn and her daughters, for *Daughters are Forever* ends in an all-women family reunion when Marilyn returns from Toronto. The meeting begins in a restaurant, and there is some discomfort in the conversation. The three women decide to have a pyjamas party afterwards. In Marilyn's house, they all prepare the setting with snacks, when the mother takes the wooden spoon to the living room, where the girls are. The spoon is a symbol of the beating that took place in the kids' childhood, for it was the instrument used by the mother to make the children behave the way she wanted.

Terrified by the sight of the spoon, the reaction of the girls change only when Marilyn breaks the spoon and then Cat and Lindy break it again in small pieces, the source of so many hurts in that family:

> She entered the living room tapping the spoon in her hands. The women stopped eating. They watched warily. Lindy looked ready to react. They stared at the spoon at an odd angle, as though not able to look at it head on. Breath stood still for a moment. No words entered the air space,

> but the paragraphs of emotion dividing them were hidden in this small gesture with an old spoon – and they all seemed to know it. Marilyn slipped slowly to the floor and snapped the spoon on the way down.
> "I should have done that years ago," she said. Both girls wept soundlessly. Marilyn gathered them up just as she would have years ago had someone else delivered the blows. She held them and whispered words of comfort. Their cries grew big. They sounded so old, so small and so big at the same time. Finally, Lindy grabbed the broken spoon and snapped it in half again. Cat tried hard to break the other half one more time. She couldn't. Instead she stabbed the futon laughing and crying at the same time. (MARACLE: 2002, 233)

Marilyn decides to take some time to rest, as she feels stressed out. They have nice talks, Cat tells about her pregnancy and on the next morning they all go for a walk and the girls take Marilyn to the house of a woman who used to take care of them as well, as a second mother. The story of *Daughters are Forever* ends in a nice Vancouver morning.

Indeed, the issues dealt in Maracle's novel reflect the reality in which First Nations' and Métis' families are inserted: a marginal position in the Canadian society. The novel also presents to the reader a new and beautiful explanation of the formation of the world, introduced by the native culture. As Beth Cuthand argues in her essay "Transmitting our Identity as Indian Writers", the mythological narrative of the first chapter, as well as its various threads in the entire novel, are part of indigenous narrative style:

> We come from a tradition of storytelling, and as storytellers we have a responsibility to be honest, to transmit our understanding of the worlds to other people. (…) In this process, there is something more than information being transmitted: there's energy, there's strength being transmitted from the storyteller to the listener and that is what's important in teaching young people about their identity. What we're doing as Indian writers is taking that tradition and putting it physically onto paper and getting a broader distribution of those stories, because it's really important for us, in terms of our continuing existence, that we transmit our identity and strength from one generation to another (CUTHAND: 1985, 54)

In this line of thought, the significance of *Daughters are Forever* underlines the fictional or literary goals of any novel, for it represents the strength of a people that has been forgotten by the dominant ruling society. Maracle's exposition of family relations within her native background serves as a document and a testament of the condition in which the Canadian First Nations and Métis are forced to live.

As stated before, the two novels presented in this chapter are different; however the themes dealt in both narratives are the constant themes present in the lives of Canadian First Nations and Métis. As Julia Emberley remarks: "Writings that we recognize to be works of 'imagination' can tell us stories as a way of representing the experience of people excluded from mainstream literature" (EMBERLEY: 1996, 99).

Lee Maracle managed to portray in *Sundogs* and *Daughter are Forever* the most relevant contemporary Indigenous topics. Like Bobbi Lee in the autobiography, the women described by Maracle in her novels share some of her own concerns and are examples of her people's life conditions. The clear improvement of writing techniques shows a writer whose constant search for a better life marks the structures of her novels and molds her own experience in the world.

5- CONCLUSION

Native Literature has managed to advance Aboriginal people's demands for justice and equality as well as to denounce the excluding practices of mainstream society. It can not be forgotten that it was through the means of the English language – today's global medium of communication – that the voice of Lee Maracle could be heard in the south of the American continent, in Brazil. Helen Tiffin argues that:

> Post-colonial counter-discursive strategies involve a mapping of the dominant discourse, a reading and exposing of its underlying assumptions, and the dis/mantling of these assumptions from the cross-cultural standpoint of the imperially subjectified 'local'. (TIFFIN: 1999, 98)

The use of the colonizer's language served the purpose of expressing the condition of the colonized. The intruder's manipulative strategy of "civilizing", "westernizing" – by imposing the use of colonizer's language – end up turning into the very means to denounce the colonizer's practices. Will a discourse of resistance in the master's language lead us anywhere? It is hard to answer this question now, but in the future, following the development of the contemporary world's post-colonial conflicts, we might find an answer to the Indigenous nations' issues and reply accordingly in fair and equal way.

More questions: did Natives ever ask for this situation to take place? Would they like to return to the wilderness of Canada in harmony with nature, after experiencing life in the Western way? Or do we simply assume, for being inserted in the Western world, that our values are irreplaceable? There are questions that we will never be able to answer, for we do not have a time machine that could change the past or propose different presents. There is the moment, the now, the present time, the twenty-first century and a legacy of making this the best world possible.

Lessons can be learned from all cultures in the world, for in each one of them there are values that functioned well in the preservation of native cultures and the survival of native people. Nowadays, conquest is understood as unfair. It was not so a hundred and fifty years ago. Indeed, in the 1850s, there was no concern about the evolution of industries in a modern world as possible causes of natural disasters that could lead to the collapse of the Earth's resources and a possible destruction of the world as we know it. Films, such as Fox Studios' *The Day After Tomorrow* (2004) show a fictional phenomenon that is known to be possible, of course, not in the matter of days as the film presents it, but in the years to come. With global warming, the world's

climate can change, the level of the oceans can rise, and a new ice age can begin. In the film mentioned above, the Northern Hemisphere freezes and the only possible way of survival would be moving south. Crossing the border from the USA to Mexico is amusing in the movie, for the Mexican government only opens the borders for the Americans when they decide to forgive the underdeveloped country's international debts. The tables turned: the USA, super world's power in need of help calls the attention to how valuable and how needy one can become, because of one's own greed and come to depend on poorer neighbors.

Native literature is shouting: do you, oppressor, see what you have done to us? How did you leave us? Maracle's comparison between Indigenous Canadians and South African Apartheid is a sign of the common struggle of oppressed people. An invasion like the one that happened in North America also took place in Africa and other continents. Racism has divided societies all over the globe, excluding those who are different. Who is not different? What is the norm? Is there such a thing? Can we criticize, stereotype, colonize, and fail to see our own mistakes? There are lessons we should better learn fast from these peoples in the margins: first, we were the ones who set them at the margins, destroying their peaceful life in harmony with nature and their natural environment; second, we do not nurture our world and we are letting it fall apart; and third, how can we change ourselves and the world in which we live to make it somewhat better to everyone?

Maybe, even with all the criticism and interferences/intrusions, carried out by Don Barnett, Maracle's 1975 autobiography's white editor, he tried to do something to change the social situation and order of things. Due to his help in publishing her autobiography, the Indigenous young Bobbi Lee was able to speak out and denounce the very excluding white practices. Bobbi Lee, then, became Lee Maracle, the acclaimed Indigenous author and critic who touches readers with her mythological charming narrations, pure and straightforward criticism of Western practices and manners to wake us up from our somnambulistic state of blind oppressors. The rebel who does something for her own people, Lee Maracle, and the oppressor who tries to give a hand to the oppressed, Don Barnett, combined were able to form a strong team.

There are some other white men and women who might make efforts to remove the shades that blind dominant society. An example is the moviemaker Michael Moore. Recognizing white people's fallacies is already a step towards change. In his book *Stupid White Man*, Moore lists twenty-six things in which the USA is number one, for example: "number one in

millionaires", "beef production", "firearm deaths", "number of international human rights treaties not signed" (MOORE: 2004, 176-177). The contradictory members of this list – millionaires and beef producers, on one side, deaths by firearms and lack signing human rights treaties, on the other – makes explicit the consequences of capitalism: richness for few and poverty to many plus an unfair society where people occupy the distinct positions of margin and center. Moore comments that the right thing should be done in order not to have Bin Laden in every American airport or corner of the planet. Is terrorism a consequence of colonialism? This is a topic for further research in the field of political sciences.

In Brazil, like in Canada, Indigenous populations decreased tremendously. According to official statistics (IBGE: 2000, 222), there were around 2.431.000 Indigenous people in this country in the sixteenth century. The statistics from 1998 show that there are 302.888 people living on indigenous lands, and, including those, there are only about 700.000 people of Indigenous descent in Brazil. The relevance of this data is tracing a bridge between the two colonial pasts, and reflecting on the similarities of Indigenous conditions everywhere. The Native literature produced in Brazil is just beginning. The Canadian example should reinforce a will to enlarge the means to denounce oppressive practices and breaking silences via literature, and it could change the current injustices seen all over the world.

Canadian Native scholars are producing their works based on a mixture of their Native culture and Western formal education. They are managing to convey their messages and, once again, denounce that "the influences of a patriarchal and imperialistic culture upon a people whose systems were fundamentally co-operative units has been not only devastating, but also dehumanizing to a degree that is unimaginable" (ARMSTRONG: 1996, ix). Jeannette Armstrong's protesting tone represents another voice in the search for improvement. Armstrong's text's title "Invocation: The Real Power of Aboriginal Women" not only clarifies the role of women in Indigenous societies but does invocate her fellow women to fight back, using the tools that better serve the purpose of denunciation: language, literature, and culture – the tools the oppressor gave the oppressed as an attempt to suppress their original language, literature, and culture. Instead of allowing an erasure of their traditional ways, Native Canadians are subverting the master's aims.

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