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Indigenous Voices from Canada and Australia: Autobiography, Identity and (Hi)Stories in Maria Campbell's *Halfbreed* and Sally Morgan's *My Place*.

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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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To my mother, my father, my brother and my dear Jo, who always believed that I could make it.

To my family and friends who never let me down.

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Jo, my "sensei", my friend, my partner, my love... Thanks for being my heaven and for showing me a new world of possibilities.

I give you this story.

This proper, true story.

People can listen.

I’m telling this while you’ve got time. …

time for you to make something,

you know. …

history. …

book

Bill Neidjie.

SINOPSE

Análise das autobiografias *Halfbreed*, de Maria Campbell, e *My Place*, de Sally Morgan, com base nas teorias pós-coloniais, feministas e autobiográficas bem como em estudos sobre mulheres indígenas com destaque para questões históricas canadenses e australianas e ênfase em questões de gênero, etnia e identidade.

SYNOPSIS

Analysis of Maria Campbell's autobiography *Halfbreed* and Sally Morgan's autobiography *My Place*. The study is based on Postcolonial, Feminist and Autobiographical theories as well as on Indigenous women' studies, highlighting historical Canadian and Australian histories and with emphasis on gender, ethnicity and identity issues.

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RESUMO

Essa dissertação tem como objetivo analisar as autobiografias de Maria Campbell, *Halfbreed*, e Sally Morgan, *My Place*, levando em consideração aspectos de cunho histórico, político, étnico e social do Canadá e da Austrália. Além disso, a dissertação aborda a busca das escritoras por suas identidades indígena canadense e aborígine australiana, respectivamente. Para investigação do tema escolhido realizo um estudo sobre autobiografia destacando seu contexto histórico, sua relação com o sujeito autobiográfico com base em questões de gênero e etnia. Para análise das questões de gênero uso a teoria e crítica feminista, enquanto que as questões étnicas busco fundamentar na teoria e crítica pós-colonial. Para o estudo da obra de Maria Campbell entrelaço questões de cunho autobiográfico, fatores históricos canadenses e a questão da mulher indígena no Canadá. A análise de *Halfbreed* também busca tratar do sujeito feminino de origem *métis* em busca de sua identidade, igualdade e dignidade. Quanto à *My Place*, o processo de análise também envolveu um estudo de autobiografia a partir de uma perspectiva aborígine feminina australiana, o que trouxe à tona questões identitárias do sujeito feminino pós-colonial e questões históricas referentes à Austrália. A análise de *My Place* enfatiza a busca de Sally Morgan por sua identidade e pelo passado de sua família, marcado por lembranças, estórias, dor, perda e esperança.

Palavras-chave: Autobiografia indígena canadense; Autobiografia indígena australiana; Teoria e crítica feminina e pós-colonial; História do Canadá e da Austrália; Busca da identidade feminina.

ABSTRACT

This dissertation aims at analyzing the autobiographies by Maria Campbell, *Halfbreed,* and Sally Morgan, *My Place* taking into consideration historical, political, ethnic and social aspects of Canada and Australia. Besides, this dissertation refers to the writers' search for their Indigenous Canadian and Aboriginal Australian identities, respectively. To investigate the chosen theme, I approach the autobiographical genre emphasizing its historical context, its relationship to the autobiographical subject based on gender and ethnic issues. Concerning the analysis of gender issues it was necessary to refer to Feminist theories and criticism, whereas discussions regarding ethnic issues were based on Post-Colonial theory and criticism. In the analysis of Maria Campbell's work I discuss issues related to autobiography, Canadian history and to Indigenous Canadian women. *Halfbreed*'s analysis also considers the condition of the female Métis Canadian subject in search of identity, equality and dignity. As far as *My Place* is concerned, the analysis was a process which involved a study of the autobiographical genre from a female Aboriginal Australian perspective. The analysis raises questions related to the identity of the postcolonial subject and Australia's historical context. *My Place*'s analysis also emphasizes Morgan's search for identity and for her family's past, which is marked by memories, stories, pain, loss and hope.

Key words: Indigenous Canadian autobiography; Aboriginal Australian autobiography; feminism and postcolonialism theory and criticism; Canadian and Australian histories; search for female identity.

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INTRODUCTION

While I'm here sitting in front of my computer writing this introduction I realize how long my journey in the Master's course has been and, inevitably, I remember all the moments and people who helped me finish such a precious stage of my academic and personal life. It was not easy, I must confess, but I believe that if this journey had been an easy task I would not feel as proud of my work as I am feeling right now. The difficulties and the efforts to finish projects like this seem relatively small when we get to the end and finally realize that it is over. However, when I look back and see all the things that were left behind, all the difficulties that I have been through and all the efforts and sacrifices I had to make to finish this dissertation, I can't deny that moments like those were fundamental in the sense that they made me stronger and much more aware of my abilities to overcome obstacles.

Despite all the problems I faced while I tried to conclude this dissertation, the difficulties that Maria Campbell and Sally Morgan have been through made me sympathize with their life-stories, at first, but also, and most importantly, gave me the strength not to give up writing. These women also served as examples of people who refused to keep silent, who courageously faced the problems and who won many battles. Their transgression of boundaries showed me that we can't give up the dreams we believe will make us better women, better citizens, and better human beings.

This dissertation aims at analyzing the autobiographical works of two writers, both from Indigenous background, who equally claim for respect to themselves, their tribal communities, origins and culture; who search for identity; and who desire being part of a world that guarantees the survival of Aboriginal culture, traditions, dreams and beliefs. Maria Campbell's *Halfbreed* and Sally Morgan's *My Place* represent and portray the reality of countries, Canada and Australia, respectively, which still refuse to offer spaces of inclusion to Aboriginal people. By means of their autobiographies and their social and political work with Canadian and Australian Indigenous communities, Maria Campbell and Sally Morgan give us directions to criticize the world we live in and change it into a better place for future generations.

In relation to the structural aspect of this dissertation, I decided to split it into three major chapters which are divided into minor chapters, as a way of making the work

easier and clearer to all those people who will be reading it. This dissertation aims at analyzing the ways in which an Indigenous Canadian writer, Maria Campbell, and an Aboriginal Australian writer, Sally Morgan, were able to write two autobiographies, which represent the processes of erasure of Indigenous communities, their loss of identity by means of oppression and silencing as well as the denial of equal rights to Native people. Both *Halfbreed* and *My Place* narrate the saga of two women who refuse to accept the imposed barriers of patriarchal and colonial ideologies and who are able to find their lost identities and bring hope to their own futures and to the futures of their Indigenous communities.

The analysis of *Halfbreed* and *My Place* focuses on the Canadian and Australian Indigenous women's autobiographical writing. In the development of this dissertation I made use of Postcolonial, Feminist and Autobiographical theories and criticism, as well as of Indigenous Canadian and Aboriginal Australian women's literary studies. The first chapter, entitled "Autobiography" starts with the presentation of the historical development of the autobiographical genre up to the present moment. This chapter also focuses on the relationships between the genre and the autobiographical female self, calling attention to issues such as gender, ethnicity and the processes of decolonization of Indigenous women writers. The second chapter, entitled "Canada", connects the discussion of autobiography to the investigation of Indigenous Canadian women's writings. The second chapter also presents an overview of important historical Canadian facts and events which are relevant to the history of both Indigenous and white people. To conclude this chapter I present an analysis of Campbell's autobiography, *Halfbreed*, based on her search for her Indigenous memories and identity, her struggle to overcome alcoholism, drug-addiction and the loss of her siblings, as well as her efforts to guarantee that her people had a voice in mainstream Canadian society. The chapter entitled "Australia" aims at discussing autobiography from an Aboriginal Australian female perspective as well as presenting the historical development of Australia, from a British colony into a democratic nation, by focusing on political, social, and ethnic issues. Besides, I also analyze the importance of Aboriginal Australian women's voices to the history of the country. I conclude the chapter presenting an analysis of Morgan's *My Place*, calling attention to Morgan's search for identity, her need for belonging, her struggle to fight against silence and erasure, as well as her attempt at re-writing the history of Aboriginal Australian people from their own perspective.

Both *Halfbreed* and *My Place* present two interesting Aboriginal women perspectives of what it is like living in countries which share similar backgrounds and similar processes of oppressing and silencing people undervalued by traditional patriarchal and colonial practices. Campbell's and Morgan's autobiographies are narratives of women who dared moving from their position of "othered" into "selves" and now are rulers of their own destines.

To conclude, I would like to state that both *Halfbreed* and *My Place* were inspirational works to me as a student of Literatures in English and as a woman. Campbell's and Morgan's life experiences showed me that the life-track is a continuous process of search for discovering who we really are and what we have to offer to and can do for a world that lacks so much in respect, love and equality. In this sense, I would like to say that, motivated by all these feelings, I decided that the introduction would be the last thing I would include in this dissertation. I did this because I refuse to accept the fact that this work ends up in and with a conclusion. And now that the introduction is almost finished I feel that, in fact, this journey is not concluded. This introduction marks the beginning of new perspectives, histories and stories that I expect to be part of my life-track; of my own history.

1. AUTOBIOGRAPHY

> *Autobiographical practices become occasions for restaging subjectivity, and autobiographical strategies become occasions for the staging of resistance.*
>
> Sidonie Smith. *Women, Autobiography, Theory: A Reader*

1.1 Autobiography: a literary genre

The moment we understand autobiography as a practice that involves the writing of one's life and that this task is performed by the writer himself/herself, it is necessary

to analyze other factors that emerge from this initial concept. Considering the intrinsic connection of autobiography and the self, this chapter discusses autobiography with emphasis on the issue of genre and its development throughout the times as well as the fundamental role of the self in the task of writing one's own life. This chapter also discusses the issues of gender and ethnicity as important topics for the analysis of works written by contemporary women writers.

The understanding of autobiography as a life-writing practice becomes a basic element for future developments regarding concepts and definitions. According to James Olney, discussing autobiography in literary studies contexts involves a paradox:

> 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)

Olney considers autobiography not only one of the simplest and commonest writing undertakings, but also as "[…] the least 'literary' kind of writing, practiced by people who would neither imagine nor admit that they were 'writers'. But also […] the most rarified and self-conscious of literary performances […]" (OLNEY: 1980, p. 4) Defining autobiography by means of a paradox emphasizes the difficulties found in defining a genre which attracts critics' attention and turns common people into writers. On the other hand, autobiography, as Olney himself defines it, "[…] is also the most elusive of literary documents." because "One never knows where and how to take hold of autobiography: there are simply no general rules available to the critic." (3) While writing an autobiography can be one of the easiest tasks undertaken by any person, the analysis of such a work can become a daring undertaking. The moment the writer succeeds in denying or bringing into question his or her real existence, the writer fails to bring autobiography into the status of a genre with its own characteristics and forms. However, the moment the writer assumes his/her existence and refuses to deny his/her subjectivity, this autobiographer not only supports the existence of autobiography as a genre but also the idea that autobiography is able to exist by itself. (4) The real

commitment of the writer to the narrative is essential to sustain the position of the contemporary autobiography as a great and not as a minor genre.

Still considering the difficulty in defining autobiography, Tess Cosslett, Celia Lurry and Penny Summerfield analyze the word autobiography through the angle of genre:

> The word 'genre' is itself a slippery term with different meanings in different disciplines. For instance, in literary studies it means an established category of written work with similar features and common conventions (established stylistic and thematic practices). 'Autobiography' in a literary sense is sometimes referred to as a 'sub-genre'. But in linguistics, 'genre analysis' can cover forms (spoken, written and visual) as diverse as the academic essay, the talk show, the press photo and the job interview, and the definition of the term starts from the social and practical dimensions. (COSSLET *et al*.: 2000, 17)

The adjective "slippery" is particularly important because it offers an idea of the difficulty in placing the term autobiography into the broader category of genre. This difficulty is due to the fact that genre itself is not easily defined. In the fragment above, Cosslett, Lurry and Summerfield present two important conceptions of genre: the first, related to literary studies, defines genre by means of stylistic and thematic practices. On the other hand, thinking of the word as a linguistic matter, "genre analysis" can be analyzed by means of form rather than practice, such as the academic essay, the talk show and so many other social and practical dimensions. In this sense it is possible to notice the difficulty in finding one single concept to define genre.

Lidia Curti works with the idea of difference in dealing with the notions of genre and gender in women writings. According to Curti, the idea of genre is defined as a law. Such an idea refers to the traditional understanding of genre: a narrative category marked by fixed structures and by the idea of a whole, of a totality. According to Curti, "Genre has been seen as a vehicle of intrinsic charges of meaning, as a sign system, and consequently marked by a precise iconography, in cinema, for instance." (CURTI: 1998, 32-33) The association of the word genre to a law highlights intrinsic and well-marked aspects of a genre rather than its possible neutrality or concepts of transgression. However, the issue concerning the "law of the genre" has been brought into question lately by contemporary theoreticians and literary critics. The formal and the systematic wholeness has been challenged especially by contemporary writers who have helped to

transgress the fixed boundaries of the “law of genre”. Regarding the concept of “law of the genre” Jacques Derrida states that:

> […] The law is mad, is madness; but madness is not the predicate of law. […] The genre has always in all genres been able to play the role of order's principle: resemblance, analogy, identity and difference, taxonomic classification, organization and genealogical tree, order of reason, order of reasons, sense of sense, truth of truth, natural light and sense of history. (DERRIDA: 1980, 55-81)

Derrida’s words confirm the transgression of the traditional “law”. Jacques Derrida suggests that the challenging of boundaries in contemporary analysis of genre has opened up space to transformations in the traditional and fixed concept of the word. He suggets that the “madness”, that is a characteristic of the contemporary idea of genre, has “blinded” and readjusted the traditional patterns of the literary genre. (DERRIDA: 1980, 55-81) Like Derrida, Lidia Curti also points to transformations in the idea of a “law” and analyses the contemporary conception of genre. Curti claims that:

> […] genres start as a whole, then transgress their boundaries and become ambivalent signs suspended in a liminal zone, a border in which each term irresistibly winds up, going beyond the other side of any “limit” or “division” towards an infinite. (CURTI: 1998, 33)

Transgression, ambivalence, borderland, infinite: all these words are part of redefinitions of a traditional view of genre. Fixity and wholeness have been substituted by transgression, and the traditional “law of the genre” has been reevaluated as an attempt at adapting to changes in society and consequently changes in writing. Curti also suggsts that even repetition, the essence of genre, can be seen as a kind of transgression, because it allows variation, deformation, proliferation and fragmentation. Curti argues that, “The passage is from genre through engendering, generation and genealogy, on to degenerescence. These two moments constitute a particular epiphany of the evanescence of genres.” (CURTI: 1998, 33) In this sense, we see that the attempt at redefining the issue of genre starts in itself, and, from within, it is transformed to contain new forms of artistic expression. The changes in the “law of the genre” have affected many artistic, literary and cultural manifestations. However, this change becomes particularly important when the issue concerns autobiography.

When we think of autobiography, it is necessary to consider its historical developments and the influences each particular moment had in the construction of the genre as we know it nowadays. The 19th-century poet Robert Southey is considered to be responsible for coining the word "autobiography". However, the narrative form had earlier usage. In *Autobiography*, Linda Anderson claims that the history of western autobiography finds its origin in Saint Augustine's *Confessions*, by the year AD 398-400, "[…] both in the sense of making a historical beginning and of setting up a model for other, later texts" (ANDERSON: 2004, 18). According to Anderson, *Confessions* is at a simple level the story of Saint Augustine's conversion to Christianity and the physical and spiritual process he undertakes to find his conversion. This process involves not only Saint Augustine's physical and spiritual wanderings but also his development as a man as well as his journey from his birthplace up to Rome and Milan where his conversion took place. (20) In this sense, *Confessions* is considered an autobiographical writing because it is the first text in which moments in the life of a man helped him to look inside himself and develop his sense of personality.

The breakdown of state censorship during the civil war in England and a democratic access to printing materials led England to a high level of publications in the 17th century. Such publications included spiritual memoirs and autobiographies. In the 17th century, Puritan practices and ideologies influenced the behavior of subjects to the point that the individual should "turn inwards, reliant solely on his own conscience, a divine injunction addressed to him alone." (ANDERSON: 2004, 28) Anderson points out that John Bunyan's autobiographical work entitled *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* (1666) is a reference in the 17th -century autobiographical writing. As a traditional Puritan, Bunyan's text explores the relation between God and the Puritan subject, always tormented by the dualism between good and evil, sin and salvation. According to Linda Anderson, what both Saint Augustine's model of the *Confessions* and Bunyan's *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* and its sense of selfhood share is the "[…] emphasis on a search for unity with God which could redeem the self's sinfulness and hence its incoherence." (28) In both cases what is significant to mention here relates to the spiritual implications of the events in the lives of the writers. According to Linda Anderson, in spite of women's attempts at writing conversion narratives in the 17th century, women's "[…] negotiations with these narratives were not completely smooth, and tensions can be perceived as they move between the

expectations of the genre and of their own feminine role" (33-34) Autobiographical narratives written by men and women in the 17th century were considered to be "[…] private exercises, an attempt to assess the subject's progress towards salvation, or as public models, published, often posthumously, and offered by the male clergy to other sectaries as examples or treatise." (33) In the 17th century, autobiographical practices were spaces to reinforce Puritan practices and this task was performed both by men and women. But for women the negotiation with those spaces was harsher because of the impositions of the genre which would put in check their feminine role in society at that time.

Humanism and the Enlightenment are the focus of 18th -century writings. Felicity A. Nussbaum focuses on the development of the autobiographical genre in 18th-century England and the position of the "self" responsible for the development of the genre. The humanistic man, according to Nussbaum, defends his moral duplicity as an attempt to create a uniform nature of man; his pursuit of happiness is his goal but failure is seen as part of his free will. (NUSSBAUM: 1998, 160) Differently from the 17th-century writings, which were permeated by Puritan practices and the eternal search for a balance between sin and salvation, the 18th -century autobiographies will be marked by the figure of a humanistic man. The ideal humanistic individual is considered free from God's will and secure of his integrity despite contradictions which are part of his ideological frame as an individual. In relation to 18th-century autobiographical writings, Nussbaum argues that they were mostly diaries and "self-biographies" which hardly ever reached the public sphere during the author's life and often remained unpublished for many centuries. Nussbaum states that:

> The Mid-eighteenth century, then, cleared a public space for writers and readers of documents about the private "self". What had seemed private to the early eighteenth century had become a desirable commodity by the end of the century […] Private autobiographical writing in the eighteenth century serves the purposes of various institutions in anchoring a self-regulating body of individuals who perceive themselves to be autonomous and free. But it also functions to articulate modes of discourse that may disrupt and endanger authorized representations of reality in their alternative discourses of self and subject. […] An eighteenth-century serial autobiography, read through the ideology of genre, is the thing itself rather than failed conversion narrative or an incipient realist novel." (NUSSBAUM: 1998, 166)

Despite the humanist perception of freedom and the subject's universality framed by the subject's contradictions, the writing of autobiographical texts in the 18th century is marked by the attempt at serving the purposes of various institutions. Such a regulation questions the ideals of autonomy and freedom that the humanist thought should convey. The revisions and changes in autobiographical texts from the 18th century were not incidental at all, as Nussbaum points out. These revisions would prove that the autobiographical production of that time would favor the interests of regulatory institutions rather than the interests of the writer itself. (NUSSBAUM: 1998, 166) In spite of the humanist man's moral contradictions, the biggest contradiction was in fact related to writing. What should be part of man's freedom was reformulated to serve not the writer's purposes but somebody else's purposes. In America, the late 18th century is marked by the formation of a new republic followed by a great circulation of several autobiographical forms. According to Sidonie Smith, the texts which circulated in America included "[…] conversation narratives, travel diaries, captivity narratives, sea adventures, gallows narratives (or criminal confessions), and slave narratives […]" (SMITH: 1995, 86) Heterogeneous autobiographical practices were fundamental to the construction of the myths and models of identity to that recently born nation. The most famous and influential personal narrative of that time is *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*. Despite being published only in 1868, Franklin's autobiography is seen as a great example of a narrative by a man who makes use of political rhetoric and creates, as Smith points out, "[…] an exemplary type of American subject: the self-made man, bourgeois, optimistic, flagrantly individualistic, and decidedly masculine." (86) Franklin's legacy of the self-made man had such a strong influence in the American society that it served as an autobiographical model and was followed by 19th –century writers.

The autobiographical production of the 19th century is marked by the association of autobiography to the idea of authorship. A comparison of earlier autobiographical works and the 19th-century production points to two different moments: the public exposure of the self and autobiography as a site marked by the image of the literary genius. In relation to these two different ways of dealing with autobiographical practices, Linda Anderson states that:

> If one of the anxieties around early discussions was the public exposure of the private self, it is also the case that autobiography gradually comes to be the site where genius, and in particular literary genius, could be established as "internally" valuable, without reference to other "outside" judgments. The writer had a vocation which was not to be determined or valued in terms of the marketplace, but only with reference to the self. (ANDERSON: 2004, 7)

Vocation and authorship would be fundamental elements to define, legitimate and distinguish "serious" autobiographical works from the popular production of that time. At that moment, social and literary distinctions became hierarchically organized. This meant that social differences would be reinforced and disseminated by means of literary productions. In relation to social distinction, autobiography becomes a site of social and literary restrictedness; a site available to people of high and respected reputation or people who had some kind of historical importance. Literarily speaking, other autobiographical practices would also be hierarchically organized in relation to self-representation leading to degrees of "seriousness", which meant that those who were capable of self-reflection would be separated from people considered incapable of achieving self-reflection. Anderson analyses this difference between forms of narrative and social implications stating that:

> […] autobiography came to be equated with the developmental narrative which orders both time and the personality according to a purpose or goal; thus the looser, more chronological structure of the journal or diary could no longer fulfill this "higher" function of autobiography. (ANDERSON: 2004, 8)

In this sense, the autobiographical production of the 19th century connected both the respectability of the authorship and the importance of the individual in a society that valued the "respected" individual. Regarding the production of autobiographical narratives, it is important to stress that, differently from the 19th-century production, the 18th-century narratives, like journals and diaries, can not be considered failed attempts at trying to establish themselves as autobiographical practices. On the contrary, they would mainly consider "natural" the recounting of public and private experiences as part of an incoherent and unfinished work, and the self, transformed by a series of revisions and serial modes, would not be easily placed into a fixed and definitive

version of itself. (ANDERSON: 2004, 9) In the 19th century, autobiography as a genre is seen as a product of a middle-class structure which defines the individual as socially and historically located.

The use of autobiography to sustain a defined and fixed image of the successful man is strongly present in narratives produced in the United States. These narratives privileged the ideology of the bourgeois, of the white man which excluded "inferior" forms of narrative like those of people who would not fit in the mainstream society. In an analysis of the autobiographical production of the 19th century in the United States, Sidonie Smith states that the desire of following Benjamin Franklin's successful self-made man model of narrative, turned the autobiographical practice into a "[…] means to affirm the subject's identification with the mainstream values of American life." (SMITH: 1995, 86-87) The autobiographical genre served then as a mirror that reflected and reproduced the image and the ideologies of that new republican society which valued the integrity of a respected self. The pressure from the marketplace in offering this model of narrative closed the market to other forms of narrative, which would be considered of less importance and of less respectability, like journals, diaries and letters. Marginal narratives which would not fit in the needs of society of that time would be relegated to a circulation "[…] within a private circuit of exchange rather than the marketplace." (86)

An approach to the autobiographical practices of the 20th century leads us to great changes in relation to the traditional perspective of autobiography as a literary genre. Throughout the centuries, autobiography had always been considered a space that would affirm the position of the subject in society. The traditional autobiography would be a genre that would reproduce the ideology of a society that would value "[…] the white, male, Western subject secured by stable gender, race, and class identifications [...]" (SMITH: 1995, 89) However, in the 20th century, new forms of autobiographical practices emerged as consequences of changes in societies around the world. The Feminist, Black and Civil Rights movements of the 1960s were fundamental to a reevaluation of autobiographical practices in the 20th century. Such movements brought into question issues that defied the stable position of privileged classes to the detriment of marginalized people who were neglected by oppressive social practices. (88) The challenging of standardized patterns and ideologies moved from the political and social questionings to the literary questionings and it was by means of new literary practices

that marginal people found their way towards visibility. Because autobiography is recognized a life-writing genre, it became the perfect site for making public the lives of marginalized people. As a consequence, these marginal narratives brought into light histories and events that would not attract the interest of mainstream audiences and markets. Julia Watson and Sidonie Smith analyze traditional autobiography as a web of privileged characteristics which define a self as a universal human being, rational, whose identity is deeply connected to the ideals of a society whose history is marked by a series of privileges of the mainstream. (WATSON *et al*.: 1992, xvii) The breaking with such standards led people to consider other concepts such as inclusion, tolerance, difference and visibility. This change in society brought consequences that can be noticed in the autobiographical practices, as Linda Anderson points out. In dealing with the importance of autobiography nowadays, Anderson states that she sees autobiography as a very important genre that opens up space to negotiation and, at the same time, creates a site for challenging the traditional "law of the genre": "[…] a site for new theoretical and critical insights." (ANDERSON: 2004, 16) Anderson points to the challenging of the traditional autobiographical genre and contemporary transgressing experiences. As a consequence of transgression, fragmentation becomes the word which defines autobiography as a genre nowadays. According to Sidonie Smith, this new contemporary genre generates:

> […] Hybrid forms for hybrid subjects. Autobiographical texts combine many and diverse forms: poetry, essay, photograph, dream, or vision. Fragmented, these multiforms crack the notion of a coherent, unified autobiographical subject, the meaning of whose "life" can be contained in progressive chronology. Body, imagination, intellectual analysis, memory, cultural discourses including media and myth – all provide different ways of knowing, interpreting, shaping a "life". (SMITH: 1995, 89)

The end of a former normative individualism and the emerging of a variety of discourses of identity which defy the traditional "law" is the great change in the ideology of the autobiographical genre. Serving the purposes of a new society that claims for equal rights, inclusion and respect is the task of 20th-century autobiography. And the new self behind the narrative is the one who is responsible for transgressing the boundaries of society and genre. In relation to traditional practices and the

contemporary world, Julia Watson and Sidonie Smith call our attention to difference, to the changes in literature and to the role of literary studies nowadays:

> We do not want, […] to call into question Western literary practice and theorizing. It does us no good, it does literary practice no good, to take up critical definitions, typologies, reading practices, and thematics forged in the West through the engagement with canonical Western texts and read texts from various global locations through those lenses. Different texts from different locales require us to develop different theories and practices of reading, what we might call "standpoint" reading practices. Such practices call all of us, positioned specifically in our own locales, both to engage the autobiographical practices of colonial subjects and to critique our own points of observation. (WATSON et al.: 1992, xxviii)

Considering the new perspectives of autobiographical texts which emerge from several locations, new positions of critique, regarding very particular points of view, as well as new theories which try to fulfill the needs of challenging autobiographical practices point to three important adjustments. The first adjustment regards historicizing Western practices. It involves putting together the traditional implication of the word autobiography and the notion of "selfhood", which conceives man as a unique individual who, despite similarities and identifications with other "I"s, does not see himself as a member of a collectivity, of a race, a nation or a sexual orientation. The second adjustment requires a reconsideration of necessary flexibilities in relation to generic boundaries. This means that critics have to reconsider the generic stabilization and "classifications" of the traditional genres which, according to Watson and Smith, are more empirical than logical; which are constructed models and assumptions to serve aesthetic, communicative and even political purposes. In this way, both Watson and Smith state that, nowadays, autobiography can be considered much more a genre of choice rather than a genre to serve purposes. The third adjustment relates to autobiography *per se* and other forms of life storytelling, both written and spoken which have emerged and which deserve attention. This last adjustment would require more time to be accomplished because these new forms of autobiographical writings deserve to be more attentively studied and recognized. Besides, the genealogies of other forms of life story have not been chronicled yet. (WATSON *et al*.: 1992, xvii-xviii) These three adjustments are important to be analyzed as ways of reconstructing autobiography to serve the differences and to encompass the peripheries.

1.2 Autobiography: the narrative of the self

Multiculturalism and social changes have helped to call attention to the importance of contemporary autobiographical productions. Multicultural interactions have happened not only among people but in several areas of studies. Such interactions and even interdependence in these areas of studies are seen as attempts at interpreting our world marked by heterogeneity. Homi K. Bhabha deals with the issue of marginality and the politics of identity, difference, multiculturalism and all the pluralistic relations that have permeated world issues today and the ways in which searching for identity has moved people beyond traditional paradigms. In relation to the overcoming of borderlines, Bhabha comments that:

> The move away from the singularities of 'class' and 'gender' as primary conceptual and organizational categories 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. What is theoretically innovative, and politically crucial is the necessity of thinking beyond initial categories and initiatory subjects and focusing on those interstitial moments of process that are produced in the articulation of "differences". (BHABHA: 1994, 269)

New dimensions of the subject and its position in relation to new paradigms have led people to think beyond traditional categories of self initially based on the image of the white middle-class man. This breaking with standardized points of view, regarding "gender" and "class", has brought into discussion multiply situated postmodern subjects who, in search of their identities, are aware of their marked positions in the world. Interstitial moments, produced in the articulation of difference, are necessary because such "[…] spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood and communal representations that generate new signs of cultural difference and innovative sites of collaboration and contestation." (BHABHA: 1994, 269) In search of a terrain to elaborate new strategies of selfhood and communal representations, many marginal people have found in autobiography the perfect field for contestation.

Parallel to the growth of autobiography as a site for public contestation and construction of identity, the emergence of literary studies has tried to follow the claims of our postmodern world and individuals. Connecting the relevance of autobiography to the emergence of literary studies, James Olney states that autobiography has become "an organizing center" which locates several trends of literary studies such as American Studies, Black Studies and Indigenous Studies, for instance. (OLNEY: 1980, 13) Autobiography, in this sense has been able to connect itself to other disciplines, as Tess Cosslet, Celia Lurry and Penny Summerfield suggests that:

> […] [Autobiography] links together many different disciplines – literature, history, sociology, cultural studies. At the same time, within each of these fields, the study of autobiography explodes disciplinary boundaries and requires an understanding of other approaches, methods and practices. (COSSLET *et al*.: 2000, 1)

Nowadays, this clear break or blurring of boundaries in autobiographical writings is only possible to happen due to the effort of people who defied traditional beliefs and still try to overcome barriers in an attempt to find a space to speak and to claim for visibility. This subject, who in many cases finds his or her voice in autobiography, has been responsible for bringing into public awareness the position of marginality that was and still is imposed to people who would not fit the models required by mainstream ideals. The flexibility of postmodern subjects in relation to the humanist model of a unitary self is discussed by Felicity A. Nussbaum. The comparison between the flexibility of the postmodern subject and the Humanistic unitary self becomes a way of proving that traditional patterns of construction of the self can no longer be taken for granted in the analysis of contemporary autobiographical selves. The new subject that emerges in contemporary writing is seen by Nussbaum as a "[…] model of multiple discursive formations which calls a historically located individual subject into being […]" and, as a consequence, this subject is able to present more flexibility in "[…] producing new ways of regarding gender, identity and narrative." (NUSSBAUM: 1998, 162) The subject's flexibility in producing new ways of thinking about gender relations, identity construction and narrative techniques finds its origin in a very basic concept: a real being depends on historicity. Regarding the importance of history in the production of written texts and in the construction of the subject, Susannah Radstone, points out the relevance of historical accounts to the writing of someone else's life:

> Recent histories of autobiography have moved from understanding autobiography as a reflection of historical shifts in the ontology of the subject to an emphasis upon the constitutive role of the autobiographical text in the production of subjectivity. The self is no longer understood, moreover, as constituted by a history which then shapes its autobiographical performance. Rather, it is autobiography itself which produces the subject: the subject, that is, is textually constituted and that textual constitution has a history. While histories of autobiography problematise earlier universalist and reflectionist approaches to autobiography, these histories are themselves formed within a particular conceptualization of history that informs their historical accounts of autobiography. Histories of autobiography locate individual autobiographies within historical epochs and their aesthetic, formal and thematic concerns – concerns which are inextricably tied to the historicisation of the ontology of the subject. (RADSTONE: 2000, 203-4)

In this sense, the traditional idea of an ontological and universalistic self who is shaped by historical understandings of this subject is discarded. In recent representations of the self and of its historicity, the autobiographical text plays a fundamental role: the construction of a self by means of textual production. This textually constituted subject will have its history traced by means of its own autobiographical text. So, the history of the self will depend on autobiography, and the only possible way of tracing and understanding the self's history is through the analysis of this self's textual construction.

Apart from the historical construction of the self through texts, the subject's sense of identity is one of the main causes for the development of autobiography. Liz Stanley argues that the growing interest in autobiographical practices "[…] comes from the ways in which autobiography – self, life, writing – both shapes and helps enact self-identities; […]" (STANLEY: 2000, 43) Contemporary writers found in the autobiographical genre a site in which self-identities can easily take place "[…] within the construction of notions of selfhood and identity." (43) Such notions and the construction of identities, not attached to sets of social and kin-based responsibilities and obligations, have been fundamental to the development of modern criticism and theories. Constructions of the self regarding notions of selfhood and its search for identity have drawn the attention of modern theoreticians to the construction and articulation of the self, its interiorities and the authenticities locked in a confessional culture. (43)

Considering the developments in modern theories of autobiography and selfhood, Carolyn Steedman states that "Self-narration […] has come to be emphasized again and again as formative, constitutive and descriptive of the subject of modernity." (STEEDMAN: 2000, 26-27) The growing interest in studies related to the spreading of individualism and individuality in the West has stressed the role and the importance of writing and reading in the construction of modern social and political selves. (26) This growing interest in the individual has redirected the question of autobiography from an exclusive interest in the word autobiography to a more general concern with narrative practices. Autobiography, then, can be understood not so much as a form of writing but as a way of thinking and feeling the self. (26) Autobiographical practices and the thinking of self, according to Julia Watson and Sidonie Smith, can be productive in the sense that the subject who articulates problems of identity and identification, "[…] struggles against coercive calls to a 'universal humanity' […] such autobiographical language may serve as a coinage that purchases entry into the social and discursive economy." (WATSON *et al.*: 1992, xix) The entry into dominant structures by means of autobiographical practices is promoting political intervention which means going against coercive social policies that exclude the marginal subject. Autobiographical practice, as a site of contestation, is also a site of creativity and liberty for the subject who constructs itself in the text and by the text.

The postmodern subject that defies the role of oppression imposed by regulatory and strict boundaries is at issue on Stuart Hall's *A Identidade Cultural na Pós-modernidade.*[1] Basically, what Hall brings into discussion is the position of the postmodern subject in relation to changes in society. The issue of identity is central to the discussion and understanding of the postmodern subject. According to Hall, the idea of a unified and stable identity can not be accepted in postmodern societies. The postmodern subject is better represented by its fragmentation rather than its stability due to profound changes in the structure of the self and in social institutions. This way, identification with stable notions of cultural identities has been considered problematic and unstable. (HALL: 2001, 12) Multiplicity becomes the key element to understand postmodern identity. The variety of multiple cultural representations provides contradictory and fragmented identities which no longer can be seen as unified and coherent. Hall suggests that "Modern societies are, then, by definition, societies in

[1] The original title of Stuart Hall's book is *The Question of Cultural Identity*. The quotations included in this work which refer to Hall's book *A Identidade Cultural na Pós-Modernidade* were translated by me.

constant, fast and permanent change." (14) Faced with the ever changing and fragmented aspect of our postmodern world, the subjects have to adapt to the instabilities necessary for the construction of their sense of being and belonging.

Fragmented identities, multiplicity, instability and lack of coherence are concepts that define the postmodern subject. But speaking of the postmodern subject is speaking of subjectivity. Linda Anderson discusses the meaning of subjectivity as a characteristic of the self and of his/her experience. According to Anderson, the term subject stands for "[…] self, individual, human being, widely adopted by poststructuralist critics due to the sense of doubling it gives in the binary opposition of subject/other […]" (ANDERSON: 2004, 140) As a consequence, subjectivity would be the "[…] internal experience of being a subject" (141) In this sense, speaking of subjectivity means focusing on the self's experiences. Especially in postmodern writings, subjectivity will be reinforced by experiences of oppression and practices of subjugation of the "Other". Personal experiences particularize and create differences allowing the subject to speak of the impression of being a subject/"Other". However, experience cannot be seen as an isolated part of the self's construction of its subjectivity. Nancy J. Chodorow, in a more psychoanalytic view of subjectivity, explains that experiences are part of a process of differentiation which cannot deny the interaction and connection of that subject who speaks and other individuals:

> Differentiation is not distinctness and separateness, but a particular way of being connected to others. This connection to others, based on early incorporations, in turn enables us to feel that empathy and confidence that are basic to the recognition of the other as a self. (CHODOROW: 1997, 33)

Difference and connectedness are key concepts to understand Chodorow's propositions. The self's experiences are part of particular process of identity which does not and cannot exclude the role of interaction with other people. Linda Anderson's concept of subjectivity and Chodorow's notions of interdependence between the self and the other bring into light the concept of intersubjectivity. Concerning the issue of intersubjectivity, Cosslet, Lury and Summerfield state that "The self is no longer an expression from within, but is extracted, moulded, created by outside forces" (COSSLET *et al*.: 2000, 7) They believe that intersubjectivity, as a growing interest in

the agenda of theoreticians in general and in cultural studies scholars, can be understood as "[…] the ways in which all selves are structured by interactions with others, and a more general attention to the ways in which the self is framed and created by the social." (7) According to the authors, the self can no longer be seen as an isolated individual whose experiences are independent from social life. The self's experiences are bonded to its interaction with society and history. "Ironically, it is only in intersubjectivity, in communicating and cooperating with others, that these writers find a writing 'self': […]" (8)

Many critics, according to Cosslet, Lury and Summerfield, are

> […] less interested in autobiography as a body of texts than in autobiographical practices, including everyone's everyday presentations of their selves in ordinary social encounters. (COSSLET et al.: 2000, 7)

A recent perspective of autobiography provides a reformulation and expansion of the traditional formula of the genre by emphasizing the relation between self and society, by privileging the dynamic nature of subjectivity, and valuing the writing rather than the text itself. Autobiography, then, becomes a site for the narration of one's life experiences in relation to the world where he/she lives considering the interaction with social, political, historical and cultural events that help this self to put together the pieces of his/her fragmented identity. As a consequence, the self's fragmentation becomes more explicit when intersubjectivity is taken into account because the subject will be seen as part of a process which is beyond singularity, stability and coherence.

Autobiography, search for identity, subjectivity and experiences will lead us to a fundamental aspect that will help to bind these issues together: memory. The act of remembering your past and recovering what has been left behind is a very important aspect in the construction of someone else's subjectivity and identity. When dealing with the issue of memory and the relevance of it to the question of identity, it is necessary to consider what Jacques Le Goff names "individual memory" and "collective memory". Jacques Le Goff, in his analysis of the relevance of studies of memory and its development throughout history, considers essential the connection between memory and identity, whether memory is taken as collective or individual. Le Goff states that "Memory is an essential element of what we call 'identity', individual or collective,

whose search is one of the most fundamental activities of individuals and societies of our time […]" (LE GOFF: 2000, 57)[2] Regarding the issue of memory, Le Goff reinforces the aspect of the collective memory instead of individual memory due to its importance to the construction and deconstruction of history. New interpretations and different historical points of view take part in studies of memory which bring into light the interference of collective memory in the history of societies. Le Goff states that:

> Concerning history, […] there's been the development of a new form of historiography, the 'history of history', which means, the study of the manipulation carried out by the collective memory of a historical phenomenon which only traditional history had studied so far. (LE GOFF: 2000, 56)

Collective memory then plays a very important role in the construction of the history of a nation, especially if the historical events have been manipulated to serve to the purposes of dominant social classes. The negligence towards a real collective memory, which should serve the nation and not just privileged people, is the biggest concern of anthropologists, historiographers, journalists and sociologists. Le Goff justifies a need for a more democratic history claiming that:

> Memory, which can be accessed by history and consequently nourishes history, tries to save the past only to serve the present and the future. We have to work to make collective memory able to set men free and not enslave them. (LE GOFF: 2000, 59)

Considering the importance of memory as a way of denouncing oppressive history and biased history books, Ecléa Bosi criticizes the reliability of historical events and denounces the omission of voices from the official history of a nation:

> The history books which registered these facts are also one point of view, one version of what happened, usually contradicted by other books with different points of view. The truthfulness of the narrator did not worry us: for sure his mistakes and slips are less serious in his consequences than official historical omissions. Our interest is on

[2] The quotations extracted from Le Goff's book "História e Memória" were translated by me.

> what was remembered, on what was chosen to perpetuate in the history of your life […] (BOSI: 2004, 37)[3]

The importance of relating history and memory in this work is connected to the role of the subject in society. Oppressed selves who try to put together the pieces of their identities, many times broken by oppressive practices and discourses, tried to count on their individual, social and communal memories as a way of subverting their position of otherness in history. The importance of memory to marginalized people is represented in autobiographical writings of many individuals who question traditional discourses of superiority, including the traditional historical discourse, and fight for a more democratic space in which their memories can be revealed. In relation to the process of remembering, Ecléa Bosi defines it as a very contradictory and subjective event. Bosi states that "At the same time that memory emerges as a subjective force it is also profound and active, latent and penetrating, unknown and invasive" (BOSI: 2004, 47). Such contradictory aspects of memory lead us to the words of Catherine Hall and her definition of the process of remembering. "Memory, as we know, is an active process which involves at one and the same time forgetting and remembering." (HALL: 1996, 66) The subject's memory becomes, then, an active process which will be present in the narrative. The self chooses to forget or remember facts that will be important to his/her narrative and, consequently, to the construction of his/her identity. In this sense, memory serves as a mechanism of construction of identity and subjectivity because both, what is remembered and forgotten, will be part of the subject's identity. Together with the writing of memories there is also the insertion of voices which were silenced and memories which were ignored during the process of construction of a nation. In relation to the new concept of history, Catherine Hall suggests "A history which shows how fantasized constructions of homogenous nations are constructed […] a history which is about difference, not homogeneity […]" (76) Serving the purposes of homogenizing patterns of western societies, history did not considered several aspects of social memories. The individuals who narrated history opted for emphasizing memories which would consolidate the ideals of high social classes. As a counter-discourse, memories from the periphery emerge from silence to claim for equality, difference and belonging.

[3] The quotations extracted from Ecléa Bosi's book *Mémória e Sociedade: Lembranças de Velhos* were translated by me.

Ecléa Bosi defends a particular aspect of memory: its social function. According to Bosi "Nowadays, the function of memory it is the knowledge of the past which organizes itself, orders time and locates it chronologically." (BOSI: 2004, 89) History and past, for Bosi, can only be put together when the past is revisited by the voices of older generations. By means of the memories of the older generations, Bosi compares the process of narrating history to an interconnection of history lines that need to get together and need to be pulled by other people as a way of keeping alive the histories of a country. Bossi claims that "History must be reproduced generation after generation, to create many other generations in a way that the threads intertwine prolonging the original, pulled by other fingers." (90) Memory, in this way, is presented as a very important artifice for the recovery of a past that can only exist when it is remembered. And remembering the past is the strategy of people who have been neglected in the historical process. Through memory the subject narrates its life, linking it to the lives of other people, as a way of knowing itself and (re)constructing its identity. In the case of autobiographies written by marginalized people, memory, in its collective aspect, is intrinsically connected to the construction of the fragmented identity of an individual and to its sense of belonging. In this way, when memory becomes a collective act, the subject finds its subjectivity connected to the lives of other people and understands that his memories are not isolated but are part of bigger process of interactions which is always active; always alive.

1.3 Autobiography: the importance of gender.

Transformations in the traditional and fixed notions of autobiography as well as the emergence of a fragmented postmodern subject multiply located, have created a blurring or even a transgression of boundaries inside and outside the formal text. The search for identity has led many writers to find in the autobiographical genre a site for negotiation; a space to locate the subject in search of a place that can define the subject's identity. Based on these assumptions, many female writers have defined the autobiographical genre as a site of transgression.

In the analysis of differences between the words "gender" and "genre", Lidia Curti calls attention to the fact that between these two words there is initially the difference in

the letter “d”, but she says that, when difference matters, both words present two sets of definitions which go beyond the difference in the letter “d”:

> The “d” is the difference between the two words, the intractable difference within a thinking of totalities. Genre is the study of a systemic totality; gender is the split in the totality, meaning reversal, upturning, rupture. “D” is always there in presence/absence, indicating the imperfect closure between genre and gender, and within each of the two: the boundaries between genres constantly redefined through the endless play of repetition and difference, the boundary masculine/feminine forever open and constantly deferred. The reader/viewer is the essential final link for the constitution both of genre and of gender in the narrative discourse. (CURTI: 1998, 31)

The word gender brings into our minds the traditional dichotomy between male and female. Such binary opposition between males and females shows that boundaries cannot be defined, finite or even unbreakable. Such contradictory relation is traditionally related to and, in many cases, serves as a basic definition of gender. The boundaries between male and female are open but gender can neither be understood as a natural sexual category nor defined by the simple dichotomy man versus woman. Broader differences have to be considered and analyzed. When traditional concepts of gender are challenged, new values are brought into discussion and the binary position male/female is no longer acceptable for being too essentialist and not being able of encompassing the changes in the world today. Uma Narayan analyzes the role of women of color and feminists who fight for a position which is no longer dependent on the image of subordination and submission. Such analysis proves that changes in the traditional image of women have developed new perspectives in feminist studies, in the role of women, and in issues of difference, especially in the case of women of color. Narayan suggests a change in the image of the homogenous self, marked by a fixed position in the westernized culture:

> We [women] need to move from a picture of national and cultural contexts as sealed rooms, impervious to change, with a homogenous space “inside” them, inhabited by “authentic insiders” who all share a uniform and consistent account of their institutions and values. (NARAYAN: 1997, 33)

The challenging of traditional barriers imposed by perspectives on the issue of gender can be seen as one of the many ideas developed by different areas of literary studies. Disruptions can be felt in literary works, especially in those produced by female writers. Autobiography, in this sense, appears as a possibility for women to express their needs and implement their ideals of transgression. Tess Cosslet, Celia Lury and Penny Summerfield understand that the challenging of traditional boundaries and definitions has not only been important to autobiography as a genre itself but that its "[…] disruptive interdisciplinarity, the challenging of traditional boundaries and definitions, has also been central to the feminist project, especially as articulated in Women's Studies […]" (COSSLET *et al.*: 2000, 1). The authors also state that "[…] autobiography provides a meeting-place for many different kinds of feminist approach." (1) They argue that this meeting-place has been useful not only to serve women studies purposes but such studies have helped autobiography in the sense that, in turn, feminist approaches have expanded the definition of autobiography from a body of texts into a practice that permeates several other genres. (1) The relation between autobiography as a genre and women writings can be considered a new achievement. Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson connect the changes in society to the growth of autobiographies written by women and their academic awareness:

> The growing academic interest in women's autobiography may be the result of an interplay of political, economic, and aesthetic factors. The growth of gender, ethnic, and area studies programs to address the interests of new educational constituencies has created a demand for texts that speak for diverse experiences and issues. (SMITH et al.: 1998, 5)

The emergence of such writings was seen by publishers as a profitable enterprise. However, as Smith and Watson claim, such writings have been rediscovered by publishers, because "[…] women have written autobiographically for many centuries and published autobiographies throughout the twentieth century that are widely read, advertised by book clubs, and taught in university courses […]" However, such texts were not focus of studies before because they were not considered "[…] 'complex' for academic dissertations, criticism, or the literary canon." (SMITH *et al.*: 1998, 4) Smith and Watson agree that, both the emergence of women studies and the entrance in the academic realm prove that autobiography, as a site for women's demands, "[…] has

been employed by many women writers to write themselves into history." (5) In general terms, being part of history and being recognized as a self, and not invisible to the eyes of literary critics and society is definitely one of the most important achievements in the history of women writings. According to Smith and Watson:

> […] this interest in women's autobiographical practices as both articulation of women's life experience and a source for articulating feminist theory has grown over several decades and was acknowledged as a field around 1980. (SMITH et al.: 1998, 5)

This interest, which emerged in the 1980's, is due to three important aspects, which, according to both critics, justify the growth of women's autobiographical practices. The "first front", as they call it, was the building of archives of women's writing which was considered an important effort in changing the perception of women writings from "marginal" and "failed" into successful and important narratives. They believe that "[…] pioneering critics cracked literary history wide open." (SMITH *et al.*: 1998, 6) The "second front" is related to the claiming of models of heroic identity which involved "[…] excavating and revaluating the buried texts of women's autobiography […]" (7) Excavation and revaluation were fundamental to change the westernized image of "Othered" woman into a woman who would genuinely speak for herself without incorporating any kind of imagery. The "third front" is related to the revision of dominant theories of autobiography. Only in the 1980's it's possible to identify theories which are seriously concerned with women's experiences. However, as the critics suggets, such a:

> […] focus on women's experience as the true feminist 'content' of women's autobiography and the transparent 'expression' of their lives enabled critics' intervention in autobiography, but it essentialized woman. (SMITH et al.: 1998, 10)

A third movement towards changes in theories of autobiography tries to go beyond the experiential in women's autobiography. In the late 1980s studies of women's autobiography "[…] proposed theories centered in women's textuality and in the history of women's cultural production rather than simply a gendered identity." (SMITH *et al.*: 1998, 12) The interest in women's rhetoric, which highlighted their self-

representations and focused on their subjectivities in dialogue with one another rather than assimilated to “high” literature, asserted “[…] women’s autobiography as a legitimate field of analysis and practice.” (12) These three moments in the development of women’s autobiographies are fundamental to the opening up of space for silenced voices which have been oppressed for centuries by the patriarchal literary tradition. The late 20th century can be seen as a period of profound changes in the lives of women who overcame all kinds of old barriers.

New approaches to the theory of autobiography and the presence of women in the academic field have been achieved with the help of feminist movements. Feminists have made a great effort in investigating and denouncing the current role of women subjugated by patriarchal oppression. Janice Gould defines feminist as "[…] someone engaged in the critique of patriarchy who desires, and in some way works for, the liberation of all women from patriarchal oppression.” (GOULD: 1992, 83) Gould defends a kind of feminism that questions the overwhelming empowerment of men and points out to women’s rebellion against patriarchal oppression. Regarding the issue of patriarchy, the critic Heather Jones states that:

> […] patriarchy has been defined in this context [the context of the Law-of-the-father] as a general organizing structure apparent in most social, cultural and economic practices world-wide, a structure that is considered to promote and perpetuate, in all facets of human existence, the empowerment of men and the disempowerment of women. (JONES: 1994, 605)

1.4 Autobiography: the decolonization of gender

This binary opposition between empowered men and disempowered women is, initially, our first idea of a patriarchal system basis. However this opposition is not only connected to gender relations because other relations also support the patriarchal ideal of empowerment such as those presented by colonized people and their colonizers. As Jones points out, power can be represented in different ways and such dualism determines a broader concept of patriarchy:

> […] dualisms or binary oppositions often associated with patriarchy – such as good/evil, strong/weak, master/slave, superior/inferior, authority/obedience – structure as masculine and feminine, respectively, in each case not only the relations between men and women but also the roles and relations between those who are empowered or disempowered (feminized) generally […] (JONES: 1994, 606)

As an example of the extension of patriarchal domains, Jones states that "[…] traditional institutions, common-sense reasoning and the conventions of everyday life, patriarchy appears to render itself invisible, appearing to be part of human nature, part of what is 'natural'" (JONES: 1994, 606) Heather Jones presents the interest of Feminist Studies for theories that attempt "[…] to make patriarchal strategies visible, to reveal that they actually are neither natural nor necessary, and thus to enable women and other 'feminized' groups to empower themselves." (606) This attempt at transforming the basis of patriarchal systems from natural to culturally constructed, invisible to visible, while also granting empowerment to oppressed selves is the focus of Feminist Studies. Josephine Donovan criticizes the series of stereotypes that are imposed to women, especially in western literature. Donovan states that:

> Much of our literature in fact depends upon a series of fixed images of women, stereotypes. These reified forms, surprisingly few in number, are repeated over and over again through much of Western Literature. The objectified images have one thing in common, however; they define the woman insofar as she relates to, serves, or thwarts the intersects of men. (DONOVAN: 1997, 213)

Much of Donovan's proposition in relation to a feminist criticism relates to the issue of patriarchy towards the construction of the image of women in western literature. She defends two analysis of feminism: one moral and the other political. Morally speaking, Donovan defends a feminist criticism which is concerned with a change in women's roles from object to subject positions. Politically speaking, Donovan defends a change in the academic curricula and standardized critical judgments as a means to put an end to what she calls "sexist ideology." (DONOVAN: 1997, 215) Donovan, as many other feminist critics, defends the position of women that deny patriarchal standards and defy pre-established and oppressive practices in society and, more specifically, in literature.

Nancy J. Chodorow's, in relation to the historical development of feminist criticism and women movements, points out two feminist approaches which try to bring solutions to male dominance and empowerment. The critic claims that:

> In both the nineteenth and twentieth–century women's movements, many feminists have argued that the degendering of society, so that gender and sex no longer determined social existence, would eliminate male dominance. This view assumes that gender-differentiating characteristics are acquired. An alternate sexual politics and analysis of sexual inequality has tended toward an essentialist position, posing male-female difference as innate. Not the degendering of society, but its appropriation by women, with women's virtues, is seen as the solution to male dominance. (CHODOROW: 1997, 25)

Innate or acquired gender differences have always been brought into question by feminist critics, but Chodorow points to the issue of difference and gender relation as dependent on relationality rather than dependent on segregation. She defends an understanding of gender difference as not absolute or irreducible and not involving an essence of gender, as essentialist feminists have tried to defend. (CHODOROW: 1997, 26) On the other hand, Chodorow believes that it is crucial for feminists to understand that differences between women and men are cultural, social and psychological constructs, and speaking of difference as a final, irreducible category is to reify these same constructs and discourses of gender differences. She calls attention to the fact that feminists' criticism as well as their inquiries on the essentialization of gender differences are doing feminism a "disservice" because they rely on masculine models of gender rather than creating feminist understanding of gender and difference by means of politics, theorizing, and experience. (38-39) In this way, Nancy Chodorow understands gender as an intricate and difficult issue to be dealt with and calls our attention to differences in gender which are culturally constructed and not fixed by essentialist theories. Gender should be seen apart from fixed and formal models of subject's identification and closer to cultural acts and discourses produced by the subject. In relation to the issue of difference, considering women's backgrounds, social location and culture, bell hooks states that:

> Women do not need to eradicate difference to feel solidarity. We do not need to share common oppression to fight equally to end oppression. We do not need anti-male sentiments to bond us together, so great is the wealth of experience, culture, and ideas and beliefs, united in our appreciation for diversity, united in our struggle to end sexist oppression, united in political solidarity. (bell hooks: 1997, 411)

Fighting against oppression in several levels is necessary, but keeping heterogeneity instead of homogeneity is fundamental. Only this way each woman can speak against oppression from her own location and with autonomy. Her identity will only be guaranteed when she faces the uniqueness of her selfhood.

1.5 Autobiography: the emergence of ethnicity.

Women have found in autobiography the space they need to defy their role in society. Being oppressed and neglected by social, political, economic and literary forces is a central issue to those who challenge otherness and claim for selfhood. Marginal women find in autobiography a space where they can negotiate their subjectivity, their identities and deconstruct the genre as a way of reconstructing the ideology of the genre. So, the autobiographical genre and, more specifically, literary criticism of autobiographical writings have changed in the last century and have paid more attention to the needs of women who had not been recognized as authentic selves and who had not been able to speak for themselves. Julia Watson and Sidonie Smith, when commenting on the importance of autobiography to marginalized women, comment that "For the marginalized woman, autobiographical language may serve as a coinage that purchases entry into the social and discursive economy." and "To enter into language is to press back against total inscription in dominating structures, against the disarticulation of that spectral other […] the 'dominated self'." (WATSON *et al.*: 1992, xix) The autobiographical terrain, marked by the image of the "universal man", can be seen as a site of reconstruction of female selves by female selves. In speaking of marginalized women, we have to consider not only the issue of gender but also to insist on the interferences of ethnicity in the construction of the self's identity and subjectivity.

Changes in society and the emergence of movements led by marginalized people towards a politics of inclusion and equality have brought into discussion the ambiguous binary system involving center and margins and the concept of ethnicity. The blurring of boundaries, the intersection of center and margins and changes in the understanding of ethnicity are deeply connected to the increasing complexity in the politics of representation of the subject. The fragmentation of the subject and changes in social politics, as an attempt to encompass new transformations in the modern world, have raised questions concerning "essential ethnic subjects" and the old black and white binary system. Stuart Hall analyses the crises of old ideologies and politics toward black people and points out the reasons that would justify such changes. Hall addresses the issue of ethnicity explaining that:

> The term ethnicity acknowledges the place of history, language and culture in the construction of subjectivity and identity, as well as the fact that all discourse is placed, positioned, situated, and all knowledge is contextual. Representation is possible only because enunciation is always produced within codes which have a history, a position within the discursive formations of a particular space and time. (HALL: 1997, 226)

The self in search of its subjectivity cannot be properly analyzed without considering his/her history, language, culture and contextualized discourses. By means of discourses and contextualization of these discourses, the self is able to get connected to a specific time and space. The contextualization of discourses and of selves is fundamental to the understanding of the construction of the subject's identity. Addressing the issue of the black subject and considering the binary position black and white, Hall states that:

> […] the term "black" was coined as a way of referencing the common experience of racism and marginalization in Britain and came to provide the organizing category of a new politics of resistance, amongst groups and communities with, in fact, very different histories, traditions and ethnic identities. (HALL: 1997, 223)

Being black in current times means much more than a category of differentiation between white people and non-white people. It implies reinforcing ideals of resistance

against homogenization and racism; it means reinforcing the individualities of the black self considering his/her ethnic and cultural differences. Such a change of perspective shows that "There was a concern not simply with the absence or marginality of the black experience but with its simplification and its stereotypical character." (HALL: 1997, 223) Politically speaking, changes in the perception of blackness in the western world have been fundamental not only to bring marginalized voices into the public domain, but also to break with essentialist and racist categorizations of black people. A new concept of blackness opened up space for the discussion of representation of black people. Stuart Hall discusses changes in the representation of the black subject pointing to the shift from "relations of representation" to a "politics of representation" which discards the essentialist and racist conception of blackness and supports the black experience as a process guaranteed by means of heterogeneity and ethnicity. Contestation and changes in the representation of the black subject have also created a change in the understanding of the term ethnicity. This shift regarding the contestation of representation can also be felt in the notion of ethnicity itself. Hall presents this shift in the understanding of ethnicity by means of two perspectives: the first is dominant and connects the idea of ethnicity to nation and "race"; the other notion can be understood as a new and positive conception of periphery. This new notion of ethnicity reinforces that "[…] we all speak from a particular place, out of a particular history, out of a particular experience, a particular culture, without being contained by that position as 'ethnic artists' or film-makers." (227) According to Stuart Hall, we are all "[…] *ethnically* located and our ethnic identities are crucial to our subjective sense of who we are." (227) This new notion of ethnicity reinforces the preservation of difference as a synonym for diversity. We can only put into practice our real ethnic selves when diversity and heterogeneity are guaranteed.

In an analysis of the importance of the notion of ethnicity to the representation of the self and to autobiography as a site of contestation, Linda Anderson states that "[…] the autobiographical subjects are cast adrift from patriarchal origins and must endlessly reinvent themselves, their location and community along with new forms of autobiography." (ANDERSON: 2004, 120) In the same way that autobiography has been transformed to welcome silenced selves, these selves have to adapt and build their identities interacting with the concepts of history, location, time and culture. Most of these ethnic selves who found in autobiography a way of denouncing their oppressed

subjectivities have spoken of imperialistic oppression and the effects of colonialism in nations dominated by European countries. The issues of imperialism, the effects of colonization in the lives of these selves, and the influence of European nations in their colonies or former colonies have been brought into discussion by scholars of postcolonial theories.

According to Bill Ashcroft the term postcolonialism has been widely used among literary critics since the late 1970s as an attempt to discuss many effects of colonization in nations that suffered from European imperialist oppression (ASHCROFT *et al.*: 2002, 186) Such theory is linked to issues of power, subjectivity, language, ideology, race and identity. It is also seen as a way of claiming for a form of subversion that defies established discourses and which tries to give voice to those who were forced to accept a position of subjugation and oppression. Some of the topics discussed by postcolonial critics are related to aspects of migration, slavery, assimilation, race, gender, hybridization, difference, representation and place. The discourse of superiority of western civilizations is also taken as another important strategy of imposing the white people's political, social and economic ideologies.

The process of decolonization is usually seen as the struggle for the independence of dominated people and by the colonizer's attempt at trying to keep its dominance and its hegemony towards the colonies. Regarding the issue of decolonization and the effects of colonialism on colonized selves, Julia Watson and Sidonie Smith state that:

> Decolonization, of course, refers literally to the actual political processes set in motion in various geographical locations before and during this century. Colonies established under European domination achieved independent statehood, sometimes through peaceful and sometimes through violent struggle. But decolonization remains a problematic notion, a potential disenchantment. Colonial relationships persist today […]" (WATSON *et al.*: 1992, xiii)

Adding to their discussion of the process of decolonization, Watson and Smith claim that, "Decolonization is always a multidimensional process rather than a homogenous achievement. And it involves the deformation/reformation of identity." (WATSON *et al.*: 1992, xviii-xix) Such observations lead always to the implications of oppressive practices toward the colonized selves. Going back to autobiography and connecting it to the position of the colonized self, Watson and Smith believe that "The

autobiographical occasion […] becomes a site on which cultural ideologies intersect and dissect one another, in contradiction, consonance, and adjacency." (xix) Through autobiographical writing, the postcolonial self is able to question his/her position of subjugation, to deconstruct the discourse of the oppressor and to redefine its position by means of discourse. This entrance into the terrain of discourse, once dominated by the western ideology can serve as reference and goal to the fight of colonized people for their identities once suffocated by this same western ideology. Economic, political, cultural and social influences that emerged from the contact between colonizers and colonized tend to affect, in a higher scale, the colonies rather than the imperial forces. Colonized subjects, communities and, even nations, have their traditions neglected; their culture is deeply affected, almost erased; they are expected to do what they are told to do and they are expected to learn what is taught by means of force and imposition. Decolonization, in this sense, happens inside and outside autobiographical practices, and it leaves marks that will never be erased.

Homi Bhabha has studied the implications of the contact between colonizers and colonized in the construction of peoples' identities. He claims that the initial contact between two different cultures necessarily results into hybridism: a terminology that implicates mixture of cultures and that questions the assumption of the "pure" and "authentic" reinforced by the colonial discourse. (BHABHA: 1997, 34) Bhabha argues that:

> Hybridity is the revaluation of the assumption of colonial identity through the repetition of discriminatory identity effects. It displays the necessary deformation and displacement of all sites of discrimination and domination…For the colonial hybrid is the articulation of the ambivalent space where the rite of power is enacted on the site of desire, making its objects at once disciplinary and disseminatory – or, in my mixed metaphor, a negative transparency. (BHABHA: 1997, 34-35)

Discrimination, oppression, colonialism, all these practices that helped to erase and blur the sense of identity of the colonized are defied by the articulation of an identity that is marked by a hybrid formation. The hybrid self is an important terminology that reinforces the interdependence between colonized and colonizer and it is reinforced by the construction of the self's subjectivity. Analyzing Homi Bhabha's

work and his definition of hybridity, Bill Ashcroft emphasizes the interdependence that the word brings. The interaction between subjects, in this case between colonized and colonizer, is much more relevant to the construction of the subject's identity rather than seeing it isolated or connected to isolated events. Hybridity will then be associated to the idea of product, result of interactions rather than an isolated and intrinsic event or object. Ashcroft claims that:

> […] the concept of hybridity emphasizes a typically twentieth-century concern with relations within a field rather than with an analysis of discrete objects, seeing meaning as the produce of such relations rather than as intrinsic to specific events or objects. (ASHCROFT: 2002, 121)

Helen Tiffin not only refers to the concept of hybridism but also discusses the decolonizing process involved in the representation of former colonies and subjects' identities. Decolonization is a complex process that takes place at the moment of independence of a former colony. Tiffin also explores the terminology of hybridization, going beyond the hybrid subject and extending it to a broader concept: the concept of culture. (TIFFIN: 1997, 95) According to Tiffin, postcolonialism and decolonization can be seen as processes that reinforce the hybrid identity of the self and stress the binary system which takes place in the negotiation of spaces between margin and center. The colonized self is always in process and is always recreating itself according to several intersections once started in colonial times. As Tiffin argues:

> Post-colonial cultures are inevitably hybridised, involving a dialectical relationship between European ontology and epistemology and the impulse to create or recreate independent local identity. Decolonisation is process, not arrival; it invokes an ongoing dialectic between hegemonic centrist systems and peripheral subversion of them; between European or British discourses and their post-colonial dis/mantling. (TIFFIN: 1997, 95)

Thinking of the colonized and of the construction of his/her identity, Trinh T. Minh-ha relates this discussion to the ideology of the dominant. She believes that "To raise the question of identity is to reopen the discussion on the self/other relationship in its enactment of power relations." (MINH-HA: 1997, 415) The idea of identity is seen

by Minh-ha as inserted into a dominant context and it is imposed by a certain ideology of dominance. This ideology tends to reinforce the concept of identity which is essential, pure and intact that erases everything that can be considered foreign, strange and not true to the "real" self, not including the figure of the "other self". (415) Being the "Other" is characterized by a relationship of domination imposed by colonial forces that delineate the identity of the colonized as not being self. Being "Other" and not self is the way that European ideologies reinforce and perpetuate the colonized subject. Such differentiation serves to the purposes of western ideologies because it helps to crystallize the ideology of the white, male, successful and dominant self. The concept of otherness, introduced here by Minh-ha, leads us to other important issue that permeates the postcolonial theory: the concept of alterity.

The state of being "Other" or being different is seen as alterity by Thomas Bonnici. Bonnici points out that "[…] othering, therefore, is the process by which the empire (Other) creates its colonized subjects (others)." (BONNICI: 1999, 162) According to Bonnici in the discourse of power, the "Other" is the focus of power necessarily producing him. (162) The critic also explains that there are four modes of othering the colonized subject. The first aspect involves a process of worlding the other by the presence of the Eurocentric representation in foreign land. The second aspect relates to the process of debasement, in which the native is regarded as lazy and object of imperialism. The third aspect involves the process of discrimination. And finally, the fourth process is connected to the aspect of homogenization, in which the natives and their traits are universalized. (162)

The subaltern subject receives special attention when Gayatry Chakravorty Spivak elaborates arguments that challenge the speaking position of the subaltern/marginal subject. Spivak believes that it is not possible that a subaltern individual or group develops an effective and real "voice" because of the cruel and deep effects of colonization. Spivak also points out that the remarkable heterogeneity of subaltern groups makes the effectiveness of their message and the audibility of their "voices" difficult. (SPIVAK: 1997, 27) In spite of giving credit to the existence of a subaltern voice that emerges as an attempt of subverting the dominant power, this voice is still contaminated by the hegemonic discourse of dominant groups. In this sense, Spivak, refuses to accept the existence of a subaltern voice completely legitimized and not influenced by the Eurocentric discourse. In spite of Spivak's analysis of the subaltern

subject and its lack of an uncontaminated speech, the voice of the "Other" is considered to be of great relevance to postcolonial studies. Once we give them voice and allow them to speak, we can begin to understand the "Other", to respect its position in the world, hear his/her claims and subvert the hegemonic discourse that has always been heard and imposed for centuries to colonized people.

Talking about the colonized implies raising questions and trying to find answers to his/her position in this world. It is seen as an attempt of defining the position of subaltern groups and individuals in a world which has been imposed by dominating forces. Being the "Other" implies being different, exotic and not identifying with the mainstream discourse; it involves the effects of oppression and the erasure of the subjects' past and traditions. This discussion about defining colonized subjects as "Others", leads us to the discussion of their subjectivity as subaltern individuals. Being subaltern reinforces a subjugated position towards colonialist ideology and weakens one's position as real and unaffected voices into the Eurocentric world.

2. CANADA

> *To hell with feeling marginalized.*
>
> Maria Campbell. *The Other Woman: Women of Colour in Contemporary Canadian Literature*.

2.1 Autobiography and Indigenous Canadian women

The North-American Indigenous mythology confers women the sacred responsibility of creators and guardians of tribal life. As Paula Gunn Allen claims:

> Before the coming of the white man, or long ago, so far, as the people say, the Grandmother(s) created the firmament, the earth, and all the spirit beings in it. She (or they) created, by thinking into being, the Women, or the Woman, from whom the people sprang. The Women thus thought into being also gave thought, and the people and all the orders of being in this

> world came into being, including the laws, the sciences, agriculture, householding, social institutions – everything. (ALLEN: 1992, 2000)

The power of creation acknowledges the importance of Indigenous women in their communities. However, the interference of white men in Indigenous communities was responsible for most of the near destruction of their dreams, rituals, myths and beliefs. Especially in North-America, colonialism was a devastating process that imposed the European values and supremacy to Indigenous communities. In relation to Native communities, colonialism represented the end of an equalitarian, not hierarchical society which was organized by a cooperative system and which counted on women to preserve the spiritual and ritual life of their tribes. (ALLEN: 1992, 195) Paula Gunn Allen refers to the colonial process and its effects on tribal societies stating that:

> During the five hundred years of Anglo-European colonization, the tribes have seen a progressive shift from gynecentric, egalitarian, ritual-based social systems to secularized structures closely imitative of the European patriarchal system. During this time women […] – along with traditional medicine people, holy people, shamans, and ritual leaders – have suffered severe loss of status, power and leadership. (ALLEN: 1992, 195)

Allen explains that the "[…] woman-based, woman-centered traditions of many precontact tribes were tightly bound to ritual, and ritual was based on spiritual understandings rather than on economic or political ones" (ALLEN: 1992, 195) In he article, Allen suggests that the colonial period was responsible for the genocide of many Indian tribes. However, this genocide started with the dissolution of ritual tradition and, consequently, the "[…] degradation of the status of women […]", central figures "[…] to the spiritual and ritual life of the tribes." (195) Allen concludes stating that "Colonization means the loss not only of language and the power of self-government but also of ritual status of all women […]" (196) According to Allen, the lack of balance brought by colonial forces to Indigenous communities can be interpreted as an illness that requires healing:

> […] the violation of the Mother's and Grandmothers' laws of kinship, respect, balance, and harmony brings about social, planetary, and personal illness and that healing is a matter of restoring the balance within ourselves and our communities. (ALLEN: 1992, 208)

Many attempts have been made by Indigenous peoples to heal from the wounds caused by colonialism. One of these wounds is related to the de-characterization of the role of Indigenous women. The creation of stereotypes that portrayed Indian women as the romantic savages of white man' dreams has been questioned and demystified by modern studies. According to Kathleen M. Donovan, many Native women have been part of ethnographic studies, but due to flaws in methodologies and biases of ethnographers, misinformation usually resulted in "[…] portraits of Native women that continued the stereotype of romantic savages in the wilderness or, conversely, of lowly members of the tribal hierarchy, […]" (DONOVAN: 1998, 17) Donovan concludes that "Even literary works have by and large concentrated on Indian males and the destructive forces of alcoholism, poverty, and suicide on reservations." (17-18) The critic points out that "Only in recent years have writers given voice to the problems facing non-reservation, urban Indians." (18) Although most of these works still focus on male characters, contemporary urban Indian women have tried to find in literature a way of healing their wounds and a path for the search for their own identities. Pride, respect and visibility are important issues discussed by Indigenous women. Janice Gould remembers her childhood by presenting the meaning of being a mixed-blood Canadian Indian:

> When I was a kid my mother told us, 'You are French, Irish, English, and Indian.' We always said it that way, too, in that order. Being part Indian was a source of pride to us because we understood how unique it must be in a world so populated by white folks. And we were warned by my mother always to be proud, always to hold our heads up and never let anyone make us feel ashamed of being Indian. Pride and shame were involved with our Indianness in an extraordinary self-defining way. (GOULD: 1992, 82)

In the words of Janice Gould, being an Indigenous woman in our world points at two directions in the construction of identity. The first and most positive aspect relates to pride and uniqueness, two words rooted in most Indigenous women who, like Janice Gould, respect, remember and establish connections to their pasts. The second aspect relates to shame, a feeling which has been imposed to Indigenous people and which contaminates the way they are represented and the way they represent themselves. The

presence of both feelings is a good example to illustrate not only the fragmented and contradictory identity of Indigenous selves, but also to show the clash between traditional and imposed cultures; respect and prejudice; selves and "Others"; equality and oppression; authenticity and assimilation.

Regarding the studies of autobiography, both critics and writers claim that the Indigenous self finds in the genre a way of narrating its life and recovering the ideals of pride and uniqueness. The connection between self and community is fundamental to the studies of indigenous autobiography. Hertha D. Sweet Wong presents two different kinds of subjectivity constructed by means of autobiographical narratives. When she compares both subjectivities, Wong claims that theoreticians of Native American autobiography admit that "American Indian subjectivity has been defined as relational, while European (or universal Western) subjectivity has been presented as individual." (WONG: 1998, 168) On the other hand, feminists analyze women's subjectivity through the scope of women's traditional relationality and men's individuality. (168) Wong, in her article, defines other ways of defining Indigenous women's subjectivity by questioning both reductive thoughts in relation to the oppositionality of differences. In her analysis of Indigenous people and their role within their communities, Wong calls attention to the fact that:

> Generally, Native people see themselves as connected to an entire network of kinship relations with family, clan, community, earth, plant and animal life, and cosmos, while Western non-Natives envision themselves as separate from such relations. In many Indigenous contexts, it is understood that to speak or write about oneself, calling attention to one's own accomplishments […] reveals a poor upbringing […], while in many Western contexts to announce oneself directly is considered straightforward and honest. (WONG: 1998, 169)

Despite such assumptions regarding Western and Indigenous self-narratives, Wong considers them oversimplifications. The critic discusses traditional concepts of Native self-narratives and presents a broader idea of relationality or individuality concerning autobiographies by Native people:

> Numerous kinds of relational subjectivities are possible, that a subject is not either individual or relational, but may be more or less individual or more or less relational in diverse contexts, and that subjectivity is not

> determined entirely by either biological or social-cultural discourses. (WONG: 1998, 169)

Wong criticizes the traditional and generalizing concepts of subjectivity stating that, despite many dominating orientations towards the construction of shaped subjectivities, groups or selves may not always conform to them. Wong justifies her point of view stating that "[…] in some indigenous cultures, there are appropriate occasions to exercise individuality – articulating personal achievements to attest to the right to speak to a council or practicing 'traditional' arts with innovations […]" (WONG: 1998, 169) Regarding Native women and their marginalized position in society, Wong states that "Native women, by virtue of culture and gender, are multiply relational subjects. But forced to choose, Native women often feel obligated to insist on Native over female identity." (170) Gender and ethnicity get into conflict when Native women's subjectivities are being discussed. They define themselves much more in relation to their tribal and cultural affiliation rather than in gender-based terms. Such thing happens because, for some women, "[…] the material conditions of being Indian in the United States (or Canada) outweigh gender considerations" but for others, "[…] it is neither desirable nor feasible to focus on gender as if gender might be separated from a cultural web of significance." (170) In the case of American Native women, being Indian and reclaiming their Native identity means to reconnect to their tribal origins. It represents a way of reconstructing their traditions suppressed by processes of colonization and rebuilding their diminished female power. (170) Native women, then, have opted for their Indigenous identity rather than their female identity to guarantee the existence of their communities, traditions, and myths.

But speaking of Native women narratives is not only thinking of the subject's option for a female or Indigenous identity. Hertha D. Sweet Wong calls attention to a "[…] profound and persistent tendency to impose a historical fixity on Native people." (WONG: 1998, 170) Such fixity in defining the self's subjectivity is connected to a need for defining Native people as "authentic" selves. This matter of authenticity is questioned by many contemporary Native women writers because "[…] 'authentic' Natives are those who are furthest from the 'corrupting' influences of Western civilization, those people […] closest to the cultural condition […] during European contact." (170) In this sense, thinking of "authenticity" in relation to Native people means that they "[…] cannot live in the late twentieth century, nor can they be

‘successful’ economically or otherwise.” (171) This view of “authentic” Indians can be interpreted as a “[…] performance, a mask, yet another commodity.” (171) Such commodity serves to patriarchy, helps to elevate the superiority of white people towards Native people and diminishes the relevance of their role in society. However, many Native women have rebelled against “authentic” representations of their people and of themselves. According to Wong, “Many Native women writers directly challenge the dominant (mis)representations of American Indians and the Native and non-Native border patrols of Indian authenticity.” (171) History has helped to define Native people to an “ideal” of representation but being connected to traditions and cultural practices does not imply that the Native person is not connected to the world. The image of “authentic” Indians should, instead, remain in the past and follow the changes in the world and in the individuals. In the case of Native women they have to keep on resisting from being:

> […] perpetually frozen in the past as anthropological objects of study and, at the same time, resist performances of ‘authentic’ Indianness (that is, taking on, and thus perpetuating, stereotypical representations of nativity); as women they must negotiate whatever gender identities are available within their particular cultures and resist being rendered invisible within the larger cultures of the United States or Canada. (WONG: 1998, 171)

Being visible is one of the greatest concerns of Native women writers. Through different narratives they succeed in transforming these narratives into political strategies of cultural survival and guarantee their personal identities. “A Native autobiographer, whether a speaking or writing subject, often implies, if not announces, the first-person plural – we – even when speaking in the first-person singular”, claims Hertha D. Sweet Wong (WONG: 1998, 171). Paul John Eakin, in relation to the relationality of self who writes autobiographies, agrees that “We tend to think of autobiography as a literature of the first person, but the subject of autobiography to which the pronoun ‘I’ refers is neither singular nor first, and we do well to demystify its claims.” (EAKIN: 1998, 63) Eakin continues his analysis of autobiographical narratives and relational selves claiming that such narratives are “[…] telling us something fundamental about the relational structure of the autobiographer’s identity, about its roots and involvement in another’s life and story.” Besides that “[…] the focus of the autobiography is on

someone else's story, and the primary activity of the autobiographer is the telling of this story." (71)

Autobiographical narratives committed to the telling of life stories, like in the case of most of Native autobiographies written by women, are responsible for linking the life of self to the lives of her community. This connection favors the writing of communal stories rather than individual narratives which focus on the achievements of one single individual. The connection between individuals guarantees the real existence of the self, which would only be possible within her original community. The emergence of tribal pasts, origins and stories is intrinsic to the works of many Native women writers because it is a way of defining their subjectivities and calling attention to the importance of their people in the construction of their identities. According to Wong, the word community in relation to Native people is also linked to the ideology of the "authentic" Indian. The totalizing and suppressive ideal of community can be dangerous in the analysis of relationality. The word community can be understood according to two different contexts. In Non-Native context community means "[…] a gathering of people in the same vicinity […]" (WONG: 1998, 172) and who usually share the same feelings. In Indigenous contexts, "[…] community is more likely to refer to a host of kinship networks and geocentric relations, extending beyond human beings to include vegetable and animal life." (172) The problem related to the word community is due to the singularity and definite characteristic it implies. According to Wong, "Each individual participates in a variety of simultaneous and overlapping communities […] yet the myth of a singular, unified, self-defining community […] is still apparent." (172) This homogeneity, especially in the case of communities controlled and dominated by colonial forces, helped the process of "authenticity" of Indigenous tribes in many countries. In the case of autobiographies written by Native women, the term community is connected to resistance and survival:

> The contemporary notions of community circulated in Native American autobiography are not merely continuations or retrievals of ongoing "traditional" thoughts and practices, but, in many cases, particularly when deployed by Native mixed-blood women writers, a conscious strategy to understand what over two hundred years of colonial rule has dissassembled and, by so doing, to resist the official tragic narrative of Indian loss and disappearance. (WONG: 1998, 173)

Thinking of community as a way of resisting oppression and being able to rescue several people from complete erasure, many contemporary women writers adopted the autobiographical genre as a strategy of resistance and survival. In this sense, autobiographical writings must illustrate the position of multiply-related Native women who cannot allow the interference of "authentic" images of Indigenous people as a way of defining themselves. Regarding the idea of authentic Indians, Leslie Marmon Silko stated that "I understand now that human communities are living beings that continue to change; while there may be a concept of the 'traditional Indian' […] no such being has ever existed." (SILKO: 1997, 200) In relation to the Indigenous people of North America, Silko says that "[…] there have been changes; for the ancient people any notions of 'tradition' necessarily included the notion of […] adaptation for survival." (200) In this sense, Indigenous subjectivities and their ever changing identities cannot allow the interference of generalizations or characterizations. It is necessary to consider the individualities of each subject, culture, tradition and community. Wong's analysis of contemporary Native women autobiographies shows their effort to avoid models that deny their real identities and erase their cultures. As an attempt to survive and overcome oppressive forces, Native women, especially in North America found in autobiography a voice to speak for themselves as individuals connected to their pasts. Wong states that:

> They make it clear that any discussion of (Native) women's autobiography (and the subjectivity it constitutes) must resist positing a generalized female or Native relationality or a monolithic community in favor of working toward understanding the diverse and shifting trajectories they simultaneously reflect and construct. (WONG: 1998, 177)

In relation to Native Canadian literature, Agnes Grant criticizes the fact that, by the end of the 20th century, very "[…] few Native Canadians have been published, but also because our theories of criticism take the very narrow view of literature." (GRANT: 1990, 124) Grant criticizes the literature which is marked and defined by fixed and unchanging attributes. As she says, writing is framed by European traditions and standards of "quality" which "[…] precludes members of other culture groups from holding influential literary positions and also ensures a continuation of existing criteria." (124) Native writers, for example, are usually looked down by the traditional criticism because Native literature is considered minor and generally, Native Canadian

Literature is not conceived as "[…] a living, contributing factor in all facets of Canadian society." (125) The fact that many Native writers were excluded from the construction of a national Canadian literature makes clear the difficulty to incorporate Native voices in the Canadian literary studies. As Grant claims, "Virtually never do we ponder, dissect, critique, analyze, and finally incorporate as our own the words of Native writers." (125) Such a refusal in accepting the inclusion of Native voices in the mainstream discourses shows the lack of interest for people who have been part of that society even before colonialism. Such erasure of Native voices from the Canadian literary context points out to the situation of conflict and segregation present in Canada. The emergence of a Native literature proves that Native people are finding ways of telling their stories and rescuing a past that was erased from historical accounts. In her article, Grant presents her definition of what Native literature represents in relation to our contemporary world, in relation to Non-Native people and in relation to Native communities. She says that:

> 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. Native literature records oral narratives, values, beliefs, traditions, humour, and figures of speech. It emphasizes communal living and portrays a mingling and sharing; elders wait to teach Indian ways to the young who may be floundering in an alien culture or questioning traditional ways. Non-Native readers may not always recognize the strength and beauty of the literature but will recognize common themes. For Native readers, the literature is a source of strength and personal development. (GRANT: 1990, 125)

The study of Native Canadian literature, specially that written by women, has pushed many critics towards discussions regarding the struggle of many Native Canadian women for visibility in a society which aims exclusion, oppression and erasure of Native people's culture, traditions and diversity. Julia V. Emberley, a critic of Native women's writings in Canada, claims that the exclusion of Native people in Canada is rooted in the very concept of land and place. Emberley believes that "[…] Native peoples do not have a place or space to return to in the event of cultural, spiritual, and social genocide." (EMBERLEY: 1993, 17) Genocide is a strong word but very much real to the Native peoples' context around the world, specifically in Canada. According to Emberley, two concepts are usually referred to when scholars try to

represent the current situation of Native people in Canada. The first concept relates to ethnicity, while the second issue relates to internal colonialism. Ethnicity in Canada, according to Emberley, works as a way of assimilating Native people's cultures and reducing their historical specificities, their originalities, due to politics of multiculturalism. On the other hand, internal colonialism, despite its characteristic of a politics which signals to the historical particular situation of Native peoples, equates "[…] Native peoples in relation to colonialism with other colonized groups in Canada […]" (18) Emberly concludes that neither ethnicity nor internal colonialism have been able to account for the continuing marginalization of Native peoples and the erasure of their cultural differences. (18) However, some attempts at entering into the traditional Canadian literary domain have been seen as positive ways of resistance towards oppressive and totalizing practices. Emberley believes that the entry of Native storytelling into print culture can be considered a process of negotiation.

According to Emberly such process is a way of overcoming "[…] the violence of epistemological enforcement that has ignored, yet 'freely' appropriated, the cultural contributions of those people whose history and culture have been relegated to a wasteland of stereotypical by-products." (EMBERLEY: 1993, 19) More specifically in the case of Native women writers, the critic calls attention to the different labels that represent these women and the implications that their writings bring to political, cultural, and selfhood issues:

> The use of the label "Native Women" or "Indian Women" writers contains, on the one hand, a political and historical inscription of subjectivity that delimits "authenticity" and, on the other hand, delimits a cultural politics of autonomy in which Native women writers engage in a critique of dominant ideological representations of "the" Native Woman, remaking subjectivity through the very act of writing. Native women's literature can be read, then, for a critique of sexism, racism, colonialism, and economic exploitation as well as for its mark of cultural, and not essential, differences. (EMBERLEY: 1993, 19)

Such analysis of the role of Native women writers defines the struggling characteristic of women who challenge essentialist and totalizing views of difference and who criticize racist practices, colonial oppression and exploitation at several levels, practices which help to diminish their position of politically active individuals in the Canadian society. According to Emberley, the writings of Native women from Canada

are good examples of literatures which involve complex and difficult attempts at addressing "[…] the political demands to reformulate a critical methodology that does not circumscribe cultural autonomy within a liberal pluralist program of so-called 'diversity' disguising 'choices' or categories with which to facilitate assimilation." (EMBERLEY: 1993, 19) Regarding the production of writings by Native women from Canada and the current position of Native women in that society, the critic believes that:

> […] it is possible to produce readings of Native women's subjectivity in colonial texts that construct the figure of "Native Woman" as neither an idealized victor in the face of irrevocable oppression nor as passive victim of some inevitable force of exploitation, […], but as a contradictory subject involved in alternative strategies of resistance. (EMBERLEY: 1993, 20)

Such literary manifestos of women who claim for a space that guarantees them equal rights, justice, respect and visibility can not be ignored anymore. Ignoring these texts means "To ignore the recent proliferation and emergence of the literature of the 'dispossessed' is to deny a vital history of our times." (EMBERLEY: 1993, 24)

In discussing the importance of Native literature to the Canadian society, it is essential to focus on autobiographical writings produced by women in Canada. Shirley Neuman, a critic of Canadian autobiographies, analyzes the importance of autobiographical writings to the history of Canada and to the construction of a consistent and encompassing Canadian history. In her article, Neuman reminds us that initial attempts to define Canadian autobiography led critics to very traditional concepts of the genre which reinforced "[…] the author's progress to his individual destiny, a growth of the poet's mind […], and […] emphasized the shaping power of narrative in defining the self." (NEUMAN: 1996, 1) Neuman argues that such canonical approaches to the autobiographical genre were present in Canadian society for quite a long time and the genre would interest only those who aimed at reinforcing historical or social aspects of Canadian society. Autobiography was also frequently "[…] used as a source of biographical information, with the most fascinated and enduring interest reserved for those writers whose autobiographies were the least reliable guides to the life […]" (2)

However, during the 1970s and 1980s there was a big change regarding the emergence of influential and elaborated poetics of autobiography, but these changes did

not affect much Canadian autobiography because few critics made references to the new changes that had taken place in other countries around the globe. To these critics what mattered was not the questioning of the genre or the questioning of its poetics. They were much more concerned with the biographical reference which would engage their criticism. (NEUMAN: 1996, 2) Such changes in the poetics of the genre and the difficulty in discussing these changes in relation to the traditional Canadian autobiography produced a conflict which reflected "[…] the difficulties of a settler culture in adapting European-derived generic conventions to the experiences its writers want to record." (2) Neuman goes deeper into the conflict and suggests that, in the case of writers in a settler culture like Canada "[…] where the poetics of the genre might be seen as largely irrelevant to, or inaccurate about, the experiences being recollected" (3), a reinforcement of the traditional aesthetic of autobiography serves only to aggravate the conflict. The belief that new changes in the poetics of the genre would not be able to represent or encompass their needs as Canadian people, made many writers refuse the changes and keep on adopting the traditional aesthetic of autobiography.

In Canada, the classical autobiographical narrative, the one which leads to a spiritual progress and which aims at the discovery of the self's vocation, found a very fertile terrain. According to Neuman, this happened because Canada is a country that "[…] spent its first hundred years after Confederation tediously and inconclusively preoccupied with questions of national identity […]" (NEUMAN: 1996, 3) Such concerns led many writers to believe that the canonical mode of autobiography, which would praise "[…] the young man going forth to forge in the smithy of his soul the uncreated consciousness of his race and, of course, garnering a healthy share of lionism along the way." (3), was the best way to represent the author's and the country's needs and it would help them to accomplish their quest. However, in the 1980s, a growing number of writers, especially women, started to question issues related to representation, feminism, postmodernism, culture and subjectivity. From the mid- to late 1980s changes became more evident, and a growing number of Canadian autobiographies would then start to reflect "[…] an analogous change, most notably in their framing of their discussions in terms of the now considerable body of theory and poetics of the genre written elsewhere." (5) The changes that took place in last decades of the 20th century, regarding the traditional concept of autobiography in Canada, can be understood as an "[…] intense theoretical activity of the 1980s, which saw poetics of

autobiography run the full gamut from a humanist discourse through the most radical forms of deconstruction and identity politics […]" (6)

Nowadays, a more mature and solid ideology of the genre is established in Canada. New perspectives regarding different forms of representations of women can be seen as one of the biggest achievements of the autobiographical genre and of Canadian autobiographical writers. Among other topics at issue in the contemporary poetics of Canadian autobiography, it is important to refer to what Neuman calls "A reexamination of the representation of autobiographical identity in relation to issues of race and ethnicity"; "whiteness" and its racial constructions; the growing of feminist anti-racist and anti-sexist works; issues related to postcolonialism and the growing literature of Indigenous people which is based on collectivity, tribal life, self-representation and which points out to the difficult relationship between Indigenous people and other peoples of Canada. (NEUMAN: 1996, 7) The new poetics of the genre in Canada is important because they bring into light the importance of discussing topics such as anti-racist and anti-sexist politics, immigration issues, queerness as well as feminist and postcolonial theories and practices.

2.2 Canada's history and the history of its Indigenous people.

History and nation are two important words in the development of a country. Every country finds in its history basic elements that serve as directives to its inhabitants. Such elements are offered as a way of developing the sense of identity with the land by perpetuating values, ideologies, myths and heroes that historical accounts have crystallized. In a definition of history, Daniel Francis, a Canadian historian and author/editor of several other books on Canada's history, defines history as stories transformed into narratives that describe the peoples as part of the larger ideal of community. Francis claims that:

> History is a representation of the past; it is information transformed into story. Sometimes these stories are told as narratives; sometimes they are embedded in symbols or in art or in specific sites. The stories we tell about the past produce the images that we use to describe ourselves as a community. If we are not telling ourselves the right stories, then we

> cannot imagine ourselves acting together to resolve our problems (FRANCIS: 1997, 176)

Much of the historical accounts portrayed in these narratives, especially in most colonized countries, represent the effects of imperialism and its ideology on the construction of the cultural imagination of a nation. As far as the concept of European nationalism is concerned, the political scientist Benedict Anderson became famous for developing the idea that nations are imagined communities. In his book *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, Benedict Anderson proposes a definition of nation. He proposes that nation "[…] is an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign." (ANDERSON: 1991, 7) Benedict Anderson defines nations in four different ways: as imagined, as limited, as sovereigns and as communities. According to Anderson, a nation is imagined because "[…] the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion." (7) Also, a nation is limited because "[…] even the largest of them [nations] […] has finite, if elastic, boundaries beyond which lie other nations." (7) A nation is sovereign because "[…] the concept was born in an age in which Enlightenment and Revolution were destroying the legitimacy of the divinely-ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm." (7) Finally, a nation can be considered a community because "[…] regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as deep, horizontal comradeship." (7) Anderson's new concept of nation and nationalism is a new way "[…] to offer some tentative suggestion for a more satisfactory interpretation of […] nationalism." (5) which departs from the principle that "[…] nationality, […] as well as nationalism are cultural artefacts of a particular kind." (5) Anderson believes that to understand these artefacts it is necessary to consider how they came into historical being, the ways their meanings have changed over time, and why they command such profound emotional legitimacy. (5)

The complexities regarding the issue of nation and nationalism have been discussed by other critics, such as Edward Said and Homi K. Bhabha. According to Edward Said, "[…] nations themselves are narrations. The power to narrate, or to block narratives […] is very important to culture and imperialism, and constitutes one of the main connection between them." (SAID: 1994, xiii) Said believes that imperialism and

colonialism played a very important part in the construction of historical narratives in several countries, like Canada. The critic calls attention to the fact that both, colonialism and imperialism are not simple acts of accumulation and acquisition, they are "[…] supported and perhaps even impelled by impressive ideological formations that include notions that certain territories and people *require* and beseech domination […]" (9) The interference of such ideologies alerts to the construction of narratives that aim to reinforce the ideology of the colonizer and its objectives. In Canada, the British imperialism had a great effect on the construction of the nation. Referring to the education of children in Canada by means of historical accounts, Daniel Francis states that "Until at least World War II the worship of the monarchy and the British Empire enjoyed almost cult status in Canadian society." (FRANCIS: 1997, 53) The former British colony molded its history so that it narrated and reproduced the British imperialist ideology that contaminated the world in the 19th and 20th centuries. History, then, can be interpreted as a series of stories told as narratives, which aim at connecting all the peoples from a country in a communal way, and which may be connected by reproducing imperialist and colonial perspectives and practices.

In relation to the issue of nation and narratives, Homi K. Bhabha points to the connection between nations and narrations as a way of keeping alive the ideologies that informed the construction of countries, especially in the west. Bhabha states that:

> 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 power of narratives in the construction of a national identity leads, however, to a conflict between "[…] the language of those who write of it and the lives of those who live it." (BHABHA: 1995, 1) Bhabha considers that the narratives responsible for the foundations of a nation can be interpreted as "[…] acts of affiliation and establishment […]" (5) According to Bhabha, the problem of such traditional histories is that they "[…] do not take the nation at its own word, but, for the most part, they do assume that the problem lies with the interpretation of 'events' that have a certain transparency or privileged visibility." (3) The fact that these historical narratives tend to

privilege the perspective of those in power shows that the basis of the nation has been delineated by the language and culture of those in mainstream society. However, new perspectives in the reading of historical narratives have drawn attention to the narratives about difference; to the narratives which come from the margins. Such new directions in the narration of nations have driven people from different countries into profound processes of historical change. These changes prove that the perspective of nation as a narration has to be acknowledged as "[…] 'containing' thresholds of meaning that must be crossed, erased, and translated in the process of cultural production." (4) Although the construction of a national culture started by means of privileging narratives, it is important to transform these narratives into spaces of negotiation of difference and to include the stories of those people who were not invited to participate in the construction of the nation. Regarding the importance of a national culture to the construction of a country and to the formation of a national ideology, Franz Fanon states that:

> A national culture is not a folklore, nor an abstract populism that believes it can discover the people's true nature. It is not made up of the inert dregs of gratuitous actions, that is to say actions which are less and less attached to the ever present reality of the people. A national culture is the whole body of efforts made by people in the sphere of thought to describe, justify, and praise the action through which that people has created and keeps itself in existence. (FANON: 1997, 154-155)

Finding a way out of effacement is the solution for those people who have always strived to survive despite the erasure of their traditions and stories from the construction of their nation. Belonging, in this sense, is much more than guaranteeing a geographical place with which they identify. Belonging means to participate in the narratives of a nation which these people and their ancestors have helped to build. The silenced voices of the "Others" deny them the right to take part in the construction of their nation. But worst then ignoring the "Other" is distorting the truth to justify political, economic, racial and social ideologies considered important to the construction of a "solid" and "important" nation. Unfortunately, this scenario of exclusion and contradiction is part of the history of many countries. In the case of Canada, this scenario is present and has influenced Canadian's national imaginary. Daniel Francis, in his analysis of Canada and its national dreams, claims that the country is formed by many stories and images that

serve as basis for the construction of ideals, beliefs and values. (FRANCIS: 1997, 10) In his re-evaluation of Canada, Francis proposes new ways of understanding and re-examining the stories, myths and beliefs which permeate and influence the very existence of this nation. His re-examination of the history of Canada is justified by the fact that to live together, "[…] we try to get over our differences, put aside our grievances, show a united front. History is as much about forging a liveable consensus as it is about remembering." (12) And it is exactly this sense of union that has served as central idea to the construction of the Canadian national imagery.

An overview of the recent history of Canada shows that this is a country which suffered profound changes since the World War II. Initially, Canada was considered a country without an independence day because its "[…] history reveals no single moment at which the country gained its autonomy." (FRANCIS: 1997, 17) According to Daniel Francis "Canada began as a collection of separate colonies belonging to Great Britain, then evolved by stages into an independent nation."(18) In fact, Canada went through a process of domination which started in the 1840s and ended up in 1867 with the Confederation, a legislature which guaranteed the autonomy of Canada within the British Empire. (18) However, changes in the world drove Canada away from the British imperialist model of politics. But these changes did not represent a definitive break of the former colony with Great Britain. Currently, Canada is a federal constitutional monarchy with a parliamentary democracy. The head of the state is Queen Elizabeth II and the current prime-minister, Stephen Harper, is the head of the government. Canada's two official languages are English and French and both of them have equal status in federal courts. The country is composed by ten provinces and three territories and is one of the world's wealthiest nations. Dependent on international trade, Canada has successfully avoided economic recession and its economy is marked by profound changes in its industry and in its urban areas. Considered one of the most important first-world countries, due to its impressive development, stability, growing economy and high educational rates, Canada has not always faced prosperity and happiness. One of the biggest issues that haunts the Canadian imaginary relates to its aboriginal population, issues which draw our attention to the questions of ethnicity and multiculturalism. (WIKIPEDIA: 2006)

According to Daniel Francis, Canada's history has been responsible for the exclusion of many people from master historical Canadian narratives, but these people have found ways to penetrate into the narrative:

> The Master narrative excluded many people, however, who did not see themselves reflected in the stories; or worse, felt belittled by them. These people – Aboriginals, minorities, working people, women – have had to force their way into the story of Canada by inventing narratives of their own. (FRANCIS: 1997, 172)

Especially in the case of Aboriginal people from Canada, history has been very prejudiced and oppressive. Some of the myths that are part of the national Canadian culture played an important role in the valorization of a mainstream discourse and of white-people's ideology to the detriment of Indigenous people's history. According to the Canadian critic Emma LaRocque, "[…] the history of Canada is the history of colonization of Aboriginal peoples." (LaROCQUE: 1996, 11) Some of these myths are questioned and re-evaluated in the literature of Indigenous writers such as Maria Campbell, Jeannette Armstrong, Lee Maracle, Thomas King, Tomson Highway and Beatrice Culleton. Many myths of the Canadian nation have helped to establish the ideology of this country, but three of them are of great importance to the relationship between white Canadians and Indigenous people. The three aspects concerning the national Canadian ideology refer to the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR), the New-West Mounted Police (NWMP) and the ideology of the master race.

The Canadian Pacific Railway was the representation of a national dream. The CPR was a synonym of technological development, modernity and progress. According to Daniel Francis, the narrative of a nation which needed development and was building itself around this ideal, "[…] was reinforced by the fascination which railways exerted over the public imagination during the last half of the nineteenth century. Railways were the emblem of an age which believed fervently in progress […]" (FRANCIS: 1997, 20) Canadian railways "[…] seemed capable of transforming the world like magic, spreading wealth, settlement, and industry in their wake." (21) And transformation was exactly the consequence of such explosion of progress. In the 19th century the Indigenous population was being destroyed by the ambition of the ruling government, the encroachment of white settlement invasion and the construction of the

railways. In this context, a group of people called Métis, or halfbreeds, who, according to the historian Olivia Patricia Dickason is a term "[…] used in its French sense, mixture, usually applied to the crossing of human races, without specifying which ones." (DICKASON: 2002, xvi), gained some importance in the history of Canada because of their efforts to guarantee their lands and the right to live the way they had always lived. The Métis have always been part of Canada's history since colonial times. However, only recently this group had its importance recognized and has received more attention from the government and public in general. According to a document ratified in 2002 by the Métis National Council, the Métis define the identity of the group as a Nation and the history of the Métis communities. Regarding the origin and history of the group, the document published by the Métis National Council states that:

> Prior to Canada's crystallization as a nation in west central North America, the Métis people emerged out of the relations of Indian women and European men. While the initial offspring of these Indian and European unions were individuals who possessed mixed ancestry, the gradual establishment of distinct Métis communities, outside of Indian and European cultures and settlements, as well, as, the subsequent intermarriages between Métis women and Métis men, resulted in the genesis of a new Aboriginal people - the Métis. (MÉTIS NATIONAL COUNCIL: 2007)

The document also suggests a national definition for the term "Métis", one which suggests that "Métis means a person who self-identifies as Métis, is of historic Métis Nation Ancestry, is distinct from other Aboriginal Peoples and is accepted by the Métis Nation." (MÉTIS NATIONAL COUNCIL: 2007) The Métis are connected by the ideal of nation which is "[…] a distinct Aboriginal nation largely based in western Canada." The Métis Nation:

> […] grounds its assertion of Aboriginal nationhood on well-recognized international principles. It has a shared history, common culture (song, dance, dress, national symbols, etc.), unique language (Michif with various regional dialects), extensive kinship connections from Ontario westward, distinct way of life, traditional territory and collective consciousness. (MÉTIS NATIONAL COUNCIL: 2007)

Since 1983, the Métis have counted on the Métis National Council to represent the Métis Nation in Canada and internationally. The Métis National Council is a specific

representative body of the Métis Nation separated from the Native Council of Canada. According to the same document from 2002, the Métis National Council informs that the Council:

> […] receives its mandate and direction from the democratically elected leadership of the Métis Nation's governments from Ontario Westward (Métis Nation of Ontario, Manitoba Métis Federation, Métis Nation-Saskatchewan, Métis Nation of Alberta, Métis Provincial Council of British Columbia)" (MÉTIS NATIONAL COUNCIL: 2007)

The main goals of the Métis National Council are to reflect and move forward "[…] on the desires and aspirations of the Métis Nation governments at a national and international level." Along with it, "[…] the Métis National Council's central goal is to secure a healthy space for the Métis Nation's on-going existence within the Canadian federation."(MÉTIS NATIONAL COUNCIL: 2007) The results of this union between the Métis people from Canada guaranteed that on September, 2002 "[…] the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that the Métis had an Aboriginal right to harvest protected by the Canadian Constitution." The document points out that "The ruling was in favour of two Métis hunters, Steve and Roddy Powley, who killed a bull moose near their home in Sault Ste. Marie on October 22, 1993" (MÉTIS NATIONAL COUNCIL: 2007)

Despite the recent attempts to guarantee the Métis' rights, the journey to reach respect and dignity for the Métis has been very difficult. The history of the Métis people is marked by a series of attacks to their identities, traditions, culture and survival. In 1885, a continuous process of disrespect toward the Métis, their fear of white-settlers' invasions and their continuous land grievances led into a fierce battle in Batoche, in the province of Saskatchewan. Daniel Francis points out that, at that time, the CPR was on the verge of bankruptcy and lacked money to finish its railroad. The Battle of Batoche represented not only the defeat of the Métis and the destruction of their dreams of having right to their lands. The Battle of Batoche represented the victory of the government as well as the victory of the CPR. According to Francis, because the CPR helped to move several soldiers to the battle field, "[…] the CPR could claim a share in saving the country, and in return a grateful government saved the CPR by approving the money necessary to finish the road." (FRANCIS: 1997, 22) The Battle of Batoche, or the North-West Rebellion, was a very important moment in the history of Métis and

other Indigenous people because it represented their fight for survival, their fight for their land, and the most aggressive attempt at being heard and respected. Unfortunately the history books don't consider the battle an act of bravery of the Indigenous people nor do they give importance to their claims. In fact the rebellion was "[…] treated as an act of lunacy." (77) In fact the Battle of Batoche had its beginning a few years before. In 1869-70 the Red River Insurrection was the beginning of Métis revolt towards governmental measures. According to Maria Campbell, in her autobiography *Halfbreed*, the Red River Rebellion, led by Louis Riel, represented the "[…] fear of the Halfbreeds that their rights would not be respected by the Canadian government when it acquired the land from the Hudson's Bay Company, along with the prejudice of the white Protestant settlers […]" (CAMPBELL: 1982, 9) According to Maria Campbell, after this battle, the Métis moved from Manitoba and Ontario to other areas of Canada, including Saskatchewan, and established a government under the rule of Gabriel Dumont and a group of councilors. Feeling their security and their way of life were once again being threatened by the new waves of settlers and by the building of the railroad, the Métis required their right to their land. However, governmental land acts were discriminatory "[…] they didn't believe they should be treated like newcomers." (10) As the Métis's claims were not listened to and pressures from government brought hunger and suffering to the population, the solution found by the Métis and by other non-treaty Indians was to prepare a new rebellion: the Duck Lake Rebellion. In 1885 the Métis and other non-treaty Indians won their first battle. However, their victory did not last long. A few months later they would lose to the troops sent by the government in the Battle of Batoche (11). Going back to the myth of the Canadian Pacific Railway, CPR, the history of this company becomes the narrative of a country which believed in progress at any cost, including the genocide of several Indigenous tribes and the destruction of the Métis communities. The CPR became greatly famous for opening up the West of Canada to people who would than be able to notice that everywhere "[…] the signs of industry and growth indicated a prosperous future, while here and there a picturesque Indian village exposed vestiges of the 'primitive' peoples who first occupied the region." (FRANCIS: 1997, 25)

All these battles faced by the Métis and other non-treaty Indians during the 19th century call the attention to another important myth of the Canadian national culture: the New-West Mounted Police, NWMP, or the current Royal Canadian Mounted Police,

RCMP. According to Daniel Francis the North-West Mounted Police "[…] was a frontier police force created by the federal government in 1873 to keep the peace between Native Indians and white intruders in the area now comprising Alberta and Saskatchewan." (FRANCIS: 1997, 30) The NWMP emerged during a time of transition in western Canada:

> The buffalo which sustained the Aboriginal lifestyle for centuries were disappearing. Both Indian and Métis were unsettled by the threat to their traditional economy posed by the arrival of Non-native settlers. The job of the police was to make sure that the new society replaced the old with as little upset as possible. (FRANCIS: 1997, 30)

The fact that the police were able to carry out their job of keeping the peace between non-treaty Indians, Métis and Non-native settlers turned the NWMP into a symbol which was respected and idealized by the Canadian national imagination. The appreciation of the history of the NWMP flourished when they became figures of fictional novels. According to Francis, at the time when the NWMP gained an enormous projection in the Canadian society, "[…] the Mounties created their own version of the history, which then attained the status of popular myth when it was taken over the professional storytellers." (FRANCIS: 1997, 31) Daniel Francis also points out that "The early chronicles described the Mountie as unassuming, patient, impartial, self-disciplined, sober, and completely incorruptible." (33) However, this is not what really happened. The Mounted Police was created as a way of keeping Aboriginal people down, by means of force and violence. The Battle of Batoche is an evidence that the government and the Mounted Police had as their aims to put an end to the revolution by means of force and even death. Campbell states that "Within a month, eight thousand troops, five hundred NWMP and white volunteers from throughout the Territories, plus a Gatling gun, arrived to stop Riel, and one hundred and fifty Halfbreeds." (CAMPBELL: 1982, 11) The New-West Mounted Police, in relation to the non-treaty Indians and the Métis, was another way of oppression. It was a very powerful controlling force imposed by the government as a way of dominating the Aboriginal people, control their lives and "keep order". The admiration for the New-West Mounted Police was so strong that movies from the 20th century portrayed them as heroes and always superior to their enemies. Maria Campbell makes reference to the North-West Mounted Police in her autobiography when talking about the movies. She refers to the

Canadian admiration for their police officers and questions the position of her people presented in the movies. She states that:

> One show I remember was about the Northwest Rebellion. People came from miles around and the theater was packed. They were sitting in the aisles and on the floor. Riel and Dummont were our heroes. The movie was a comedy and it was awful: the Halfbreeds were made to look like such fools that it left you wondering how they ever organized a rebellion. Gabriel Dumont looked filthy and gross. In one scene his suspenders broke and his pants fell down, and he went galloping away on a scabby horse in his long red underwear. Louis Riel was portrayed as a real lunatic who believed he was god, and his followers were real "three stooges" types. Of course the NWMP and General Middleton did all the heroic things. […]" (CAMPBELL: 1982, 97)

Such description points to the fact that the NWMP was so admired and respected by the Canadians that the main ideology ignored the fact that beneath the mask of protectors, the NWMP was marked by ideals of oppression, subjugation, control, and humiliation of the Métis and the non-treaty Indians. The lack of respect and the lack of truthfulness regarding the Battle of Batoche show the influence the myth of the NWMP had upon people and the lack of authenticity that surrounded the history of Canada. Unfortunately, the weakest parts of this story were the Métis and the non-treaty Indians, who were clearly ridiculed in the movies, by the people and by historical narratives which did not give them the right value.

The third aspect concerning the history of Canada and the elements responsible for feeding the sense of unity and superiority among Canadians, regards ethnicity and the ideology of the master race. The sense of racial superiority, which was praised by historical narratives and consequently followed by Canadians, shows a real dark side of the Canadian history. This myth, according to Daniel Francis "[…] was the dark side of Canada's British inheritance, a virulent sense of racial superiority which placed beyond the pale anyone who was not English speaking, fair skinned, and devoutly Christian." (FRANCIS: 1997, 70) Consequently, the Aboriginal people suffered a lot from this ethnocentric view. School materials of that time are good examples of how the Aboriginal people were treated. History books had a dominant view which related to the "[…] expansion of European civilization in America. Giving that way of framing the story, there was no real place for Native people, except insofar as they obstructed this

process". (72) The superiority of European white people showed that Indian people had no space in the ideal Canadian social context. According to Daniel Francis, "What emerged from the pages of these books is a cluster of images which might collectively be labeled the Textbook Indian. […] which the anglocentric view of Canada invented in order to justify its own hegemony." (71) Francis points out that "Until the 1960s the Textbook Indians were sinister, vicious figures, without history or culture." (72) Due to the idea of a superior race, spread all over the country, Indians were considered second-class citizens until very recently, and the government aimed their assimilation. (76) This assimilation could be justified by the fact that many Canadians believed that "[…] Indians had no future as Indians, that their culture was unsuited to modern, industrial civilization, that their only hope for survival was to join mainstream, and white society."(76) In relation to the Métis, textbooks only paid attention to them when they clashed with white people, like in the Red River Insurrection and the North-West Rebellion. Francis points out that the representations of the Métis in Canadian textbooks portrayed people who had accepted assimilation and that neither had a culture nor played an important role in the economy of the West. (77) Like the oppression of the NWMP toward the Métis, the textbooks would not make any reference to the Métis after the execution of Louis Riel, after the Battle of Batoche. According to Francis, these textbooks gave white Canadians a reason to believe they were superior and invincible. Along with that, Canadians counted on the spreading of an assimilation policy imposed by the government as an extinction policy, to the non-white and unfitting people. (78)

The three aspects referred to in this chapter are ways of presenting the history of Canada in relation to the Indigenous question. The CPR and its ideal of expansion at any cost, the New-West Mounted Police and its practice of keeping Indians down, and the belief in a superior race to the detriment of all other ethnicities, are only a few of Canadians myths which turned this country into the powerful nation it is today, in spite of the negative consequences of this progress. The contemporary history of Canada has tried to change its position toward Indigenous people and some measures have showed their concern with re-defining themselves and their traditional ideals of nation. Discussions around the issue of blood and race have long ago been part of the history of Canada, specially the history that aimed at controlling and assimilating the Indians and the Métis. Daniel Coleman and Donald Goellnicht refer to the issue of race in Canada as

a process that emerged in the country at the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century. According to them, "progressives" and "visionaries" were responsible for spreading the use of racial measures as a way of justifying their ideals of progress. "For Canadian nationalists at the beginning of the twentieth century, 'race' was a domain that called for careful planning."(COLEMAN *et al.*: 2002, 3) Early nationalists believed that they could transform Canada into a well planned, organized and more just society. This became one of the reasons for the spreading of the racial ideology among Canadians:

> […] eager to build a "Canadian race" in the invigorating northern regions of the New World, and they believed that, with thoughtful foresight, judicious immigration controls, and the best in up-to-date scientific methods, they could avoid the class antagonisms of Europe as well as the racial conflicts of the United States.(COLEMAN *et al.*: 2002, 3)

Early Canadian nationalists believed that the society they dreamed of could not be created and developed by disorganized planning. "The evolution of a superior society required an interventionist state informed by the most 'advanced' social theory and scientific knowledge available." (COLEMAN *et al.*: 2002, 4) In relation to immigrants and more specifically to Indian people, the new racial society would impose measures that aimed at excluding and assimilating those who would not fit in or who would not be allowed to participate in the development of a "just" Canadian nation. Coleman and Goellnicht claim that these first nationalists were so sure of the needs of the Canadian people that their racialized categories served as a "[…] cautionary reminder about the real violence to which 'progressive' ideas of racial difference can be put." (6) But these new ideologies were not totally accepted by all the inhabitants of Canada. "In fact, First Nations' complex loyalties to clans, tribes, and nations […] posed a formidable challenge to the very race-homogenizing concept of 'nation' being championed by Anglo-Canadians." (7) Policies that aimed at assimilating and erasing Indigenous culture, such as "[…] strictly supervised educational system which would remove them [the Aboriginal youths] from their allegedly 'fading' traditions and ingest them into the Anglo-Celtic social body", (5) were common practices that helped to root racial values into the Canadian society. Other important policy toward Indigenous people and the Métis was the Indian Act, which aimed at speeding up the process of destruction of Indigenous nations. As far as Indigenous people are concerned, in Canada the "primitive" people are differentiated by means of categories which were adopted to

identify and classify Native communities from Canada. According to Olive Patricia Dickason, the aspect of interpretation of Native communities in Canada is considered a problem. Dickason points out that "[…] labels such as 'Cree', 'Huron', 'Beaver', 'Haida' were imposed by Europeans and do not represent how the people termed themselves, at least aboriginally." (DICKASON: 2002, xiv) Dickason also calls attention to the fact that:

> […] in Canada, "Native" has come to be widely used […] In Canada, "Aboriginal" is becoming widely used by Indians as well as non-Indians. "Amerindian" has not received popular acceptance in English-language Canada […] (DICKASON: 2002, xv)

Despite the difficulties in interpreting and defining the Indigenous people of Canada, it is important to stress that First Nation people are seen as group apart from the Métis Nation. The difference is at their origin level. Those who are full-blooded Indian are assumed to be First Nation people, whereas the Métis do not receive the status of First Nation people due to their mixed heritage. Dickason explains that, after the Indian Act, these differences related to origin and blood connections were established and became even more complex. Dickason states that "[…] the Indian Act applies only to 'status' Indians, that is, those who are registered and listed in the official band rolls. Non-status Indians and Métis are legally classed as ordinary citizens." (DICKASON: 2002, xvi) According to Gail Guthrie Valaskakis, a studious of Native culture in America, people of Indigenous descendants had their identities separated, classified and categorized by means of racial and blood categories arbitrarily imposed by the government. Valaskakis points out some of the most important Canadian governmental policies regarding the categorization of Indigenous people. She states that "In 1879 federal legislation defined who was an Indian and the extent of the government's control over their lives." (VALASKAKIS: 2005, 226) The Indian Act, as this legislation was called, was responsible for registering and classifying Indigenous people all over Canada. The Indian Act was considered an enfranchisement of Indians and it separated First Nation communities into two groups: status or treaty Indians, and non-status or non-treaty Indians. According to this act, all First Nation people who had at least one-quarter of Indian blood are considered treaty or status Indians (DICKASON: 2002, 238). According to Olive Patricia Dickason, the Indian Act was created as an attempt to

"[…] break down tribal forms of government on the grounds they were 'irresponsible'" (239). Despite some changes along the years, the "[…] Indian Act continues to regulate the obligations and benefits of First Nations today." (VALASKAKIS: 2005, 226) The exclusion of Métis from benefits due to their Non-status Indian identity proves that the Indian Act was totally arbitrary and limited considering the already existing miscegenation in the country at that time. "In this circular wording of arbitrary power and colonial privilege, the government determined who would and who would not acquire Indian 'status' based on seventeen federal determinations of Indianness." (226) Giving a "status" to Indians was a way found by the government to define the benefits, rights, obligations and treatments imposed by the treaty. The Indian Act also encouraged acculturation, since one of the methods of identifying Native people was by tracing their heritage by paternity and not blood relations. Registered Indians, then, "[…] endorse the legal protection and fiduciary responsibilities entrenched in this legislation […]" (227) In relation to the paternal registration, Valaskakis, denounces that this system of segregation by means of male lineage guarantees the homogeneity of Indians and the separation from other Aboriginal people and this arbitrary judgment "[…] disregards tribal traditions and the matrilineal heritage of some Native nations." (227) Revisions and changes in the Indian Act have created aberrations of membership among Aboriginal people and nowadays "[…] one can now be Indian but not affiliated with an Indian band, or be an Indian band member and not registered as an Indian." (228) What is possible to notice is that the Indian Act created a conflicting situation regarding identity among Native people by means of segregation, exclusion and control. The situation of the Métis has not changed since the Indian Act was created: for a long time they are excluded from government benefits and from the right of being considered Indian. Métis were "[…]recognized as culturally distinct mixed bloods." (228) Only after 1982, the Métis were recognized as Aboriginal people by the Canadian constitution and by the Canadian courts. This late acknowledgement of the Métis as part of the Aboriginal population in Canada proves the disrespect towards the contributions of these people to Canadian history and culture. Nowadays, according to Valaskakis:

> A million Canadians can claim Métis blood and thousands have applied for Métis status. The recognition of who is and who is not Métis, however, is complicated by shifts in the meaning of the word "Métis" itself, which connotes both the specific collectivity of French and Cree descendants of Manitoba's Red River settlement who migrated to Alberta

> and Saskatchewan, and the general concept of mixed-bloods of French and Indian descent, largely located in Quebec. (VALASKAKIS: 2005, 228)

Regarding the current situation of the Métis in Canada, Kathleen M. Donovan calls attention to the fact that "Contemporary Métis insist they are separate and distinct ethnic group with their own language, history, and cultural identity. Their origins were Native and European, but they do not belong to either group." (DONOVAN: 1998, 20) Donovan points out that in the past the Métis would see their exclusion from the treaties very negatively, but the Métis of the last decades insist that this separateness does not weaken them up but it gives them strength. (20-21) Many movements towards discriminatory measures imposed by the Indian Act have called attention to the necessity of a revision of the Indian Act especially in relation to Non-Status women. "The struggle of women who lost their Indian Status by 'marrying out' implicated not only the federal government but also Status Indian organizations." (VALASKAKIS: 2005, 229) The federal government, after critiques and open criticism towards such discriminatory legislation, has registered not only these women but their first-generation children as well. Many complexities regarding membership have disturbed the notion of Indigenous identity among Indians, mixed-blood people and their descendants. Such inconsistencies in the membership criteria have helped to increase the number of Indigenous people who cannot define their own identities properly and this has helped to contaminate the relationship between Native peoples who still struggle for status and those who benefit from federal legislation.

The discussion of the Indian Act and racial policies in the 19th and 20th centuries brings into light another issue that has been widely discussed among scholars, historians, Canadian citizens and the government itself. The issue of multiculturalism in Canada has been considered one of the biggest steps of the Canadian government towards new and encompassing ethnical measures to the detriment of the superior race ideology for so long embraced by white Canadians. Daniel Coleman and Donald Goellnicht provide very specific data on the establishment of multiculturalism in Canada. They stressed that in the 1950s and the 1960s Canada started to turn away from race-based policies and legislations and in 1960 a law to protect human rights and people's fundamental freedoms was created. The law created in 1960 and other practices that aimed at changing Canada's racial-based system were the first movements

towards multiculturalism which in 1971 was adopted as an official federal policy but which was only institutionalized in 1988. Critics suggest that:

> […] Trudeau's "just society" would be a "colour-blind" society, welcoming immigrants from everywhere. In a conscious attempt to distinguish Canada from both Britain, which was refusing to admit the denizens of its eroding empire into its political and social body, and the United States, which was riven with racial strife during the Civil Rights and Black Power periods, Trudeau's Liberals eschewed a discourse of "race" in favour of one based on "ethnicity", "plurality", and especially "multiculturalism". (COLEMAN *et al.*: 2002, 8)

If compared to other countries, the institutionalization of multiculturalism in Canada represented a step forward in relation to policies of inclusive nationalism. In more theoretical terms, Sneja Gunew refers to multiculturalism as an area of cultural studies which deals with theories of difference and with the "[…] often compromised management of contemporary geopolitical diversity in former imperial centres as well as in their ex-colonies." (GUNEW: 2004, 15) In the case of Canada, a former English settlement colony, multiculturalism has been recently considered a fundamental issue to be discussed and truly accepted by Canadians. But what Gunew reinforces is the aspect of a continuous critical multiculturalism due to its connection with practices and discourses of diversity around the world, which often acquire the sense of police action and control. (15) The issue of multiculturalism has been discussed in many different parts of the world, but it has been brought into question especially in countries which, like Canada, have been strongly influenced by colonial practices. However, differences in contexts will point to different ways of interpreting multiculturalism in each particular country. Gunew points out two ways of analyzing multiculturalism and its theories regarding differences. Gunew states that:

> Within critical theory it [multiculturalism] was an embarrassing term to invoke partly because it was perceived as automatically aligned with and hopelessly co-opted by the state in its role of certain types of exclusionary nation building. […] In theoretical debates it was often associated with an identity politics based on essentialism and claims for authenticity which automatically reinstate a version of the sovereign subject and a concern with reified notions of origins. (GUNEW: 2004, 15)

Because of its contradictory characteristics, the term multiculturalism, according to Gunew, has to be constantly analyzed in the sense that its practices and discourses do not escape from constant and profound examination. Linda Hutcheon also discusses the issue of multiculturalism and she believes that many Canadians consider multiculturalism as a policy that would help to diminish the collective historical guilt of Canadians towards the ideologies of race so relevant in the construction of the nation. She also believes that some Canadians see multiculturalism as a "[…] federal stratagem to divert attention from questions about Québécois identity or discontent within Confederation, or the Americanization of Canadian culture and resources." (HUTCHEON: 1990, 15) However, when the Multicultural Act was institutionalized on July 12th, 1988, other issues started to worry Canadians. According to Hutcheon, the articulation of a Multicultural Act, like the one institutionalized in Canada, brings at issue worries that help to question the relevance of such an Act. Regarding the worries that emerged as consequences of the creation of such Multicultural Act, Linda Hutcheon lists:

> […] worries about stereotyping, about fossilizing cultures into unchanging folk memories, about reducing 'otherness' to singing and dancing or exotic food, about relegating non-Anglo and non-French to the margins of Canadian culture where they are prey to tokenism as much as to ghettoizing.(HUTCHEON: 1990, 14)

The fear of having different ethnic groups assimilated and reduced to a few stereotypes has called the attention of Canadians to the dangers of a policy which, instead of guaranteeing ethnic diversity, imposes models to "preserve" the history of people for so long erased from the official historical Canadian context. Despite the worries and all the controversies that the Multicultural Act brought into light, some aspects can be considered positive. Hutcheon suggests that the Multicultural Act can be seen as a positive possibility "[…] of being an innovative model for civic tolerance and the acceptance of diversity that is appropriate for our democratic pluralist society." (HUTCHEON: 1990, 15) Despite all the worries and the fact that many critics insist on the failures, the limitations and the inadequacies of the project, these same critics usually acknowledge the potential that the multicultural project holds when it refers to opening up space for aspirations of people who are not from British or French heritage. (15) The discussion of multiculturalism in a country like Canada, which refused to accept the always existing diversity in its territory and insisted on the white-race

superiority over all the other ethnicities, proves that profound changes have happened in the Canadian society. The insertion of native people and immigrants into the once closed Canadian society shows the concern with the changes in the world. Diversity, fragmentation and pluralisms have been central issues to define contemporary Canada. But tolerance is still not totally achieved and the fear of being assimilated still worries many native communities. All this recent discussion towards new political, economic and social policies of inclusion just prove that the history of Canada, and the history of all other nations are continuous processes of narration.

2.3 Maria Campbell and *Halfbreed*.

Maria Campbell is one of the first Aboriginal writers, playwrights, theater producer and filmmakers in Canada. Maria Campbell was born in April of 1940 in Park Valley, Saskatchewan, Canada. Of Indian, Scottish, Irish and French descent, Maria Campbell was the eldest daughter of eight children. Being a mixed-blood woman guarantees Campbell a very special place in the history of Canadian literature. Campbell was the first Métis woman to write a book which challenges the hegemony of the autobiographical genre and unveils the truth about the Métis in Canada. *Halfbreed*, Campbell's autobiography, published in 1973, tells us about the life of a woman who lived her girlhood with her Aboriginal family and community, and who learned to survive in spite of poverty, frustrations, shame, rejection and hopelessness. According to the Métis Society of Saskatchewan, in the book review section of the magazine *New Breed* published in 1976, Campbell's book is referred to as a "[...] truthful, bitter and touching autobiography." (THE MÉTIS SOCIETY OF SASKATCHEWAN: 1976, 18) The review analysis the experience of being Métis and it points out that:

> Miss Campbell recalls the many experiences of her life as a Saskatchewan Metis. Her life is typical of the Metis people. The poverty, the pain, the struggle and the love are honestly presented. This book paints a vivid mosaic of the plight of Metis people.
>
> The Metis people could easily relate experiences in their lives to the experiences she recalls. We are not alone in our problems and fears. I strongly suggest that each and every native and non-native person alike read this book with intelligence and understanding. Perhaps then we shall gain enough insight into our problems to make some constructive

> improvements in our situation. (THE MÉTIS SOCIETY OF SASKATCHEWAN: 1976, 18)

Halfbreed is the life story of a woman who moved away from her family and origin in search of a better life for herself and her brothers and sisters. But above all, her life is a synonym of strength. Campbell was able to overcome drugs, alcohol and a life of despair, loneliness, prostitution and misery. She gets through problems with the help of people who were able to reconnect her to her people, her origins and to herself. As a politically engaged woman, Campbell dedicated her life to Native people, and has received many awards for her writing, which include the Gabriel Dumont Medal of Merit (1992), a National Aboriginal Achievement Award (1995), and honorary doctorates from the University of Regina (1985), York University (1992), and Athabasca University (2001). Nowadays, Maria Campbell continues to write and teaches at the University of Saskatchewan. Her stage play *Flight* (1979), was the first Aboriginal theater production in Canada. From 1985 to 1997, she founded and worked at her film and video production company. There she wrote and directed seven documentaries and produced the first weekly aboriginal television series, *My Partners, My People* (1987). Along with her most famous work, *Halfbreed* (1973), Campbell has written several plays like *Flight* (1979), the first Aboriginal play staged in Canada, *The book of Jessica: A Theatrical Transformation* (1987), which is the a stage adaptation of *Halfbreed*, and children's books like *Little Badger and the Fire Spirit* (1977), as well as *Stories of the Road Allowance People* (1995).

Campbell's autobiography *Halfbreed* is considered one of the most important works ever written by a Native Canadian woman. However, Susana Egan argues that *Halfbreed* was edited by a white editor and the event which involved Campbell's rape by a Mountie was cut out of the original text. (EGAN: 1999, 104) According to Laura J. Murray, Campbell's autobiography is inspiring and has opened up the way so that other Native people could write and publish. Murray states that:

> Maria Campbell's 1973 autobiography, *Halfbreed*, is often said to mark a beginning for Native literature in Canada. […] *Halfbreed* has inspired readers of many different backgrounds and helped to fuel the immense growth of Native Canadian writing and publishing of the past two and half decades. (MURRAY: 1999, 91)

But, as Murray points out, the importance of *Halfbreed* is connected not only to the appeal of her writing, but it reinforces her literary and political concerns regarding the history of the Métis people in Western Canada. (MURRAY: 1999, 91) The writing of *Halfbreed* can be considered a process of healing in which Maria Campbell narrates her life and the life of her community, intertwined by strong bonds of belonging, tradition, respect and identity. *Halfbreed* aims at presenting the history of the Métis people in Canada and explores the consequences of decades of oppression, misery, exclusion and marginality. Maria Campbell tells her story from the perspective of a Native woman who challenges the white mainstream hegemony and questions oppressive discourses toward Native people. To begin with, the title of her book, *Halfbreed*, serves as a criticism toward a derogatory term used to refer to mixed-blood people in Canada. According to Jodi Lundgren, Campbell "[…] typifies the Halfbreed people through generalizations that counter the derogatory stereotypes associated with the word 'half-breed' in the dominant discourse." (LUNDGREN: 1995, 65) Campbell's criticism towards prejudice against mixed-blood people not only called attention to the situation of the Métis in Canada but she was able to transform the word from a derogatory term into a very meaningful terminology to refer to the Métis. Ludgren believes that "Campbell delineates the history of the Métis and demonstrates that they are a unique group, distinct from white Canadians, […]" and also distinct from their Indian relatives. (65) Ludgren also states that "Campbell not only redefines 'Halfbreed' in positivist terms but deconstructs racist stereotypes." (71) According to the critic "By emphasizing commonality instead of difference, Campbell destabilizes white readers' preconceptions about the Native Other." (73)

Regarding the importance of *Halfbreed* as an autobiographical work, Ludgren suggests that Campbell finds ways of deconstructing and subverting the genre itself. She states that Campbell "[…] subverts the hegemony of the universalist white discourse, offering a corrective local story […] in its place." (LUDGREN: 1995, 72) According to Ludgren, Campbell was able to explore the image of the Métis and deconstruct the imperialist white discourse of superiority. (72) The fact that Campbell disregards linear chronology is mentioned by Ludgren. She points out that Campbell's narrative does not follow a linear history and chronology because she starts her book referring to historical events from the 19th century and presents them as if they were "[…] mere digression, an error in chronology. It is precisely this sort of interruption of linear history which makes

Halfbreed an act of decolonization." (72) Campbell then opts to follow a traditional non-linear Indigenous narrative instead of the Western linear narrative. One good example of Campbell's lack of chronology happens when, before referring to her own birth, which happens in the beginning of the chapter three, she mentions one of her favorite childhood games at the end of chapter two. Regarding the breaking with traditional patterns, Ludgren believes that "Campbell does not fetishize tradition and certainly does not long for a return to mystical, pre-colonial purity […]" (LUDGREN, 1995: 73) In this sense, *Halfbreed* can be seen as a site of syncretism because "Campbell's colloquial, conversational tone in the book […] coupled with her use of (often humourous) anecdote and development by association rather than chronological sequence all represent traces of the oral tradition within the written form." (73-74)

In relation to the humorous tone of Campbell's autobiography, Agnes Grant states that "[…] Campbell also uses humour effectively, often remembering and lovingly describing community rituals. Much of her humour takes the form of anecdote." (GRANT: 1990, 127) But Grant calls attention to the fact that "[…] the humour in the book does much more than just entertain. Campbell uses it as a defiant gesture which accounts, in no small measure, for the popularity of the book among Métis readers." (127) One of the moments in which Campbell marks her text with humour takes place in the end of chapter two, when during a game, Campbell is not allowed to play the role of Cleopatra and when Campbell and her siblings are scorned by people who cannot understand children playing Caesar and Cleopatra. Campbell says that:

> In good weather my brothers and sisters and I gathered our cousins behind the house and organized plays. The house was our Roman Empire, the two pine trees were the gates of Rome. I was Julius Caesar and would be wrapped in a long sheet with a willow branch on my head. My brother Jamie was Mark Anthony, and shouts of "Hail Caesar!" would ring throughout our settlement. […] Oh, how I wanted to be Cleopatra, but my brother Jamie said, "Maria, you're too black and your hair is like a nigger's. So I'd have to be Caesar instead. […] Many of our white neighbours who saw us would ask us what we were playing and would shake their heads and laugh. I guess it was funny – Caesar, Rome and Cleopatra among Halfbreeds in the backwoods of northern Saskatcewan. (CAMPBELL: 1982, 18)

Kathleen M. Donovan points four important aspects in the discussion of *Halfbreed* and the examination of the situation of the Métis in the former British colony. The first

aspect concerns origin. According to Donovan, the Métis survived "[…] in the fur trade, and the free, nomadic lifestyle was essential to maintaining their culture." (DONOVAN: 1998, 21) Their difficulty in adapting to other modes of living and several attempts from the government at acculturating these people by means of agriculture and relocation were not successful. (21) In this sense, Donovan believes that "Freedom from government control and the right to self-determination are paramount to the Métis self-image." (21) The fact that the Métis have no longer an original place to call home is referred to in Maria Campbell's autobiography. Campbell's home is no longer the place of her childhood memories. The moment Campbell narrates her going back home, after so many years away, she makes clear that things would not be the same any more. Campbell says:

> Going home after so long time, I thought that I might find again the happiness and beauty I had known as a child. But as I walked down the rough dirt road, poked through the broken old buildings and thought back over the years, I realized that I could never find that here. Like me the land had changed, my people were gone, and if I was to know peace I would have to search within myself. […] (CAMPBELL: 1982, 7-8)

Neither home nor the traditional Métis' life style exist any more. What really exits is a place that she does not recognize. Her people were forced to move to other areas, were forced to change their lifestyles and were forced to behave according to the rules of the government. Campbell makes it clear in her autobiography when she goes back to the past as a way of explaining the present situation of Métis communities in Canada. Campbell explains that after they were defeated at the Battle of Batoche, her people moved to Spring River, in Saskatchewan, and there they thought they would be able to keep on trapping, hunting and that there they would be free from settlers. However, in the late 1920's their lives started to change again, as Campbell suggests in this textual fragment: "In the late 1920's the land was thrown open for homesteading and again came the threat of immigrants. By this time the lakes were drying up and the fur and game had almost disappeared." (CAMPBELL: 1982, 12) According to Campbell, the fact that they had no other place to go forced most families to adapt and change their lifestyles and they had to take homesteads as a way of owning a piece of land and guaranteeing a future for their children. Despite the efforts at trying to working the land to avoid having their lands taken away by the government, the Métis realized that they

were not born to become farmers. The consequence of their failure at breaking the land is narrated by Campbell:

> Gradually homesteads were reclaimed by the authorities and offered to the immigrants. The Halfbreeds then became squatters on their land and were eventually run off by the new owners. One by one they drifted back to the road lines and crown lands where they built cabins and barns and from then on were known as "Road Allowance people." (CAMPBELL: 1982, 13)

After many attempts at trying to adapt to new ways of living and the consequent failures for not being able to change their way of living, the Métis were pushed to the sides of roads and railroad lines. The consequences of these transformations in the lives of the Métis in the beginning of the 20th century were dramatic. Campbell refers to their situation as a hopeless one which was marked by, unemployment, self-destruction and poverty. Campbell states that "That generation of my people was completely beaten. Their fathers had failed during the Rebellion to a make a dream come true; they failed as farmers; now there was nothing left." (CAMPBELL: 1982, 13) Her people had been neglected and erased from the history of Canada. They "[…] believed they had nothing to offer. They felt shame, and with shame the loss of pride and the strength to live each day." (13) That generation, according to Campbell, is still alive. This generation is represented by "[…] the crippled, bent old grandfathers and grandmothers on town and city skid rows; you find them in the bush waiting to die; or baby-sitting grandchildren while the parents are drunk." (13) Despite all the difficulties, some people still "[…] struggle for equality and justice for their people. The road for them is never-ending and full of frustrations and heart-break." (13) In relation to the displacements the Métis have suffered throughout their history, the critic Alan B. Anderson, characterizes this kind of movements as an internal diaspora. According to Anderson, "[…] Aboriginal peoples in Canada […] constitute a classical form of diaspora." (ANDERSON: 1998, 24) Despite all the differences regarding the several Aboriginal groups who inhabit Canada, Anderson claims that they do not constitute a single ethnic category and aspects such as language, and cultures are individualized according to specific characteristics of each Aboriginal group. In the case of all the names adopted to define Native people of Canada, Anderson explains that:

> The term “First Nations” has usually been applied to Indian peoples in Canada, particularly registered, treaty and status Indians on reserves. But almost half of the registered Indians of Canada no longer reside on reserves and the term “First Nations” – while occasionally applied to all Native people – usually does not include Métis or Inuit peoples, who together with off-reserve and non-status Indians, now constitute a large majority of Canada’s total Aboriginal population.” (ANDERSON: 1998, 23)

In spite of all these differences regarding the different tribes and Aboriginal populations of Canada, one thing they share in common: the fact that they are people in a diaspora situation. Alan B. Anderson believes that there are four important aspects to define the situation of diaspora of Aboriginal communities in Canada. The first aspect refers to the fact that “Few specific Aboriginal peoples in Canada have a single, particular homeland territory; most are scattered throughout many reserves and communities.” (ANDERSON: 1998, 23) The second aspect relates to the issue of geographical location in different areas of Canada. Anderson states that “The most populous Aboriginal peoples are also the most widespread geographically.” (23) The third aspect refers to the different territorial divisions regarding the tribes’ nationalities. The last aspect refers to one of the most important and influential factors to the issue of diaspora in Canada, especially when it concerns the Métis and their mixed-blood children. According to Anderson, this aspect refers to forced removal which has resulted in many cases of very distant separations. (24) As part of a severe assimilatory process, it was a common practice the removal of mixed-blood children from their Indigenous families and their relocation into foster houses. Donovan remembers us the difficulties Maria Campbell’s went through after her mother died. Donovan states that:

> When Campbell’s mother dies, the family’s situation becomes desperate, eventually the social-welfare system moves in and separates the children by placing them in various foster homes. Her father’s way of life, based on hunting and trapping, is becoming archaic. The establishment of a national park on traditional Métis hunting grounds makes him poacher who is continually sought by the law. Eventually he’s forced to take up farming, for which he is totally unsuited. […] Campbell sees the demoralizing effects of welfare on her father, and the increasing alcoholism and violence in her Métis neighbors. (DONOVAN: 1998, 31-32)

The second aspect that Kathleen M. Donovan refers to, in her article, is related to Canada's policy of "Divide and Conquer" in relation to Native peoples. According to Donovan, such policy is one of the greatest movements to ensure lack of unity among the Native people. (DONOVAN: 1998, 21) Donovan defines two important divisions: gender based division and ethnic division. Donovan claims that:

> Historically, Indian prejudice against the Métis was based on the fact that Ottawa pitted its constituencies against each other in competition for land, benefits, money, and recognition. White prejudice against the Métis was based on race, class and gender. These divisions have been supported not only by official policies and unofficial practice, but also by Christian religions, which have been a demoralizing force in Métis consciousness through the early practice of encouraging a shift to an agriculturally based economy over a hunting and gathering one. (DONOVAN: 1998, 21)

Another aspect regarding the policy of "Divide and Conquer" taken by the Canadian government, as Donovan points out, is related to religious impositions too. Specifically in the case of Métis women, Donovan denounces that the Christian belief "[…] on original sin and the evil of female sexuality, held special implications, as did the Jesuit emphasis on patriarchal power." (DONOVAN: 1998, 21) Patriarchy and the image of women as evil beings diminished the power of women in their tribes and created a great instability in the traditional gender balance of the Métis communities. Considering the early periods of fur trading, Donovan points out that:

> […] men's and women's activities were separate but complementary. Men's activity revolved around the more solitary pursuits of fishing, hunting, and trapping while women's activities included communal fishing and trapping of small game near camp, and the harvesting of berries, nuts, and wild rice. […] Women also maintained their own shamanistic rituals, separate from those of the men. (DONOVAN: 1998, 22)

The interference in the lives of Métis communities and the new models of living and organizing their families and institutions affected mostly women. In *Halfbreed* the issue of patriarchy is strongly reinforced by the image of Campbell's father and the image of the men from her community. Women had their roles in the society changed and, with the imposition of new European models, they were forced to obey their men

and respect their alleged superiority at any cost. Such changes forced women to accept lifestyles which were not theirs and to behave in ways which were not typical to their original Indigenous communities. According to Maria Campbell, being a lady was the kind of woman men wanted, and she makes it clear when, during a conversation with her father, she refuses to behave like a typical lady and decides that her future should be keep on riding horses and having a big family. Campbell says that:

> I asked him what kind of women men liked - I have to laugh now at his description. It made me feel that I might as well give up right then as there was no way I could ever be the combination of saint, angel, devil and lady that was required. I decided that it was a good thing I liked horses and had a big family as my future with men didn't look very bright. (CAMPBELL: 1982, 85)

The result of the interaction between Europeans and Métis led into severe consequences to the stability and maintenance of Métis ways of living and community basis. Donovan states that the most important changes related to the European lifestyle were emphasis on property and accumulation of wealth. Donovan states that:

> As the economic function of women's work shifted from production to assistance in the preparation of hides, their role in food preparation and distribution also shifted due to increased reliance on European foodstuffs. In addition, economic reliance on furs required frequent moves to new camps, further diminishing women's authority and community. (DONOVAN: 1998, 23)

In relation to the interference of the Christian church, the Jesuits believed the "[…] the only truly effective means of conversion to Christianity lay in encouraging the Indians to settle near missions and trading centers." (DONOVAN: 1998, 23) The process of conversion of men led into the conversion of women, which was not an easy one. In relation to different processes of conversion, Donovan explains that "[…] some Indian women did convert out to genuine belief in Christianity, but many others converted under duress. Some of the converted women found Catholic mysticism consistent with their pre-contact autonomy […]" (23) However, it was more typical that women "[…] clung to their traditional beliefs and rituals, to the dismay of the priest and, frequently Native men […] who found their mode of living under Christianity to be

attractively sedentary." (23-24) The Jesuits also imposed that women surrender their sexual autonomy to men. Their resistance to the Jesuits' impositions opened up space to a process of pressure upon Native men to guarantee their recent dominant position by means of threats and violence to women. (24) Violence toward women was a common practice among the Métis even in festive moments, as Campbell points out:

> The men would get happy-drunk at first and as the evening progressed white men would come by. They all danced and sang together, then all too soon one of the white men would bother the women. Our men would become angry, but instead of fighting the white men they beat their wives. They ripped clothes off the women, hit them with fists or whips, knocked them down and kicked them until they were senseless. (CAMPBELL: 1982, 37)

In spite of all that violence, women were not allowed to fight back. Under the Christian precepts, women were forced to obey their men and accept their new condition of oppression. And under this process of subjugation and oppression, many Indigenous people were converted into Christianity and such process involved not only physical violence, in relation to women, but it implied leaving behind faiths, beliefs, myths and traditions to honor and follow the rules of a society which was devouring these people little by little. In *Haflbreed* the Christian Church is represented by the figure of the local priest. Campbell's bitterness regarding the role played by the Christian Church in Canada and the Church's way of colonizing Aboriginal communities is clearly represented by the figure of the local priest. A man who, in the words of Donovan, "[…] shows up for Sunday dinner and eats all the food himself, steals from the Sun Dance poles, and refuses a funeral mass for Maria's mother […]" (DONOVAN: 1998, 31). Confirming Donovan's words, Campbell states that:

> When I was still young, a priest came to hold masses in the various homes. How I despised that man! He was about forty-five, very fat and greedy. He always arrived when it was mealtime and we all had to wait and let him eat first. He ate and ate and I would watch him with hatred. He must have known, because when he finished easting all the choice food, he would smile at me, rub his belly and tell Mom she was a great cook. After he left we had to eat the scraps. If we complained, Mom would tell us that he was picked by God and it was our duty to feed him. (CAMPBELL: 1982, 29)

Despite the disgusting figure of the local priest, the image of the white-man's church that Campbell portrays represents an institution which aimed at domination, control and conversion without guaranteeing the real salvation they preached. At the end Campbell admits that:

> The missionaries had impressed upon us the feeling that women were a source of evil. This belief, combined with the ancient Indian recognition of the power of women, is still holding back the progress of our people today. (CAMPBELL: 1982, 144)

The third aspect regarding changes in the Métis history relates to rejection from both treaty Indians and Euro-Canadian people. This rejection, according to Donovan, resulted in a "[...] long-standing confusion over identity that has only recently begun to be restored by the Métis' insistence on, and pride in, a separate ethnic identity." (DONOVAN: 1998, 24) Lack of identity has been one of the main characteristics of the Métis communities due to processes of negligence, rejection, misinterpretation and omission. The relationship between Treaty Indians, or First Nations, and Halfbreeds was never a very friendly one, as Campbell points out in her book. Campbell refers to estrangement, discrimination, and presents two worlds that clashed: the world of treaty Indians and the world of mixed-people who, like her, had no rights and were not even recognized as Indigenous people. Campbell refers to this relationship in the following way:

> There was never much love lost between Indians and Halfbreeds. They were completely different from us – quiet when we were noisy, dignified even at dances and get-togethers. Indians were very passive – they would get angry at things done to them but would never fight back, whereas Halfbreeds were quick-tempered – quick to fight, but quick to forgive and forget. The Indians' religion was very precious to them and to the Halfbreeds, but we never took it as seriously. We all went to the Indians' Sundances and special gatherings, but somehow we never fitted in. We were always the poor relatives, the *awp-pee-tow-koosons* [half people]. They laughed and scorned us. They had land and security, we had nothing. […] They would tolerate us unless they were drinking and then they would try to fight, but received many sound beatings from us […] (CAMPBELL: 1982, 26-27)

The relationship between treaty Indians and Halfbreeds reinforced the segregation imposed by the government: those who had Indian blood and land and those who were not recognized Indians and had no right over their original lands. But the Métis did not

suffer only from the Treaty Indians' prejudice. According to Kathleen M. Donovan, "From childhood […] they [the Métis] learn rejection from Euro-Canadians who break up Métis camps, keep Métis under surveillance while they shop, and ridicule their mode of living, including their food." (DONOVAN: 1998, 32) One of the most important moments related to rejection in *Halfbreed* is when Campbell refers to the Métis children's school lunches. She comments that:

> Lunch hours were really rough when we started school because we had not realized, until then, the difference in our diets. They had white or brown bread, boiled eggs, apples, cakes, cookies, and jars of milk. We were lucky to have these even at Christmas. We took bannock for lunch, spread with lard and filled with wild meat, and if there was no meat we had cold potatoes and salt and pepper, or else whole roasted gophers with sage dressing. No apples or fruit, but if we were lucky there was a jam sandwich for dessert. The first few days the whites were speechless when they saw Alex's children with gophers and the rest of us trading a sandwich, a leg, or dressing. They would tease and call, "Gophers, gophers, Road Allowance people eat gophers." We fought back of course but we were terribly hurt and above all ashamed. (CAMPBELL: 1982, 46-47)

Finally, the last aspect concerns the fact that the Métis have always produced strong women who have always contributed to the maintenance of the traditions and culture. Campbell proves to be a strong woman who rebels against the oppressive authority of men when she questions the role she plays in that world and when she challenges her father's authority. Campbell refers to an argument she and her father had stating that:

> When I tried to interrupt, I was told to shut up. He said that I had acted like a common whore. "Your mother never did anything like that in her life, and as long as you're under my roof you'll act like a lady." Finally I got angry and shouted that if he could go to such places, then why couldn't I; that if Smoky was good enough to be his best friend why wasn't he good for me? I told him I was a Campbell, not a Dubuque and if Mom was a lady then why did she run off with him? I had never talked back before, much less yelled at him. He slapped my face and knocked me over a chair, and when he went to slap me again, I said, "You're not so hot. You're living with that woman when you should be married to her, so don't tell me what's right or wrong". He got hurt look on his face and walked out. (CAMPBELL: 1982, 101)

Campbell's behavior, at first, sounds as an attitude of total disrespect towards her father. But, in fact, what Campbell was doing was fighting back against a position that she was forced to accept. Her strength and rebellion are attitudes of agency that Donovan refers to when talking about the importance of Native women to the survival of their original communities. Donovan believes that Native women "[…] maintained a degree of agency in their dealings with the dominant, patriarchal culture. Contrary to the Eurocentric reports of early ethnographers […]" (DONOVAN: 1998, 25) These women experienced racism and pressures to be assimilated but they have always "[…] maintained intense family ties from a frequently dependent and precarious social position and demonstrated great love for their own mixed-blood children." (25) Regarding the relationship between Métis women and their children, Donovan states that "[…] the enforced separation of families by an arrogant social-welfare system has been extremely destructive to Métis identity." (25) In fact, the welfare policy was more a violent strategy to assimilate and erase Métis communities, values and tradition rather than a real attempt at helping needy people. The fact that Campbell's family was separated, made Maria take a serious decision to avoid that her siblings were taken away from home: Campbell decides to marry Darrel, her only salvation. But, not even her marriage was able to keep the children together under her care and protection. In relation to the welfare policy, Campbell says that:

> Darrel was in Prince Albert the day the welfare people came. We were all home and the children were eating lunch when a station wagon pulled up. I looked out the window and I knew that this was it. It was all over. The kids started to cry and hang on to me, but they were pulled away and were in the wagon within a few minutes. I couldn't move. I felt like a block of stone. The wagon away with the six little faces pressed to the windows, crying for me to help them. I walked around in a daze. Everything went to pieces inside. Dad found me lying on the bed while my baby screamed with hunger. (CAMPBELL: 1982, 107)

The separation of Maria Campbell from her siblings, and the separation of these kids, placed into several different foster homes, is one example of the process of diaspora referred to by Alan B. Anderson. The forced leaving of home; the need to live a life which does not belong to you and being thrown into a world which you does not belong to you were common policies imposed by the Canadian government to destroy these people's past, their culture, their present and the possibility of any better future.

The role of women was trying to keep the bounds of their families together. And in *Halfbreed*, the figure of Cheechum, Campbell's great-grandmother, serves as reference of a brave woman who always fought for her people, who always tried to keep Indigenous past alive in the hearts and minds of her community and who always believed in a better future for all Native communities. According to Kathleen M; Donovan, Cheechum was:

> […] the most influential person in her [Campbell's] life, who taught her traditional Métis ways of dress, mores, and culture.[…] Cheechum reinforces the need for the Métis to organize and fight for their personal and political rights, but she also sees that their efforts are doomed by the divisions within their own ranks. (DONOVAN: 1998, 31)

Maria Campbell always refers to Cheechum with the utmost tenderness, admiration and respect for who she was but mostly for what she believed and what she represented. Campbell refers to her Cheechum as a strong woman who lived to be 104 years old, and a woman who never surrendered the pressures of the white dominance and who believed her people would never fade away. In *Halfbreed*, when Campbell remembers the day her great-grandmother died, she says that:

> Cheechum lived to be a hundred and four years old, and perhaps it's just as well that she died with the feeling of hope for our people; that she didn't share the disillusionment that I felt about the way things turned out. My Cheechum never surrendered at Batoche: she only accepted what she considered a dishonourable truce. She waited all her life for a new generation of people who would make this country a better place to live in. (CAMPBELL: 1982, 156)

According to Donovan, Cheechum was the storyteller of her community and she was responsible for passing the oral tradition to her great-granddaughter. (DONOVAN: 1998, 33) The oral tradition so much present in the life of Campbell and in that of her community is reflected in her writing. Donovan states that:

> Campbell's autobiography displays the strong influence of oral tradition. Told in the first, the story transcends the limitations of Western autobiography's emphasis on the individual to encompass a sense of its subject in the context of a community's disruption but continuance. […]

> Clearly one of the purposes of the book is to hold Euro-Canadians accountable for their actions. (CAMPBELL: 1982, 34)

The need for achieving all the audiences moved Campbell to stress "the necessity of ethnic pride in order to have a future" and the "continuance of oral tradition is one of the principal means of ensuring the survival of the individual and the community."(CAMPBELL: 1982, 34-35) According to Donovan, Campbell believes that changes are inevitable and if the stories told and retold by the Native people are not recorded, not only the stories will be lost but all the people will be lost too. (DONOVAN: 1998, 25) Campbell, in an interview to Beth Cuthand, refers to the role of writing and the role of keeping alive the oral tradition as a ceremony in which the reader is invited to share the energies that come out of the stories and become part of this energy which you share with the original community. (SILVERA: 1994, 267) Campbell also believes that sharing the stories of her community is a healing process and that "It's the job of the storyteller to create chaos. All you need to do is look at nature and that's part of our circle" (269) In this sense, to keep this circle strong it is necessary that Native people "speak with a strong voice. […] if we don't do that, then the link to our past and our ancestors is going to break." (270) People like Campbell have been able to keep this circle strong and to speak for those who cannot. Campbell and other Native people have been able to heal and make more medicine, as she tells Cuthand: "We can make the trail like our ancestors did for us. Make medicine, put the stories forward along with the energy so another generation can carry them into our future. To hell with feeling marginalized." (270) In the words of Campbell, speaking for her community is "[…] what self-government is, that's true sovereignty and that's the real revolution, and that's why we have to make ceremony, and that's why we have to be damned brave and shake things up like the thunders." (270)

Together with the oral tradition and the need for keeping the memory of her people alive, Campbell chooses to write her autobiography in English, and not in Cree, her original language, because, according to Donovan, Campbell believes in the hybridity of cultures. Donovan says that:

> […] the hybridity of her [Campbell's] language is a reflection of the hybridity of her identity as a Métis woman in the cultural hybridity of the

> contact zone, of taking what is most useful from the colonizer and using it to resist and subvert […] (CAMPBELL: 1982, 37)

In her autobiography, as she herself admits, Campbell is writing for her community; she is trying to get healed and helping other people to overcome all the shame, subjugation and loss of identity caused by many years of oppressive practice. Through her writing Campbell is able to "make some medicine" and be the one who speaks for those who can't speak, as she admits in her book. She addresses all those people who cannot speak for themselves stating that "I write this for all of you, to tell you what it is like to be a Halfbreed woman in our country. I want to tell you about the joys and sorrows, the oppressing poverty, the frustrations and the dreams." (CAMPBELL: 1982, 8) Being a Halfbreed means facing oppression, putting the pieces of their identities together and it also means healing and belonging. Finally, after so many years of loneliness, searching for identity, pain and shame, Campbell admits that she found not only her place among her community but also her sense of selfhood. Campbell claims that:

> My community is primarily Aboriginal people because they have good sense of who they are where they come from and anybody else who has the same sense. I know my place and I'm tired of explaining it to people who don't honour their own place and their own history. (SILVERA: 1994, 266)

Always driven by Cheechum's words and lessons, Maria Campbell, since her early age, recognizes the problems and difficulties her community and the Métis people, in general, have been through. Campbell's ideal of having a different life; a life apart from the violence, poverty and frustrations that dominate her people at first drove her away from her roots, her beliefs and her family. Campbell's rootless life led her into a world of despair, misery, drug addiction, prostitution and alcoholism. In the 1960's Campbell, after trying to commit suicide, sees herself strapped into a bed of a mental institution. However, Campbell admits that the time she spent at the hospital made her stronger. She says that: "I felt good and strong – no longer confused – and had gained weight during the three months of my stay" (CAMPBELL: 1982, 142) Campbell's next step towards a complete recovery from a miserable life led her to an A.A. institution. With the help of friends from the group, Campbell gets over not only alcoholism but

self-pity and shame of her people. Edith, a half-Indian woman married to Don, Campbell's sponsor at the A.A. group, reminds Campbell of her origins and helps her to find her identity among her own people. In relation to Edith, Campbell says that:

> She [Edith] helped me to get over my mental block about Indians in suits – perhaps not completely, but at least so that their ways was no longer upset me. She taught me to look at myself as critically as I looked at them, and to believe that the same thing that drove me, drove them to being what they were, that basically we had all suffered trouble and misery, and that their problems were as big and as important as mine, regardless of how unimportant I thought they were. She was very honest, almost to the point of hurting me […] (CAMPBELL: 1982, 143)

Edith was the link that reconnected Campbell to her tribal life and to her community and made Campbell understand that Cheechum's lessons were the key to her identity as a woman, as a Métis and as the voice of her oppressed community. Campbell admits that:

> Because of Edith I began to understand what Cheechum had been trying to say to me, and to see how I had misinterpreted what she had taught me. She had never meant that I should go out into the world in search of fortune, but rather that I go out and discover for myself the need for leadership and change: if our way of life were to improve I would have to find other people like myself, and together try to find an alternative. Edith had grandparents like my Cheechum, so she understood, and tried to explain it to me realistically. Because of her I eventually attended meetings at the Native Friendship Center. She said that if I was ever going to become strong inside, I would have to face reality. (CAMPBELL: 1982, 143)

Campbell's involvement with other people who had been through the same difficulties as she did was fundamental to show her that there were people interested in changing the situation of oppression, hopelessness and disillusionment in Native communities. Her attempt at getting connected with people that would help her in the Native movement in Alberta drove Campbell to Prince Albert Penitentiary. Her involvement with A.A. inmates made Campbell a stronger woman and made her conscious of her identity. The bitter, weak woman who was ashamed of her people was able to reconnect to her origins and get involved with homeless people and Native political movements. The misery that devastated people around Canada made Campbell

aware that "[…] a political solution is the only way to resolve the problems facing Métis and Indian people" but at the same time "she has been forced to scale back her expectations." (DONOVAN: 1998, 33) In relation to the shameful policies taken by the government against the Métis, Campbell remembers Cheechum's words which stated that "When they [politicians] are sure they have everything, they give you a blanket to cover your shame." (CAMPBELL: 1982, 137) Those blankets were covering Campbell's people and herself from the shame of being who they were. The blanket also served to veil the truth and prevent people from facing reality, not mattering how ugly it was. (137) Little by little Campbell finds out ways of getting rid of her blanket, and in spite of the difficulties to strengthen political and social movements, Campbell's political activism made her a more realistic woman. She realized "[…] that an armed revolution of Native people will never come about; […]" and she believed that "[…] one day, very soon, people will set aside their differences and come together as one. Maybe not because we love one another, but because we will need each other to survive" (156) In the end, after all the efforts to find herself, Campbell concludes that:

> The years of searching, loneliness and pain are over for me. Cheechum said "You'll find yourself, and you'll find brothers and sisters". I have brothers and sisters, all over the country. I no longer need my blanket to survive. (CAMPBELL: 1982, 157)

3. AUSTRALIA

> *You've got to get to people's hearts, make them feel about something…if people could just see aboriginal people as a people with the same human emotions, the same feelings; as just ordinary people.*
>
> Sally Morgan. *Aboriginal Culture Today*.

3.1 Autobiography and Aboriginal Australian Women.

The process of writing has worked for women as a strategy of survival and resistance. Resistance is the word that has helped women to overcome silence and oppression. As far as the idea of patriarchal oppression and the role of women writers are concerned, Linda Anderson states that:

> […] for the woman writer, is predicated on an idea or an ideal of wholeness, an euphoric vision which obscures the recognition of other spaces, not beyond patriarchy, but within it which patriarchy must then deny or cover over in order to maintain its own wholeness. (ANDERSON: 1997, 132)

Due to the boundaries imposed by a patriarchal ideology, the role of women as subjects and as writers is limited by a traditional and homogenous thought which aims at enclosing and which refuses to recognize other spaces and voices which aim at breaking with the boundaries of the text and of the self. Anderson explains that contemporary women writers have tried to deal with the interaction between space and movement. Anderson suggests that women have been dealing with "[…] a notion of boundaries which are not fixed, which do not prevent one side being thought about as being permeated by, absorbing or moving towards the other." (ANDERSON: 1997, 133) Such flexibility concerning texts by women writers does not imply, as Linda Anderson suggests, slipperiness nor lack of engagement or indifference. On the other hand, this kind of movement is related to the need of belonging or defining where one is. By assuming this position of movement in their narratives and in their lives, women have been able to deconstruct their identities by taking into consideration the fact that this is a process of responsibility, strategy or choice. (135) In the case of women of color, "The differences of which 'we' are the subject and which creates alliances also forges divisions: the apparent stability of 'we' in fact covers multiple subject positions." (141) Linda Anderson's point of view questions the ideal of patriarchy and traditional aspects of genres which insist on homogenizing subjects and compacting minority groups. Difference has been a key element in redefining the identity and subjectivity of contemporary individuals. In the case of feminism and women, Anderson suggests that:

> The specificity of history […] unsettles feminism's own urge towards ideological and theoretical abstraction. In this sense – in its necessary resistance to, or suspicion of, its own generalizations about women – feminism can never be totally at home with itself. (ANDERSON: 1997, 129)

According to Linda Anderson, recent feminist trends question the different and heterogeneous perspectives of oppressed women. Anderson believes that these women "[…] cannot simply be absorbed into the terms of a debate, rooted in White Western history, where the individualism securing masculine identity […] is reasserted on the side of women." Instead women have to be seen as a "[…] volatile collectivity in which female persons can be very differently positioned so that the apparent continuity of the subject of 'women' isn't to be relied on." (ANDERSON: 1997, 130) In this sense, narratives by women of color aim at subverting "[…] the negative identification of woman in western discourse into a positive one." (131) However, this subversion is not completed because many women are still "[…] locked into the same system of meaning, reabsorbed within a wholeness which recognizes no 'other' identities, no otherness within the concept of identity." (131) Considering the different strategies of oppression, Sidonie Smith believes that the position of inferiority held by women in relation to male superiority has contributed to a position of oppression and silence. Smith claims that "[…] woman has remained culturally silenced, denied authority, most critically the authority to name herself and her own desires. Woman has remained unrepresented and unrepresentable." (SMITH: 1987, 49) Such different levels of oppression would even include the masculine authority over women own desires. According to Smith, self-representation depends on the articulation of a subjectivity which is delineated by discourses which influence and become part of these women lives and identities. (47) The consequences of dealing with ever changing discourses, guarantee these writers fragmented and mutable identities. The attempt at reconstructing their fragmented identities and the challenging of their subjugated position have made many women opt for writing autobiographies. Sidonie Smith believes that:

> [Autobiography] serves as one of those generic contracts that reproduces the patrilineage and its ideologies of gender. Women who do not challenge those gender ideologies and the boundaries they place around woman's proper life script, textual inscription, and speaking voice do not write autobiography. (SMITH: 1987, 44)

The fact that autobiography has always guaranteed a secure position for men in society opens up a space for women of color to subvert oppressive ideologies of gender and redefine their position towards men, towards society and towards themselves. Regarding the position of female autobiographers, Smith explains that:

> […] the woman who writes autobiography is doubly estranged when she enters the autobiographical contract. Precisely because she approaches her storytelling as one who speaks from the margins of autobiographical discourse, thus as one who is both of the prevailing culture and on the outskirts of it, she brings to her a project a particularly trouble relationship to her reader. (SMITH: 1987, 49)

The challenging of traditional boundaries highlights women double position. But in the case of women of color, for example, the complexity of her position goes beyond the gender dichotomy. In the case of women of color, Smith suggests that other discourses permeate and intersect their position of subject in the world, such as ideologies of race, class and nationality. (SMITH: 1987, 51) Sexual orientation and religion are also important issues to the representation of women of color. Sidonie Smith believes that, because of these many faces of oppression, women of color become:

> […] the subject of other people's representations, turned again and again in stories that reflect and promote certain forms of selfhood identified with class, race, and nationality as well as with sex. (SMITH: 1987, 51)

The writing of autobiographical works offers women, especially women of color, a chance to move from a position of "Other" to a position of self and revaluate their multiply oppressed conditions in society. Smith believes that the moment these women write autobiographies they are able to transform themselves and transform fixed ideologies by transgressing boundaries in a way that there is neither margin nor center. She believes that women untied their relationship in relation to the conventions of autobiography by de-centering all centers and subverting patriarchal order itself. (SMITH: 1987, 59)

The writing of autobiographical works by women of color is marked by their power of subverting oppression and their search for self-representation. In the case of Aboriginal women from Australia, autobiographies have also been considered strategies of resistance and self-representation. Despite the importance of autobiographies to the resistance of Aboriginal women in Australia, history proves that only recently these women' stories have reached the general public. According to Kateryna Olijink Longley, "It is only very recently that the written autobiographies of Aboriginal people have begun to be published in Australia." (LONGLEY: 1992, 370) This difficulty in reaching the reading public is due to "[…] the degradation and virtual erasure of Aboriginal culture" (370) Longley states that "[…] the scale of obstacles that have to be negotiated and compromises that have to be made in order for Aboriginal people to offer their personal stories to a white reading public." (370) have influenced on the publication of autobiographies written by Aboriginal women in Australia. Longley also points out that the same genres and modes which have helped to erase Aboriginal culture for more than two hundred years have served as spaces of public and autobiographical manifestation. Longley believes that such paradox has also contributed to the delayed process of publication of Aboriginal autobiographies. (370) Despite all the difficulties at reaching the general public, Australian autobiographies are marked by debates about subjectivity and location. Regarding the power of Australian autobiographies, the critic Gillian Whitlock believes that disobedience is a fundamental word and it reflects the "[…] desire of writers and critics to review and refuse the conventions of the autobiographical pact as it is conventionally understood." (WHITLOCK: 1996, ix)

Concerning the historicity of Australian autobiographies, Whitlock calls attention to the fact that "Several previous studies of Australian autobiography take their bearings from those canonical autobiographical writings of the sixties by George Johnston […] and Hal Porter's autobiographical trilogy […]" (WHITLOCK: 1996, xviii) Whitlock claims that Porter's autobiography was the first autobiographical work to deal with issues that would be discussed a few years later, such as self-representation, the representation of the "I" in autobiographical works in relation to place and time, which is a fundamental characteristic of contemporary works. Whitlock also supports the idea that Porter's autobiography *The Watcher on the Cast-Iron Balcony* (1963) challenged nationalist beliefs in relation to the figure of the masculine hero and questioned several

conventional modes of self-representation in autobiographical works. The critic suggests that an analysis of autobiographies produced in the 1980's and 1990's in Australia depends on a returning to the past. In the sixties, according to Whitlock, Australian autobiography was drawn "[…] from the periphery of critically valued literary expression, […]" and it was placed "[…] at the centre of new forces within literary critical opinion." (xviii) As far as Australian autobiographical writings are concerned, contemporary autobiographies have been marked by "[…] different forms of representation in non-fiction, with new grafts of autobiography, biography and fiction […]" (xviii) By subverting traditional conventions of the genre, Australian writers are calling the attention of readers to their works, which is justified by their success in sales. Whitlock believes that "Albert Facey's *A Fortunate Life* (1984) and Sally Morgan's *My Place* (1987) have outstripped sales of any other work in Australian publishing." (xviii) The consequence of such success is reflected in publishing houses as well. Regarding the publication of autobiographies in Australia, Whitlock states that:

> […] a variety of life writings circulate around and about contemporary Australian readers and are readily accessible in the livery of publishers big and small: Penguin, Angus and Robertson, University of Queensland Press, Magabala, Picador, Freemantle Arts Centre Press, to mention a few. (WHITLOCK: 1996, xx-xxi)

Despite all the success obtained among ordinary readers, professional readers such as critics and teachers still don't share this enthusiasm towards contemporary Australian autobiographies. Whitlock states that the problem is related exactly to the meaning of "Australian" autobiography and all the things it represents. According to Whitlock, the thinking of an "Australian" autobiography, at first would represent the "[…] start of some liberating and controversial discussion [...]" (WHITLOCK: 1996, xix) According to Whitlock the answer that defines the meaning of a real "Australian" autobiography for the reading public is related to national beliefs of identity rather than to real search for identity and for self-representation. The critic points out that:

> There has been an ongoing assumption that autobiography will prove a quarry for confirming familiar national myths, that the 'quest for personal identity' must involve asking fundamental questions about national identity. This approach has resulted in some self-fulfilling tendencies, so

> that retrieved materials for critical attention have come from salted mines, depressing the variety of the genre in Australia. (WHITLOCK: 1996, xix)

Concerns regarding interpretations of Australian autobiographies and following nationalist assumptions have called attention to the way these autobiographies are been read. When Whitlock asks the question: "How can we think of Australian identities in terms other than the legendary, homogenous sacred site?" (WHITLOCK: 1996, xxi), the issue of *how* Australians read their own autobiographies remains conflicting and unsolved. Considering the need for an evaluation of what autobiography represents and how it is portrayed, Whitlock calls attention to the fact that:

> If autobiography is to do something other than confirm well-established ideas of Australian social and cultural experience and characteristics in terms of "national" and "distinctive", we need to look to how we read, in particular exploring ways of reading which focus not just on experience and authenticity but also on complexities of personality, identity, narrative forms, and how social, cultural and political formations are taken up in texts. (WHITLOCK: 1996, xxi)

Australian autobiographies demand a self-conscious approach of readers towards the narratives. Such strategy becomes necessary because autobiographies "[…] refuse to cohere to notions of the authority of experience and the authoritative subject in autobiography; they quite openly deconstruct these unities." (WHITLOCK: 1996, xxi) But what moves readers in relation to what represents being Australian is deeply connected to their sense of "democracy" and their belief in an Anglo-Australian connection which celebrates "[…] Australian identity in terms of egalitarian, democratic tendencies. This approach to social and cultural formations […]", as Whitlock explains, "[…] has always been a myth, of course, but a powerful one, and it remains embedded in ways which allow autobiographies […] to have an immediate and popular appeal." (xxii) However, changes in the Australian autobiographical writing have helped to cause a big impact on the way readers interpret their national ideologies and beliefs. Whitlock claims that:

> Since the late 1980's a sense of impending change in Australian autobiographical writing, gesturing to women's writing in particular as a kind of tsunami on the horizons. What we see now with the benefit of hindsight is that not only gender but other kinds of difference – sexuality,

> ethnicity, race and regionalism – have been driving this new wave. *Quantitatively* it may still be the case that very few autobiographies give voice to those who were not already vocal. (WHITLOCK: 1996, xxiii)

This new wave which opens up space to difference, heterogeneity and to excluded selves is marked by the voices of immigrants, homosexuals, Aboriginals and so many other silenced people under the imaginary blanket of democracy, equality and nationalism. Whitlock suggests that these new voices are responsible for a rethinking of the dimensions of Australian identity by unveiling the traditional worry with "a nation apart". (WHITLOCK: 1996, xxiii) Such unveiling reinforces new ways of reading autobiographies. Whitlock suggests that it is necessary that the reader understands the issues concerning place, space and the effects of displacement, as in the case of Aboriginal people, migration, legitimacy and issues concerning the relationship between the self and the natural world. (xxiii) Other issues such as nationalist ideologies, which emerged during the colonial period, are challenged now by these "new" voices in the Australian society. Debates regarding gender roles, the dichotomy male/female and sexuality have been openly discussed as ways of transforming traditional colonial practices and beliefs. According to Whitlock, women and gays play a very important part in this transformational process as far as their anxieties and desires are concerned. The role of these subjects was to follow pre-established conventions that favored either male empowerment or masculinity. The critic believes that:

> The place of white women as mothers, as the reproducers of the race and the culture, is critical, as are anxieties about the potency of white men; as White comments, the only think less welcome than an artist in his family was a faggot! (WHITLOCK: 1996, xxiv)

In the case of the Aboriginal woman and her role inside her community, Jeanette Armstrong reminds us that "Traditionally, it was woman who controlled and shaped that societal order to the state of harmony, which in this time of extreme disorder seems nearly impossible." (ARMSTRONG: 1996, x) Armstrong suggests that such disorder is consequence of the European interference and colonial practices in Aboriginal societies. Armstrong points out that European attacks toward Aboriginal communities, especially toward the strength of women within these communities, are responsible for the disrespect for human rights and the seizing of Aboriginal children from their homes,

community and land. (x) The critic supports Aboriginal women struggle to survive and to keep alive their communities, cultures, myths, dreams and beliefs. Armstrong believes that:

> It is the strength of this female force that holds all nations and families together in health. It is the bridge to the next generation. It is this female power that is the key to the survival […] in an environment that is becoming increasingly damaged and unfit for all life forms. (ARMSTRONG: 1996, xi)

As far as contemporary Aboriginal women autobiographies are concerned, Whitlock states that in the past decades these works have pointed to the effects of many years of oppression, erasure, assimilation, invasion and displacement. Whitlock argues that one of the most important issues discussed by Aboriginal writers concerns the recovery of their past and the discovery of a place of their own. Their land is the original foundation of their culture, traditions, and lives. (WHITLOCK: 1996, xxiv) However, processes of dispersion have been so harmful for Aboriginal people that marked "[...] virtually every Aboriginal autobiographical narrative which has been published in the past few years." (xxv) Regarding the importance of these writings for the Australian literary field, Kateryna Olijnyk Longley comments that by offering their stories to a white reading public, Native women face some risks which challenge their attempt at making their lives fully understood. Longley points to some of these risks when she argues that:

> For white readers there are also difficulties that go beyond the challenges of cross-cultural comprehension. Even the most sympathetic white observers and promoters of Aboriginal culture face the now familiar risk of consolidating the old patterns of domination each time they attempt to act as interpreters of Aboriginal production. It can be argued, however, that there is a much more serious risk of perpetuating the negation of Aboriginal culture by ignoring the new work and remaining silent [...] (LONGLEY: 1992, 370)

In relation to the understanding of Aboriginal texts, Longley argues that silence and ignorance of such works would cause more damage than possible misreadings of Aboriginal writings, because they might lead to consolidations of old patterns of white

domination. Aboriginal autobiographies have worked as a fundamental strategy to the spreading of Aboriginal culture in the sense that it serves not only as a window for the exhibition of Aboriginal people's life experiences, but it also "[...] contributes to a more general understanding of the genres by which cultures tell their personal and communal stories and so define themselves." (LONGLEY: 1992, 370-371) Such works become windows which enable vision and reflection of different worlds and their representations. (371)

Despite the enthusiasm that surrounds the publication of autobiographies in Australia, one category of writers has attracted attention of media, readers and critics. Aboriginal women have been writing about their disadvantaged position in the white-Australian society. According to Longley, their position as writers is helpful in the sense that it unveils issues concerning racial subjugation, the loss of their traditional tribal power base and the sexual discrimination within mainstream white classes. (LONGLEY: 1992, 371) This new wave of cultural curiosity towards Aboriginal people and the growing respect for their culture have called attention to women's claim for respect, self-representation, identity and power. Longley remarks that:

> By publishing their stories of double disempowerment, they [Aboriginal women] are reconstructing the past in their own ways, challenging the entrenched history-book accounts. They are also redefining themselves in the present as crucial agents of Australia's dawning postcolonial understanding. (LONGLEY: 1992, 371)

Such achievements have only been possible because women took risks and challenged conventions which favored white-middle-class men. Through autobiography, subversion became possible. Longley argues that "Autobiography provides an ideal medium [...] because it has the authority of a primary historical record while enjoying the freedom of an unashamedly personal vision." (LONGLEY: 1992, 371) Differently from the traditional white male genre, autobiographies written by women have questioned male power, centrality and the idea of a subject strongly connected to an ideal notion of selfhood. The fact that Aboriginal women are writing for the sake of self-representation, belonging and identity can not be questioned and they have showed that their tradition, culture and beliefs are intrinsic to their search for identity. Longley suggests that these women's displaced cultural situation is responsible

for revealing their fragmented and subjected identity by means of autobiography. (371) Differently from the conventional patterns of the genre, the Aboriginal autobiography written by women emphasizes two aspects that, according to Longley, challenge any sense of the individual, isolated being and helps to redefine their position as selves in Australian society. The critic adds that "[…] it is impossible to think of autobiography as an individual activity in traditional Aboriginal society." (375) In this sense, the two aspects tackled by Longley refer to the issues of communal life and the intimate relationship with their tribal land. Longley believes that these two characteristics are ways of reestablishing and consolidating links with their Aboriginal communities and with their original tribal lands. Longley suggests that these narratives look backwards "[…] not just to 'preserve' their recent history but with the more urgent need to justify their demand for a revision of all Australian history […]" (372)

Being incorporated into the official history of Australia as agents of the same historical process, Aboriginal people felt that they need to be compensated for more than two centuries of erasure and assimilation. Becoming part of Australia's history is a process that requires the survival of Aboriginal people and a guarantee that their history is being told from their own perspective. However, the way that the Aboriginal perspective is presented can be polemic at times. Longley believes that, at the same time Aboriginal women gain power and produce a new body of works, which call attention to their need for recording their history and stories, these same works make use of a white genre to gain visibility. (LONGLEY: 1992, 372) By means of the autobiographical genre, Aboriginal women are able to reassure their power, autonomy and control over their lives as well as making public "[…] the strengths of their cultures to as wide an audience as possible." (373) In spite of the efforts to bring Aboriginal reality and life style to the general public, the fact that Aboriginal people make use of white literary genres to write about Indigenous stories and culture does not seem to please some Aboriginal critics, such as Mudrooroo. Mudrooroo presents a negative perspective regarding contemporary Australian Aboriginal literature. Mudrooroo believes that colonialism was the responsible for changing Aboriginal literature. The critic states that:

> When the Europeans arrived with their system of writing, Aboriginal literature began to change from an oral to a written one, not only in

> English but in the few Aboriginal languages which were allowed to be used. (MUDROOROO: 1997, 229)

The belief in the interference of the white culture in Aboriginal communities, according to Mudrooroo, is still a continuous process in which the Aboriginal is observed and portrayed through colonial eyes. This process of translating Aboriginal people is responsible for what Mudrooroo believes it to be a distortion of traditional Aboriginal oral literature, culture and languages. (MUDROOROO: 1997, 229) Only in the 20th century new scientific methods of analysis were able to look at Indigenous cultures objectively and demystified the idea of a "[…] graded series of cultures leading upwards to some pie-in-the-sky perfection." (229) As far as autobiography is concerned, Mudrooroo remains concerned about the use of the genre to spread Aboriginal stories and culture. This new wave of Aboriginal autobiographies calls the critic attention to whether "[…] there was such a form in traditional oral literature or if it's a completely introduced form." (230) His worries are related to a "[…] definite literary tradition, information which is stored in some form and passed down from generation to generation." He also suggests that "It is easy to find such forms of literary expression which though cast in verse or song are clearly biographical or autobiographical." (230) Mudrooroo negative perspective towards literature suggests that contemporary Aboriginal works have surrendered to white culture and in doing so, contemporary Aboriginal literature:

> […] is becoming more and more irrelevant to the society with which it seeks to deal. Aboriginal literature is and can be more vital in that it is seeking to come to grips with and define a people, the roots of whose culture extend in an unbroken line far back into a past in which English is a recent intrusion. In a sense, Aboriginal writing is a white form in that it is mostly written in English, and too often a polished English which is divorced from the community itself. (MUDROOROO: 1997, 231)

The use of an alien form and alien languages, according to the critic, is seen as contradictory and as a way of discarding the original language of Aboriginal communities. Despite his negative perspective towards works produced by Indigenous people in Australia and the use of white genre and language, Mudrooroo finally presents a wise suggestion to the preservation of Aboriginal language. The critic points out the need for using Native languages so that they can live and grow among Aboriginal

people. He suggests that “Aboriginal children should be taught, or rather given the means to learn a language, one that is their area or their own so that the continuity of past and present and future may be maintained.” (MUDROOROO: 1997, 231) Mudrooroo’s perspective towards contemporary Aboriginal literature in Australia shows how conflicting it is writing Aboriginal autobiographies. No matter how much writers attempt to keep their stories, past and traditions alive, the idea of a consensus among Aboriginal individuals seems to be very difficult. Despite all the criticism and the lack of consensus between writers and critics, contemporary autobiographies written by Indigenous people have successfully proved all negative assumptions to be wrong. These writers have proved that to guarantee the survival of their communities, beliefs and stories they must enter the white domain, subvert it from inside and show white ignorant people the existence of Aboriginal life and the strength of people who challenge assimilation and genocide by showing themselves to the world and demanding respect, equal rights and voice. By doing this, Aboriginal writers guarantee the preservation of their communities, cultures and of their oral stories and suggest that adaptation is the answer to guarantee Aborigines their desired survival.

Indigenous people have been dreaming of a country of opportunities, respect and preservation of their land, people and culture. In the case of Aboriginal women writers, they dream about a “[…] country in which they are living and hunting or over which they wish to claim rights, and they do this either in the context of ritual or simply as part of their day-to-day contact with the area.” (LONGLEY: 1992, 375) The mixing of daily life, dreams, personal and communal history points to the difficulty in separating the individual from its community not only in the sense of its land but also in the sense of traditions, past and stories. The binding between individuals, their lands and their history is one of the most important characteristics of contemporary Aboriginal autobiographies. The relationship established between community, stories, land and individual helps to reshape the genre autobiography in a way that it opens up space for Indigenous voices and narratives. According to Longley, such a strong connection with the place and the community “[…] becomes much more important than the specific personal and temporal details of the original event.” (375)

The issue of land stands out among other issues in contemporary Aboriginal communities because, according to Gillian Whitlock:

> […] 'land' features in autobiographical writing to connect the personal with the political, suggesting that questions of legitimacy are translated into the most intimate and individual histories by both Aboriginal and non-Indigenous Australians. (WHITLOCK: 1996, xxv)

Moved by the importance of the land to their sense of belonging, Aboriginal writers have adopted a kind of narrative which at first would correspond to a simple change in the autobiographical Western model, but in fact, it's a narrative that "[…] becomes more significant in terms of communal validation as it loses the characteristics of historical accuracy and personal authenticity upon which the Western genre depends." (LONGLEY: 1992, 375-376) For all these reasons, contemporary autobiography has served as a privileged site for contemporary women of color. Linda Anderson suggests that the contributions of autobiography to women are connected to the fact that it maps:

> […] the specificity of difference, opens up the space between, makes it also a space mediated and traversed by language. The words that begin to exist between women […] create a space, which if not yet, will have been." (ANDERSON: 1997, 143)

In the case of Aboriginal women writings, autobiography means questioning and such process is a very difficult one, as Margery Fee suggests. The critic comments that:

> It is not possible simply to assume that a work written by an "Other", […] even a politicized Other, will have freed itself from the dominant ideology. […] Radical writing, by definition, is writing that is struggling, of necessity only partly successfully, to rewrite the dominant ideology from within, to produce a different version of reality. (FEE: 1997, 245)

These Aboriginal women have been able to write from within white control and have tried to reach success by producing works that, as Whitlock states, aim at answering "Questions which seemed answered, or answerable, in the past […]" and "[…] now don't know how to take their place." The critic concludes that "[...] contemporary Australian autobiographical writing leaves the beaten track." (WHITLOCK: 1996, xxx)

3.2 Australia's history and the history of its Aboriginal people.

The word Aboriginal according to English dictionaries refers to the first inhabitants of a land of a country. In the *Webster's Dictionary*, the word Aboriginal, regarding human beings, is defined as "*1*. Existing (in a place) from the beginning or from earliest days; first; indigenous; *2*. of characteristic of aborigines." (NEUFELDT: 1997, 3) Such explanation becomes fundamental to understand Kathryn Trees' understanding and interpretation of the word. Trees suggests that the prefix "ab", which means "away, from, from off, down […]" (1) and the word "original" represent not necessarily a simple reference to Indigenous people from Australia. Trees suggests that:

> […] the term "Aborigine" when used as a name displaces *Aborigines* from their original land. It puts them [individuals] into a free-floating, deterritorialised space where they are not seen to belong to or as 'owning' any land. In this way the term 'Aborigine' itself reinforces the ways in which *Aborigines* have been deprived of land and status. (TREES: 1991, 68)

Such perspective of the word "Aboriginal" serves as a bridge to connect the original people of Australia and the process of dislocation, assimilation and colonization that have been part of their history. As far as the construction of identity of Aborigines in Australia is concerned, the critic Jennifer Sabbioni, an Aboriginal woman involved in her community and in cross-cultural training to demystify stereotypes of Aboriginal peoples, calls our attention to the "[…] common assumption that all the indigenous people of Australia constitute one group, the Aborigines." (SABBIONI: 1998, xix) However, she points out that "[…] we do not think of ourselves as 'Aboriginal' but rather identify ourselves within our own communities." (xix) Sabbioni explains that contemporary Aboriginal people "[…] refer to themselves as Murri (in Queensland), Koori (in New South Wales and Victoria), Nyungar (in Western Australia), Nunga (in South Australia), or Palawa (in Tasmania)." Such names, which have been adopted in the last decade, are adopted as a way of "[…] differing regional identity groups to replace the white man's collective naming of us as Aborigines." (xix)

Generalizations that lead to crisis of identity and incorrect information regarding Aboriginal people in Australia have been responsible for this recent attempt at connecting their sense of belonging and identities to their original tribal groups.

However, in spite of this need for identifying with one specific group and the variety of identities which emerge from this initiative, in the end, all these people "[…] share many features that give unity and a common sense of identity in broader terms." (SABBIONI: 1998, xix) Sabbioni states that this sense of identity, common to all Aboriginal groups in Australia, is related to history and the consequences of colonialism. Sabbioni states that the history of Australia is an account of oppression and dispossession towards the first inhabitants of the land which dates from 1770 "[…] with the landing of Captain Cook in Australia […]" (xix) The encounter of Europeans and Native people in Australia, in relation to the practices of oppression and exploitation, unites the tribes and groups by means of colonial experiences. Sabbioni calls attention to the fact that such shared experiences of discrimination and oppression date from "[…] the advent of European colonization, and of poverty and disadvantage; […]" (xx) However, those shared experiences were not strong enough to completely erase Aboriginal people's sense of belonging and connection with their groups. Nowadays, this recovery of links among lost generations of Aboriginal peoples proves that colonization failed to completely assimilate and compress all groups under the same scope of Indigenous culture.

Historically speaking, the arrival of Captain James Cook in a territory constituted by several islands named Oceania, in 1770, is considered the first step towards the creation of Australia. Originally claimed for Britain, Australia, or the British Crown Colony of New South Wales, as it was firstly named by Cook in 1788, finds in its origin vestiges of marginality and segregation. Until 1864, Australia was considered a penal colony, the punishment for criminals, prostitutes and all kinds of people who were at the margin of the official British society. The land of the rejected became homeland for these people and they were responsible for starting to populate the island. Nowadays Australia, or the Commonwealth Australia, is consisted of six states, two major mainland territories and other minor territories and it is a constitutional monarchy with a parliamentary system of government. The country is ruled by a Federal Government, under the advice of the Prime-Minister, and state-level governments, which are very independent concerning legislative powers and control over public areas and issues. Despite the independence of the states of New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania, Victoria and Western Australia, states and territories respond to the Commonwealth Parliament only to specific areas that relate to the Constitution, for

example. Nowadays Australia is considered a prosperous country with a capitalist economy which is based on a strong consumer confidence and on the growing exportation market, which initially consists of Japan, China, United States, South Korea, and New Zealand, despite its lack of a manufacturing industry with focus on exportation. Tourism is one of the major contributors to the growth of Australia as a developed country. Due to its natural beauties and landscapes, Australia is the paradise for adventurous tourists and the land of famous marsupials such as kangaroos, koalas and wombats. In relation to its population, Australia is considered to have one of the biggest immigration programs in the world as an attempt to raise population levels. Immigrants, along with the Aboriginal groups and Europeans descendants are responsible for making of Australia a multicultural country. (WIKIPEDIA: 2006)

In spite of all the efforts of the Australian government to lead the country into the status of a real first world nation, many internal issues, which stop the country from moving forward, still have to be discussed and rethought. One of these issues is the one that brings into discussion the meaning of nationalism, of being "Australian" and how this is related to the situation of Aboriginal people in Australia. The official history of Australia, for example, serves as a clear example of the segregation, oppression and prejudice that excluded Aboriginal communities from important Australian historical events. In relation to the participation of Aboriginal people in the history of the country, Kathryn Trees calls attention to the fact that historical events have always been dominated by the white discourse; by the discourse of the colonizer. She states that:

> The past two hundred years of Australian history has been dominated and formulated by a network of "white" discourses. Specifically, official representations of the relationships between "Aboriginal" and "non-Aboriginal" societies have been written by the "colonisers" to construct an official Australian history. This "history" has ensured the relegation of "Aboriginal" history and heritage to a mythical time pre-1788 and thus these official constructions of history are instrumental in the subjugation and marginalisation of knowledges from displaced peoples. These knowledges would otherwise challenge or rupture the apparent linearity of official history. (TREES: 1991, 66)

The history of Australia, as Kathryn Trees points out, has always been marked by the assumed superiority of the white race in detriment of Indigenous people. The clash between European colonizers and Native people is marked by the Aborigines' struggle

for survival in spite of policies which attempt to put an end to their communities and to carry out the erasure of their culture, traditions, beliefs, languages and sense of identity. Official history, according to the critic, has contributed a lot to the empowerment of the white race and the extinction of Native people. In relation to the naturalization of whiteness, the marginalization of Indigenous people of Australia and its consequences, the critic Kathryn Trees states that:

> Official history has served to marginalise "Aboriginal" knowledges, customs and beliefs and further ensures a privileged place for "white" knowledges, customs and beliefs as the foundation of Australian society. "White" Australian culture has come to be considered the "natural", central or dominant culture of Australia which is passed on through birthright. (TREES: 1991, 67)

The empowerment of white beliefs guarantees the erasure of other cultures which do not fit mainstream thought. Such processes of segregation are fundamental initiatives to perpetuate the naturalization of the colonizer's white discourse and the genocide of Aboriginal communities. Trees justifies the superiority of the white discourse by suggesting that:

> This general condition of "white" culture as the dominant, and therefore the official culture of Australia was clearly the result of British political and economic desire to deny the heteroglossia – social, historical, physiological conditions – already functioning within "Terra Nullius" when "colonisation" initially took place. What followed was a "narrativisation" of Australian history through the writings that represented "white" settlement. (TREES: 1991, 67)

The process of colonization, which was established by the British Empire in the 18th century, served as basis for the legitimization of white superiority upon Native communities. Regarding the origin of Aboriginal people in the Australian territory, the critic Jennifer Sabbioni points out that "Recent studies have pushed the date back even farther and presented the claim that indigenous people may have inhabited the continent for 175,000 years." (SABBIONI: 1998, xx) However analysis and assumptions regarding the existence of Native people in Australia are not valid for Aborigines. Sabbioni states that "[…] Aboriginal peoples reject this scientific approach to their origins. They consider the Dreaming to be their originating story." (xx) The belief in the

Dreaming to justify the Aboriginal existence into this world turns invalid any white assumption to define the origin of Indigenous people in Australia. Sabbioni explains the importance of Dreaming and what it represents to Aboriginal people by stating that:

> The Dreaming, sometimes referred to as the Dreamtime, encompasses the period of creation. During this period, mythical beings emerged from the earth, the water, and the sky and assumed a variety of forms and identities. They roamed the vastness of a barren landscape, stopping and engaging in various activities through which they created mountains, rivers, water holes, flora and fauna, and the indigenous people, who were appointed as caretakers of the world that surrounded them. Rules and regulations were set in place to ensure a balance between humanity and other forms of life and nonlife. It can be said that the indigenous people of Australia were really the first environmentalists in the world. (SABBIONI: 1998, xx-xxi)

The Dreaming represents not only the origin of Aboriginal people but it is the first link between the individual and its community. Such a belief guarantees the Aborigine its first notion of identity in relation to its group, land and origin. Jennifer Sabbioni states that, for traditional Native societies, "[…] every person is assigned his or her own Dreaming (or creation) story, which is associated with a totem and kinship relations." In this sense, "each person is also given responsibility for that particular Dreaming, which is continually reactivated through ritual, song, story, dance, designs and totemic subjects." (SABBIONI: 1998, xxi) In general terms the Dreaming will be responsible for determining the system of values, beliefs, behaviors and relationships that delineate human beings' way of life and the world that surrounds them. This myth of origin is responsible for the interrelation of all these natural and non-natural entities to create the Indigenous sense of identity. (xxi) Regarding the relevance of Dreaming to Native communities, Sabbioni states that "Dreamtime informs song, visual representations, political claims (including land rights), social order, concepts of law, and environmental ethics." (xxi) However, white pressures to erasure and assimilate Aboriginal beliefs and culture have disregarded the importance of Dreaming to Native communities. The disrespect toward Aborigines' history marks the oppressive attitude of white settlers towards the original tribes of Australia. In relation to the history of Australia and the empowerment of white settlers, Sabbioni concludes that "Given the history of oppression and resistance in the two hundred years since white settlement, the Dreaming also functions as the basis for indigenous identity." (xxi)

In search of the maintenance of their Dreaming, Aboriginal communities did not easily surrender to European conquest. Their resistance is another issue that is omitted from the official history of Australia. Considering the colonization of Australia and all its consequences to Aboriginal tribes during and after settlement, Jennifer Sabbioni states that “Before the 1960s historians glorified the achievements of the Europeans on the continent and ignored or underestimated, and in many cases excused, the disastrous impact of colonization on Aboriginal […] people.” (SABBIONI: 1998, xxii) The period of invasion and dominance of Aboriginal lands and people marks the celebration of the dominance of white European settlers in the official history of Australia. However, what many Australians ignore is the fact that Indigenous people “[…] employed strategies to maintain control over their land.” (xxii) Fortunately, the omission of Aboriginal presence in the history of Australia has been reexamined by contemporary historians, and Sabbioni concludes that “[…] in recent years historians have recovered these histories of resistance, courtage and heroic skills.” (xxii) Such recent attempts to recover the history of Aboriginal people mark the new moment in the retelling of the history of Australia.

In spite of recent attempts to include Aboriginal stories into the official history of Australia, much of previous white ideologies and methods of erasure of Aboriginal peoples have to be examined. Basically, the history of oppression which dominated and caused the genocide of Native peoples of Australia is marked by an initial process of extinction, disguised by “protective policies” and a following process of assimilation. Jennifer Sabbioni claims that after Darwinism, what she calls “The Killing Times”, new policies toward the extinction of Aboriginal people were reevaluated. Instead of open killing and destruction of Native communities, “[…] state governments across Australia legislated for the protection of Aboriginal peoples beginning in 1860 in Victoria […]” (SABBIONI: 1998, xxii) This new “protective” policy for Native communities imposed new modes of living. As a first measure, reserves and settlements for white settlers were established in Aboriginal territories. As far as the issue of displacement of Aboriginal people is concerned, Sabbioni points out that after the government took control of those lands, they “[…] were administrated by missionaries or government managers under the control of the chief protectors.” (xxiii) Among the many consequences that emerged from such laws and policies, Sabbioni calls attention to the white social and economic

control of Indigenous communities. Among many consequences of this "protective" period in the history of Australia, Sabbioni suggests that:

> [White laws] determined the marriage patterns, removed children from their parents, determined their living environments, barred them from certain places, controlled their access to employment, refused them access to institutions catering to nonindigenous people. Limited their entrepreneurial activities in mainstream society, and monitored their movements. (SABBIONI: 1998, xxiii)

These policies, which guaranteed the settlement of new white communities and the end of Native people's communities, were responsible for creating a lost generation which was alienated from its original land and tribal family. The use of Aboriginal labor in white settlements was responsible for the increasing number of Aborigines that were removed from their lands and forced to spread the white supremacy all over Australia. One group that was greatly affected by such white policies was the Aboriginal women's group. Sabbioni states that:

> Many young women who had been placed in missions rather than raised by their own mothers and extended families lacked the social skills necessary to counteract the advances of nonindigenous males in the workplace. Evidence shows that many returned to settlements pregnant by white man. Legislation "protect" non-Aboriginal fathers, who were able to abrogate their responsibilities toward the institutions that the colonizers had established. (SABBIONI: 1998, xxiii)

In her autobiography, *My Place*, Sally Morgan registers the accounts of people who were forced to live among white settlers. Her grandmother, Daisy, or Nan, as she is referred to many times in the book, narrates her own life as a servant of the Drake-Brockman's family in the Corunna Downs Station where she lived away from her tribal community. Daisy mentions that "The big house on Corunna was built by the natives. They all worked together, building that. If it wasn't for the natives, nothing would get done. They made the station, Drake-Brockmans didn't do it on their own." (MORGAN: 2003, 404) The work of Native people was responsible for the establishment of white communities in Australia, like the story mentioned by Sally Morgan's grandmother. Policies guaranteed that the black people didn't stop working for the white people, as Daisy mentions: "The people were really hungry sometimes, poor things. They didn't

get enough, you see. And they worked hard. You had to work hard, if you didn't do it, then they call the police in to make you work hard," (405) Unfortunately, it was not only the enforced work who oppressed the lives of Native people at that time. Violence was another way of imposing white power over Aboriginal people. Arthur, Daisy's brother, narrates moments of extreme violence against Aborigines. He states that:

> I remember seein' native people all chained up around the neck and hands, walkin' behind a policeman. They often passed the station that way. I used to think, what have they done to be treated like that. Made me want to cry, just watchin'. Sometimes, we'd hear about white men goin' shooting blackfellas for sport, just like we was some kind of animal. We'd all get scared then. We didn't want that to happen to us. Aah, things was hard for the blackfellas in those days. (MORGAN: 2003, 231)

Moments like this were very common as a way of subjugating Native people and assuring white control. Other problem that greatly affected the lives of Aboriginal people at the time of "protective" policies was the removal of mixed-blood children from their families and their internment in institutions. According to Morgan's grandmother, having children was a big trouble. Daisy states that:

> In those days, it was a privilege for a white man to want you, but if you had children, you weren't allowed to keep them. You was only allowed to keep the black ones. They took the white ones off you 'cause you weren't considered fit to raise a child with white blood. (MORGAN: 2003, 415)

The removal of these children from their communities and families was an experience lived by mixed-blood people in Australia. Sally Morgan's mother was one of these mixed-blood children who was taken away from her mother and was interned in the Parkerville Children's Home. She states that: "That was my home from 1931 when I was three years old. I was only able to go back to my mother at Ivanhoe three times a year, for the holidays." (MORGAN: 2003, 304) The reality of those kids who lived at homes like Parkerville was cruel and a sense of abandonment was the feeling they shared, as Gladys points out:

> A lot of kids at Parkerville had parents. Some had mothers, some had fathers. You'd do anything for kids like that, because you always hoped that they might ask you to come along and share their visitors.
>
> It was hardest for the Aboriginal kids. We didn't have anyone. Some of the kids there had been taken from their families that lived hundreds of miles away. It was too far for anyone to come and see them. And, anyway, Aboriginal people had to get permits to travel. Sometimes they wouldn't give them a permit. They didn't care that they wanted to see their kids. (MORGAN: 2003, 316)

The suffering of those mothers and fathers who had their kids taken away is reflected in Daisy's words when she says that:

> Alice told me Gladdie needed education, so they put her in Parkerville Children's Home. What could I do? I was too frightened to say anythin'. I wanted to keep her with me, she was all I had, but they didn't want her there. Alice said she cost too much to feed, said I was ungrateful. She was wantin' me to give up my own flesh and blood and still be grateful. Aren't black people allowed to have feelin's? (MORGAN: 2003, 420)

Regarding all those policies, that included the taking of mixed-blood children from their families, Jennifer Sabbioni denounces that there is not one single Aboriginal family in Australia which has not been affected by those "protective" policies. Many people, like Gladys, were interned. However Sabbioni points out that such practice has not disappeared yet. The critic refers to some Aboriginal activists that argue that "[…] the practice has not ceased and that only the names of the institutions have changed: rather than people being interned in missions, many are being incarcerated for minor offenses." (SABBIONI: 1998, xxiii) Sabbioni refers to data from the Australian Institute of Criminology to claim that "[…] Aboriginal people suffer a higher incarceration rate than any other group in Australia." (xxiii) Such information only stresses the ethnic, social and economic differences that exist in a country ruled by a group which oppresses those who don't fit in their ideal society.

After that period of "protection", which aimed to fragment Aboriginal communities, the period of assimilation was created during the 1930s as a revision of previous legislations. According to Sabbioni, "State and territory governments, driven by racist assumptions and self-interest under the guise of humanitarian concerns, began to float assimilation as a desirable goal." (SABBIONI: 1998, xxiii) The objective of

such practices was that "Aboriginal […] people would be assimilated, absorbed, and integrated into mainstream Australian society." (xxiii) Despite this legislation had been created in the 1930s, only after the Second World War, in the 1950, all the states started to incorporate it. According to Sabbioni, intermarriage was secured by the new laws. When those assimilation policies were established, the policy makers believed "[…] that indigenous traits would be bred out. Aboriginal descendants would become indistinguishable in the wider community of the European Australian population." (xxiv) The intermarriage of Indigenous and non-indigenous people would guarantee the extinction of any trace of Aboriginality in Indigenous descendants up to the point they could pass as white people and then become part of the "ideal" European community. However, some of these measures would never have been thought of before the assimilation period. Sabbioni states that the fight for equal rights was one of the most important achievements of Aboriginal people in Australia. The critic explains that:

> From early settlement times, the indigenous people had been the backbone of the pastoral industry and had been paid for their services in rations of flour, sugar, and a minimal amount of tobacco. Following World War II, The Northern Territory recommended that Aboriginal people should be paid in wages, but on a scale below Europeans. Agitation for equal pay began in 1960s. In 1965 legislation for equal wages was drawn up by the Arbitration Commission, but a "slow workers clause" was inserted which justified lower wages by stating that Aboriginal people work at a slower pace than their non-Aboriginal counterparts. (SABBIONI: 1998, xxiv)

Only in 1968 equal pay rights for whites and Aboriginals were finally achieved. The consequences of both protective and assimilation periods caused many wounds that still bleed in the hearts of those who had their identities stolen, their memories erased, and their lands removed. Among the consequences referred to by Jennifer Sabbioni there are other issues which have to be considered, such as the loss of identity, Aboriginal deaths in custody, the stolen generation and the land rights issue. (SABBIONI: 1998, xxiv-xxx) All these aspects refer to the current situation of Aboriginal people in Australia. All the attempts at assimilating Aboriginal communities prove that a great deal of historical events has been omitted from the official history of Australia. Only recently, Aboriginal people had their stories listened to and only recently they started to emerge from their position of subjugation and were able to take

control of their lives. Recently, many Aboriginal people in Australia, mainly artists, writers and scholars, have been able to raise their voices against the devastating consequences of colonization and white race supremacy.

As far as the consequences of imperialist practices are concerned, the loss of identity is still one of the major problems faced by Aborigines in Australia. Their identities have always been determined by scientific, political and religious thoughts and by many forms of cultural production which aim to define an authentic Aboriginal identity. According to the critic Terry Goldie, the Native and the white settler are part of the same game in which the Aborigine is controlled by the white and the rules are established by the British imperialism. Despite the clear opposition of race, the critic suggests, there is also the clear opposition of representations of the white in control and the Native under control. The images that emerge from this dualism between the superior white race and the inferior Aborigine create stereotypes and images that carry a very strong and negative meaning. According to Goldie "[...] imperialist discourse valorizes the colonized according to its own needs for reflection." (GOLDIE: 1997, 233-234) The Indigenous is seen as "Other" through the eyes of the white who establishes stereotyped patterns of Aboriginality. Regarding the several practices of "interpreting" Native people, Jennifer Sabbioni states that:

> Western concepts of race also influenced the ways in which indigenous peoples were represented – as primitive, uncivilized, childlike, and doomed to extinction. Throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, photographers and ethnographers in fact created something called "Aboriginality," which was taken up and aligned with the policies and practices of the Australian state. Aborigines were brought into being as "others" within Western culture through these representational practices. (SABBIONI: 1998, xxv)

The history of "othering" of Aboriginal people was developed by the imposition of a wide range of stereotyped and molded identities, cultures and attitudes which should follow the white standards of the so-called civilized human beings. The critic Gareth Griffiths believes that "Aboriginality" or "Authenticity", as he names this process of characterization of Indigenous people, is nothing else rather than a huge invention of white people. The belief in the existence of a true and unique "Aboriginality" which represents the Native individual has to be carefully analyzed,

suggests Griffiths. The critic calls our attention to the fact that "There are real dangers in recent representations of indigenous peoples in popular discourse, and especially in the media, which stress claims to an 'authentic' voice." (GRIFFITHS: 1997, 237) The belief in the existence of an original voice that is representative of Native cultures is a very powerful strategy of oppression, silence and it represents the erasure of peculiarities which belong to every Aboriginal individual. Griffiths blames the media for being responsible for the spreading of the image of an "authentic" indigene. He states that "The 'liberal' tone of modern journalism […] is possible partly because of the way in which certain signs have been fetishised within popular discourse […]" (237) These signs have been responsible for the creation of two images of the "authentic" indigene, as Griffiths suggests. On the one hand, the legitimization of the Aboriginal as "[…] the 'elder', the local, and the tribal, […]" On the other hand, the illegitimate Aborigine is represented as "[…] the outsider, the Southerner, the fringe-dweller […]" (237) The critic suggests that the interference of the media in the construction of a Indigenous authentic identity is "[…] a way of representing […] the 'positions' and 'voices' of the indigene, inscribing them in effect as disputational claimants to a 'territoriality' of the authentic." (238) Despite the wish of many Aboriginal people of guaranteeing a more active presence of their peoples in the Australian society, Griffiths warns that all the:

> […] representations subsumed by the white media under a mythologised and fetishised sign of the 'authentic' can also be used to create a privileged hierarchy of Australian Aboriginal voice which in practice represents that community as divided. (GRIFFITHS: 1997, 238)

Clashes among Aboriginal communities for the "right" of being the representatives of an Indigenous "authenticity" are not the only consequences Gareth Griffiths is worried about. He highlights that society at large might be constructing a belief "[…] that issues of recovered 'traditional' rights are of a different order of equity from the right to general social justice and equality." (GRIFFITHS: 1997, 238) The fear of having their claims disguised by a consensus of "authenticity" is, in fact, the biggest threat to Indigenous communities in Australia. Unfortunately the belief in authenticity has already caused damages among political activists, as Gareth Griffiths points out. He states that:

> […] in a media construction of the "authentic" Australian Aboriginal in opposition to the "inauthentic" political activists whose claim is undermined […] by a dismissal of their right to represent Australian aboriginal culture in any legitimate way. (GRIFFITHS: 1997, 238)

Despite all the pressure of Australian society to define an "authentic" Aborigine and the consequences that affected their identities and threatened the harmony among different communities, contemporary Aboriginal people are making great efforts to recover the signs of "Aboriginality" which have been hidden under the several masks of a mythologized idea of authenticity. Griffiths believes that resistance is the only solution to the existence of Indigenous peoples, stories and cultures for many generations that will come. Many Indigenous people have been able to develop "Strategies of recuperation and texts which insist on the importance of re-telling the 'story' of the indigenous cultures […]" (GRIFFITHS: 1997, 239) According to Griffiths, these Aboriginal spokespeople have come to public space to question the impositions of a white society which sees in the image of an authentic Indigene a way to guarantee a speech "[…] to enact a discourse of 'liberal violence', re-enacting its own oppressions on the subjects it purports to represent and defend." (241) The critic Jennifer Sabbioni also refers to the importance of contemporary Aboriginal artists to the rethinking of the image of Indigenous communities in Australia. She suggets that artists, more specifically writers, have been able to subvert images of "Aboriginality" as an attempt to "[…] reclaim personal and communal histories" and also, ironically, "[…] to mirror back the former colonizers and their descendants their Western colonialist assumptions." (SABBIONI: 1998, xxv) In this sense, contemporary Aboriginal Australian artists defend their position as selves and the control over their own identities by reinforcing blood connections with their peoples. Such connection justifies Sabbioni, is very important to strength their claim for belonging and for land rights. (xxv-xxvi) Blood connections, sense of community and heritage are fundamental issues to understand Aboriginal peoples and their search for self-representation. In relation to the importance of belonging, Sabbioni believes that "Kinship relationships, ties to the land, religious rites and practices, as well as our shared history since European invasion are the most significant ways in which people can identify themselves as Aboriginal." (xxvi)

Protection and assimilation as governmental practices toward Indigenous people in Australia highlighted other consequences despite the loss of identity, as Jennifer Sabbioni points out. The second consequence referred to by the critic is related to the issue of Aboriginal deaths in custody. Sabbioni calls attention to the fact that "The Anglo-Australian judicial system has been an instrument of oppression for Aboriginal […] people. Rarely has the law protected their lives, property, land, or civil rights." (SABBIONI: 1998, xxvii) The issue of custody and law in Australia proves that very little has been done to improve the lives of Aboriginal communities and their descendants. The lack of respect towards Native peoples is still evident among non-Native people. Justice seems does not seem to exist for those who have always been oppressed, rejected and silenced by the discourse of superiority of white inhabitants of that country. As far as the Australian judicial system is concerned, Sabbioni criticizes the fact that such system "[…] harasses Aboriginal people, subjects them to alien legal proceedings, and needlessly jails them." (xxvii) Despite all the crimes committed against Indigenous people in Australia, Sabbioni states that in 1988 The Royal Commission was set up to investigate Aboriginal Deaths in Custody in Australia. The critic states that "The commission produced a massive report and made comprehensive recommendations for reform. In all, 339 recommendations were put forward." (xxvii) This analysis made by The Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody showed that "Aboriginal people are at least ten times more likely to be jailed than non-Aboriginals" (xxvii) Conclusions also pointed out that most of the people who have been sent to custody shared common stories. Among the most common stories, Sabbioni highlights, is the fact that Native people "[…] had been taken away from their parents, institutionalized, dislocated, and had received limited education." (xxvii) Sabbioni calls attention to the fact that recent analysis of the situation of Aboriginal people in custody shows that:

> […] despite attention to the problem and a sympathetic reception to the recommendations by the police, press, and public, the rates of deaths in custody have increased since the recommendations were made. (SABBIONI: 1998, xxvii)

Keeping Aboriginals in jail and the absence of laws to guarantee these people a decent life among their communities and non-Aboriginal people proves that the white-dominating system of rules has been very effective in keeping its “problems” away from public domain.

The issues of the stolen generation and of land rights still hunt the lives of Aboriginal people in Australia. The effects of assimilation and “protective” practices that contributed to the erasure of Native people’s communities, cultures and Dreaming were so devastating that healing and recovering have been difficult tasks for those who never forget. Regarding the issue of the stolen generation, Sabbioni believes that this was one of the most devastating and effective practices to destroy Aborigines and all that they represented. Sabbioni states that “The trauma is a continuing legacy, and Aboriginal people suffer daily from their experiences.” (SABBIONI: 1998, xxviii) Pain, dislocation, and traumatic childhood experiences are the most common effects of such practice upon those who were forced to survive away from their families, communities and land. The critic suggests that only in 1995 began an on-going inquiry to investigate the consequences of assimilation practices of Aboriginal people and of the stolen generation.

The land rights issue hunts the lives of Aboriginal people since England took control of Australia and “[…] claimed Australian lands through the doctrine of *terra nullius* (empty land).” (SABBIONI: 1998, xxviii) According to Jennifer Sabbioni, such a doctrine “[…] held that Australia was an unoccupied territory, despite the long-term inhabitation by indigenous peoples.” (xxviii) Bob Hodge and Vijay Mishra agree that “For Aborigines today the issue of issues is land rights” (HODGE *et al.*: 1997, 412) The critics believe that the several processes of dislocation, of dispossession and of loss of land have made very difficult the survival of Aborigines in Australia. According to Hodge and Mishra, “Instead of the confident assumption of identity tied to and established through links to a country, dispossession to some degree is their universal experience.” (412) The common experience of dispossession among Aboriginal tribes in Australia is one of the most important issues that has long been discussed and which still has not guaranteed Indigenous people their right to their original lands. In her autobiography *My Place*, Sally Morgan refers to the issue of land rights through the voice of Arthur Corunna. Arthur, in his brilliant analysis of the question of the land in Australia, states that:

> There's so much the whitefellas don't understand. They want us to be assimilated into the white, but we don't want to be. They complain about our land rights, but they don't understand the way we want to live. They say we shouldn't get the land, but the white man's had land rights since this country was invaded, our land rights. Most of the land the aborigine wants, now white man would touch. The government is like a big dog with a bone with no meat on it. They don't want to live on that themselves, but they don't want the black man to get it either. Yet, you find somethin' valuable on the land the Aborigene has got and whites are all there with their hands out. (MORGAN: 2003, 266)

Despite the interference of white people in the lives of Indigenous communities and the effort of taking away the right over their lands, some initiatives taken by Indigenous groups from Northern and Central Australia, for example, have started legal battles to get back their original lands. The critics point out that these groups have been "[…] trying to reestablish traditional ways of life, as close to their traditional territories as is now possible." (HODGE *et al.*: 1997, 412) Much of this reconnection has been made by means of Aboriginal art and literature. Artists believe that their role has been the one of speaking for those who cannot fight for their rights anymore and guarantee that their culture will be respected and the lands will return to their original owners. (413) According to the critics many strategies have been used by Aboriginal writers to recover the fragments of a culture which has been devastated by the ambition of British colonizers and descendants. Vijay states that:

> Very many texts, written and unwritten, recorded or not, deal directly with the fundamental issues facing Aboriginal people, torn as they are between alienation and a sense of belonging. The strategy they use is an adaptation of traditional Aboriginal ways, constructing maps that are designed to represent broad stretches of space and time, to give meaning and perspective, direction and hope on the bewildering journey of the life of themselves and their people. (HODGE *et al.*: 1997, 417)

By tracing back their origins, the current generation of Aboriginal people, who try to find their identities among their fragmented and barely existing memories, escape from the fear of total alienation and of not belonging anywhere or anyone. Their efforts, the critics state, aim at responding to two "[…] opposing impulses, establishment of difference (between desert and water, home and exile, Aboriginal and White) and the

resolution of difference." (HODGE *et al.*: 1997, 417) Their attempt at getting back their right to their lands is more than guaranteeing the survival of their peoples, it represents the strengthening of Aboriginal peoples' beliefs, Dreaming and cultures so that they can be united to speak for themselves and defend their positions of selves.

Discussions regarding land rights point to other issues that go beyond it. Both issues of race and ethnicity undergo many other discussions and represent, respectively, the ideals of white and marginalized groups. Sneja Gunew highlights that one basic difference between race and ethnicity consists of the fact that "[…] while race is structured by the desire to be considered human, ethnicity is structured by a concomitant desire for citizenship, that is, to be legitimate part of political structures." (GUNEW: 2004, 22) The discussion of land rights, as well as the difference between race and ethnicity (between white people's and Aboriginal people's rights) also brings into light the issue of citizenship which affects the lives of Indigenous people in Australia. Such question is considered to be very delicate according to the critic Mike Salvaris. He suggests that:

> As a nation, Australians claim an instinctive affinity for some of the core values which sustain strong citizenship (egalitarianism, a fair go, mateship, social solidarity, etc.), history shows these values were often misapplied to promote social and racial exclusion rather than its opposite […]. But Australia can still fairly claim to have pioneered some of the political forms of modern citizenship, even to have been a kind of "social laboratory" a century ago. (SALVARIS: 2000, 79)

According to Salvaris, the Australian citizenship is weak in its political form and in its popular support. The critic suggests that the roots of such a weak citizenship grew from British soil and that such historical legacy, Salvaris suggests:

> […] included a British monarchical (and imperial) model of government rather than a European republican or revolutionary tradition; reliance on British common law rather than wider universal principles of human rights or citizenship as the basis for rights; a national Constitution that is […] essentially silent on citizenship; and a tendency in public policy to follow narrow and increasingly passive models of citizenship rather than seeing it as an actively developing and democratic political category. (SALVARIS: 2000, 80)

Salvaris shows his disbelief in new strategies of rethinking the issue of citizenship. The critic points out that since the 1980s "The new discourse often relies on the 'cynical and self-interested deployment' of a certain kind of bombastic masculinism, and makes endless calls to 'celebrate' being Australian […]" (SALVARIS: 2000, 81) Salvaris also points out that, in the case of Indigenous people, Australia has become more unequal which is proved by the "[…] high differentiation in socioeconomic outcomes for Indigenous Australians in almost all measures of equality and social well-being from health, welfare and education to income, employment and justice; […]" (82) Considering the awareness of citizenship among Australians, Salvaris believes that:

> […] Australians will need to understand their present relative powerlessness as citizens with no access to a process of citizen-initiated constitutional reform, as persons subject to largely undemocratic practices and institutionalisations of government." (SALVARIS: 2000, 84)

As far as the case of Aboriginal people is concerned, Tim Rowse states that "[…] the politics of Indigenous citizenship is a struggle not only over notions of right but also about ways of being present and effective, that is, about capacities for Indigenous participation." (ROWSE: 2000, 86) The attempts of Aboriginal people to guarantee their rights as active individuals of an equalitarian society show that they have "[…] challenged governments to reinvent their citizenship as a set of communal, not merely individual, capacities and rights." (86) The critic suggests that the assimilation policy "[…] sought to end discrimination against Indigenous Australians but failed to concede an Indigenous right to land." The process also "[…] gave new legitimacy to the established practice of removing children from their families in order to 'improve' their prospects" (88) Such practices greatly affected their sense of belonging, their notion of identity, their connection to their ancestors and the perspective of having their citizenship guaranteed. Rowse points out that in mid-twentieth century, citizenship acts declared Indigenous people incapable, not because of disabilities, but due to their "weak" cultural and historical backgrounds which demanded "correction" and "education". (89) However, Indigenous people were able to produce skillful and articulate critiques towards the oppressions imposed by the assimilation era. Rowse states that "The political virtue of Indigenous invisibility is also a theme […] to justify 'assimilation'." (91) During the assimilation period, many efforts were made to

guarantee the invisibility and the erasure of Aboriginal communities in Australia. According to Rowse, “Assimilation policy aspired to enable individuals by destroying the communities in which they were unhelpfully embedded.” And such policy aimed the “[…] closure of reserves and the constitution of the isolated (or integrated) Indigenous household among non-Indigenous households […]” (91) Rowse named those practices as “assaults of ‘citizenship’ itself” (91)

Only in 1967, with the alteration of the Constitution by means of a referendum, Aboriginal people in Australia were able to get their citizenship. (ROWSE: 2000, 92) However, many people were against the concession of Aboriginal citizenship mainly because it was a threat to Indigenous communities and it represented the complete end of their life-style, the end of their reserves and the erasure of their existence. In the 1970s and the 1980s, an Indigenous view emerged to change the perspective of citizenship. Such perspective rejected the position of Aboriginal people as citizens of Australia. According to Tim Rowse, “To be a citizen of Australia […] conceded British sovereignty and so betrayed the principle of unextinguished Indigenous sovereignty.” (93) The solution was postulating the “native title” which, according to the High Court, guaranteed Native people their status as original owners of the continent, but it also reasserted that Aborigines and non-Aboriginal people were common citizens. (93) Although the Aborigines had their citizenship guaranteed, Rowse believes that this is something that will always have to be reinvented and issues regarding Indigenous citizenship rights must always be brought into discussion. Rowse, also states that Aboriginal people will have to learn to deal with the “[…] cultural material they inherit from their Indigenous culture and [with the material they inherit] from the lessons that they draw from their colonized circumstances.” (97) The survival of Aboriginal groups in Australia will only be possible if they accept the intersections of both cultures and if they always reinvent their never fixed citizenships.

Discussions about Indigenous citizenship are of great importance but, recently in the history of Australia, the issue of multiculturalism has called attention of the Government, Aboriginal peoples and white society. The awareness of an increasing diversity of ethnicities in the Australian territory has made citizens and governments look at the issue and analyze the consequences of pluralism in their country and in the world. Considering the fact that Australia is a multicultural country and considering the discussion of the issue and future developments that may be brought by it, Mary

Kalantzis believes that "[…] at a time when cultural and national differences are increasingly becoming a life and death issue, Australia has been moving towards a new civic pluralism, and has the potential to lead the world with its practical example" (KALANTZIS: 2000, 99) The critic suggests that being a multicultural country is a very positive aspect as long as it is discussed carefully and without anxieties. Such anxieties, according to the critic, emerge from different sections of society, especially among those who defend social cohesion and those who support diversity. Kalantzis, also states that such disputes and the government have "[…] dumped multiculturalism and allowed racial divisions to ripen in a country which is, quite clearly, far from feeling 'relaxed and comfortable' about its future." (99) Despite the discussions, around the topic to effectively bring at issue the matter of diversity, the critic believes that:

> […] negotiating diversity is now the only way to produce social cohesion, that pluralistic citizenship is the most effective way of holding things together, and that an outward looking, internationalist approach to the world is the best way to maintain the national interest. (KALANTZIS: 2000, 99)

Sneja Gunew points that the term multiculturalism has still not been profoundly connected to questions of racialized differences in Australia due to the variety of contexts which such term represents. (GUNEW: 2004, 15) Gunew calls attention to the fact that "In Australia, the legacies of multiculturalism are too often ignored as significant in the proliferating work in cultural studies or as part of socially progressive critical theory." (19) Such ignorance of the effects of multiculturalism and the difficulty in promoting diversity among all ethnicities in Australia is one of the biggest problems to the implementation of diversity among all groups, social levels and ethnicities. Gunew claims that:

> [In Australia] […] the attempts to give a presence to "multicultural others" were misrepresented as striving to create a binary logic which a hegemonic and homogeneized Anglo-Celtic centre was supposedly always placed in contrast to an equally homogeneized multicultural ideal. (GUNEW: 2004, 19)

Diversity and the real meaning of multiculturalism seem to be misinterpreted and challenged by the belief that European descendants are one homogeneized group which rejects the inclusion of other ethnicities. The creation of two distinct racial groups is clear. On one hand the European descendants defend the "integrity" of their race, while on the other hand mixed ethnicities get together to promote the establishment of one unite group that promotes multiculturalism in all aspects. Gunew suggests that the history of Australia is not only made by the intersection of British colonizers and Aboriginal peoples. Immigrants have contributed a lot to place Australia among the most multicultural countries in the world. Regarding the exclusion of immigrant voices in historical accounts, Gunew explains that "The history of Australian immigration has been a very diverse one over two centuries but these nuances are not foregrounded when various compilations attempt to depict or characterize the nation." (GUNEW: 2004, 19) In this sense, discourses that reinforce the superiority of the white race have contributed to the growth of nationalist ideals and to the erasure of immigrant and Aboriginal voices from historical events. Such exclusion originated two centuries ago, serves to exemplify the current binary multiculturalism established in Australia. The purposes of multiculturalism and the belief in equality over racial differences were changed and now they seem to serve to the purposes of those who insist in making up the truth and imposing their raced segregation. Gunew calls attention to the different usages of multiculturalism and the participation of Aboriginal groups in such project. Sneja Gunew states that:

> Australian usages of multiculturalism tend not to signal overt articulations of racialized differences and this may in part be because the category represented by race is often reserved for the Aboriginal people who in the Australian context (unlike Indigenous in North America) have succeeded in dissociating their concerns from discourses of multiculturalism (in the sense of immigration or ethnic diversity.) (GUNEW: 2004, 20)

Gunew suggests that Australia's new politic of biculturalism has opened up space for the homogenization of both groups, white and Aboriginal, leaving very little room for interaction, for their internal differences and for other locations of differences. (GUNEW: 2004, 20) According to Gunew, such binary opposition appears to consolidate "[…] Australianness as synonymous with Anglo-Celticism […]" (20) The

challenge of the Australian belief in a homogenous national identity is necessary to guarantee the break with such opposition. In this sense, the multicultural act, as Kalantzis suggests, has to be seen as a "[…] moment in which more and more groups are demanding the right to self-determine their lifestyles. […]" (KALANTZIS: 2000, 109) Kalantzis also calls attention to the fact that:

> There is a growing trend for groups to want to differentiate themselves, to mark themselves off quite deliberately as different by their language, dress style and behaviour. Increasingly, it becomes the role of the public realm to facilitate these different lifeworlds and to prepare people for the difficult dialogues and the complex negotiations that diversity produces. (KALANTZIS: 2000, 109)

The development of a concrete project of multiculturalism which privileges differences and guarantees the negotiation of spaces, of cultures and of ethnicities is urgent. And such project, as Kalantzis points out, will lead people into two paths: the first one will be the development of a community which provides security for diversity and the other is the creation of spaces which respect differences. (KALANTZIS: 2000, 110) Only by integrating these two ideas, new perspectives of equality will be possible to happen in the sense that Aboriginal groups, and many "others", will be allowed to really belong.

3.3 Sally Morgan and *My Place*.

The Aboriginal artist Sally Morgan was born in the city of Perth, Western Australia, in 1951. As the eldest of five children, Sally Morgan grew up among her brothers and sisters, her mother Gladys, her father Bill, who died when she was 9 years old, and her grandmother Daisy, or Nan, as the family used to call her. Morgan had a very unusual upbringing because she was made to believe that her origins were placed in the south of India. At the age of fifteen, Sally Morgan discovered that she was from Aboriginal descent and from that moment on she engaged in a project that aimed at tracing back the origins of her family and her own Aboriginal identity. The fear of being excluded and rejected had made Gladys and Daisy opt for hiding the truth from their children and grandchildren making up a story that would be more comfortable to deal

with rather than admitting being Aboriginal. Morgan's attempts at finding the truth about her origin and her fight against the silence of her family's memories pushed her into a project which culminated with the publication of her autobiography entitled *My Place*, in 1987. In her autobiography, Sally Morgan shows all her commitment with the task of finding out as many information as possible about her past, about her origins, and about her own identity. Finding a place to belong and the fight against the silence of Aboriginal voices, history and stories moved her into an odyssey in search of memories she had never dreamed could exist. In her autobiography, Morgan shows the enduring process of reconnecting to her original communities and the difficulty in collecting traces of Aboriginality which were long ago erased, forgotten or simply abandoned. *My Place* was Morgan's first work and she received many awards for the publication of her autobiography and for the work she develops in favor of the preservation of Aboriginal culture and history.

Despite her interest for Psychology, Morgan's talent is really acknowledged by her work as an Aboriginal Australian author, scriptwriter and as an artist. Many of her paintings and engravings are exhibited in various private and public collections in Australia and in the United States. Her major success with *My Place*, was not the end of her career as a writer. In 1989 Morgan published her second book *Wanamurraganya: The Story of Jack McPhee*, which was followed by the publication of other five books for children: *Little Piggies, Pet Problems*, *Just a Little Brown Dog*, *Dan's Grandpa* and *In Your Dreams*. Mother of three children, Morgan is currently the director of the Center for Indigenous History and the Arts at The University of Western Australia .

Although many of Morgan's works have made great success around the world, it was because of *My Place* that Morgan became famous. However, her autobiography is not only the result of a research work well-written and well-elaborated by a woman who discovered being of Aboriginal descent at the age of fifteen. Morgan's autobiography is more than a successful work; it is the story of a woman who decides to search for her origins, who refuses to live with fear, and who challenges prejudice and silence as a way of facing oppression and showing people her pride of being Aboriginal. The critic Edward Hills states that:

> Autobiographical story can politicize history by focusing the impact of history in the individual life. By exposing the dominant myths as

> instrumental in the suppression of individual lives and societies, the marginalized can write themselves into the texts of history and can alter, however minimally, the structures that maintain that status quo. (HILLS: 1997, 101-102)

Such analysis of the role of autobiographies such as *My Place* calls our attention to the commitment of the author with denouncing the oppressive strategies of the colonizers and the author's awareness of the political issues involved in the Aboriginality issue. Morgan's attempt at changing the reality of abandonment and silence that suffocates Native peoples in Australia turned her into one of the first Aboriginal artists to speak against oppression and to fight for equality and space for Indigenous people.

Like Sally Morgan, many other Aboriginal writers and artists emerged from silence and now speak up against oppression, such as Ruby Langford Ginibi, Oodgeroo Noonuccal (formerly known as Kath Walker), Alice Nannup, Evelyn Crawford, Roberta Sykes and Alexis Wright. The critics Kay Schaffer and Sidonie Smith consider the work of Aboriginal artists of great importance to the communities they represent and to the Indigenous cultures and memories they aim to preserve. Schaffer and Smith believe that "Indigenous writers will continue to explore the silences of the past in Australia while at the same time moving beyond them to experiment with new ways of living with the present realities." (SCHAFFER *et al*.: 1998, vii) The fact of experimenting new ways of living offers these writers and their peoples a chance of surviving in the fragmentation of our contemporary world. In relation to *My Place*, the writer admits that her first motivation to start writing was anger. Edward Hills believes that entering Morgan's book is entering a narrative which fills silence with stories of both personal and communal life. Morgan's narrative opens windows which show the desire of a woman with "[…] a political desire to communicate to the wider Australian public the sufferings and pain of Aboriginal people." (HILLS: 1997, 103-104)

In an interview, Sally Morgan confesses that "I get very angry at injustice, and I thought, 'Somebody should put this down, people should know about these things.'" (RUTHERFORD: 1988, 94) Injustice motivated Sally Morgan to write an autobiography that denounces the several ways in which Aboriginal peoples were unfairly treated, were removed from their families, from their lands and lost their sense of belonging. Strategies of destruction and assimilation of Native groups by

governmental policies caused great damage and still affect Aboriginal communities and their descendants. Sally Morgan explains that her objective in writing *My Place* was not only to explore her family history and discover where she was from. The writing of this autobiography represented to her a guarantee that her children would not be deprived from their origins, from their past and from the memories of people who have always been put down by society. (94) In her book, the author makes clear what her intentions were when she decided to write *My Place*. She explains that:

> "[…] there's almost nothing written from a personal point of view about Aboriginal people. All our history is about the white man. No one knows what it was like for us. A lot of our history has been lost, people have been too frightened to say anything. There's a lot of our history we can't even get at, […] There are all sorts of files about Aboriginals that go away back, and the government won't release them. You take the old police files, they're not even controlled by Battye Library, they're controlled by the police. And they don't like letting them out, because there are so many instances of police abusing their power when they were supposed to be Protectors of Aborigines that it's not funny! I mean, our own government had terrible policies for Aboriginal people. Thousands of families in Australia were destroyed by the government policy of taking children away. None of that happened to white people. I know Nan doesn't agree with what I I'm doing. She thinks I'm trying to make trouble, but I'm not. I just want to try to tell a little bit of the other side of the story.' (MORGAN: 2003, 208)

In the same interview, Morgan also says that she "[…] felt that it was a record for them [her children] and if no-one else read it, it kind didn't matter." (RUTHERFORD: 1988, 94) Sally Morgan, an ordinary woman, as she calls herself, refuses to be seen as an expert on Aboriginal affairs and believes not having the answers the public is eager to get from her. (97) The process of writing *My Place* involved many aspects, including the recording of many voices which helped Morgan to collect as much information about her origins as she could. According to the writer, when she started recording all sorts of information there was no system, so she had information spread everywhere and while she interviewed her mother, no questions were raised; Gladys just talked what she remembered. The whole process took her too long because she had many different ideas of how to get it started. (108) In relation to her process of writing the book, Sally Morgan explains that:

> Originally I started to write about different themes, but I found that it was difficult to get the chronology. That's probably why it took me so long – it took me six years to write and to research. […], the original manuscript was much longer – it was actually three times the length. There were stories that kind of went off on tangents. It was easy to go off on another funny story […] – we chucked a few of those out. (RUTHERFORD: 1988, 108)

To write her autobiography, Sally Morgan recorded and transcribed the tapes which included the testimony of her granduncle, Arthur, of her mother Gladys, and of her reluctant grandmother Daisy, who only at the end of her life was able to give information about her Aboriginal past. Morgan says that getting her mother's story was easy because Gladys was very articulated. With Daisy, however, things were not easy. The writer comments that:

> […] with my grandmother, sometimes I would ask her a question, and older Aboriginal people will answer you, but not always verbally. So, they'll look at you, and you know what that means. That was really hard for me, because I knew what she was telling me, and she wanted me to know, but it hadn't been spoken. So, I had to decide, do I include this or do I leave it out. And there were a couple of really crucial things; I'd asked her if she'd been pregnant before. That was a terrible thing, it was agony for her… […] And she couldn't talk about it, but her look gave me an answer. Initially I left it out, because I didn't know how to handle it, and later on as we researched more and found more out, I realised I had to write it in, because it *was* information she had given me. So I wrote it in very simply. (RUTHERFORD: 1988, 108-109)

Such difficulty in getting Daisy's testimony is registered in *My Place*. Morgan states that:

> We hoped that Nan would tell us more about the past, especially about the people she had known on Corunna Downs. Mum was anxious to hear about her grandmother, Annie, and her great-grandmother, and I was keen to learn what life had been like for the people in those days. To our great disappointment, Nan would tell us nothing. She maintained that if we wanted to find out about the past, we had to do it without her help "I'm taking my secrets to the grave," she told Mum and me dramatically, one day. (MORGAN: 2003, 206)

Fortunately Nan did not take all her secrets to the grave and her reluctance was beaten by her desire that things would be different for Aboriginal people in her country. In *My Place*, Daisy expresses her desire after she finished telling Morgan her story. Daisy states that "I didn't want you to do it, mind. But I think, now, maybe it's a good thing. Could be it's time to tell. Time to tell what it's been like in this country" Daisy also states that "I want you grandchildren to make something of yourselves. You all got brains. […] I hope you'll never be 'shamed of me. When you see them old fellas sittin' in the dirt, remember that was me, once." (MORGAN: 2003, 429) The three testimonies included in this book add a great amount of historical background to Morgan's own life-story.

For many critics, Sally Morgan's autobiography is a remarkable work in the history of Australian literature, much because Morgan was one of the first Aboriginal writer to open the ways to the stories and history of Aboriginal communities. According to the critic Arlene A. Elder, Sally Morgan's *My Place* asks two basic questions: "[…] 'What people are we?' and […] 'What did it really mean to be aboriginal?'" (ELDER: 1992, 16) Elder explains that *My Place* has been examined from a variety of critical perspectives, but the critic suggests that the most important aspect of Morgan's work is the fact that:

> […] Sally Morgan's rich and provocative story has touched the heart of contemporary critical discourse and has been accepted as an Australian Aboriginal contribution to the growing body of post-colonial expressive art intertextually linked to historical precedents, non-traditional genres such as slave narratives, mystery stories, and autobiographical feminist expression. (ELDER: 1992, 17)

In this sense, Elder considers Morgan's autobiography to be a true autobiography, one which gives voice to the neglected or misunderstood outsiders. (ELDER: 199, 16) And as a subversion of traditional patterns of the autobiographical genre, one particular aspect of Morgan's autobiography called Elder's attention: the fact that it transforms Aboriginal orature into written form. In relation to the transformation of oral stories into written ones, Elder comments that "The issue of the transformation of orature into literature is of first importance in the understanding of any written work coming from and purporting to represent a residual-oral culture" (17) And Elder concludes that "Some work has been done on this aspect of *My Place*, although not as much as that

treating the book as social history, political protest, or as an example of feminist voicing." (17) Despite the treatment given to Morgan's work, Elder believes that such transformation in the mode of telling the stories is fundamental to the understanding of most primitive aspects of Aboriginal culture. Elder argues that Morgan' attempts at keeping her origins alive by incorporating in her text as many characteristics of Indigenous orature as possible, like when she refers to the image of the bird call. Morgan refers to the bird stating that:

> […] This morning, I was waiting for the bird call. Nan called it her special bird, nobody had heard it but her. This morning, I was going to hear it, too.
>
> […] Still no bird. I squirmed impatiently. Nan poked her stick in the dirt and said, "It'll be here soon." She spoke with certainty.
>
> Suddenly, the yard filled with a high trilling sound. My eyes searched the trees. I couldn't see that bird, but his call was there. The music stopped as abruptly as it had begun.
>
> Nan smiled at me, "Did you hear him? Did you hear the bird call?" "I heard him, Nan," I whispered in awe.
>
> What a magical moment it had been. […] (MORGAN: 2003, 11-12)

At this moment, Elder believes that this magical moment represents Nan's Aboriginal feeling for nature and spirituality. The image of the bird appears in two different moments in Morgan's narrative. The first moment represents Morgan's awareness of the power of nature, the awareness of her grandmother's connection with it. The bird reappears at the end of the book, and according to Elder, it represents the confirmation of Daisy's Aboriginal heritage, her link with the ancestors and with her death. This second call is mentioned by Morgan's sister, Jill, who listens to the bird and says that: "This morning about five o'clock. I heard it, Sally. It was a weird sound, like a bird call, only it wasn't. It was something spiritual, something out of this world. I think she'll be going soon." (MORGAN: 2003, 438) This final call is not only magical but it is meaningful and very important for Daisy, in particular. Daisy states that "[…] it was the Aboriginal bird, Sally. God sent him to tell me I'm going home soon. Home to my own land and my own people. I got a good spot up there, they all waitin' for me.'" (439) Two important issues come out of Nan's words: the idea of home and the image of the bird. In relation to the meaning of home and belonging, Edward Hills states that:

> Home is not the rediscovery of origins that can repair the injustice or transform the future: home is out of history, out of time, out of life. And the past, instead of providing old sites for new identities, becomes a place where nothing can be changed and where the suffering is best forgotten. (HILLS: 1997, 105)

In relation to the image of the bird, Elder believes that it represents "[…] a unifying detail on literature level and as an element of spirituality, of nature, and as a foreshadowing of impeding death in the realm of orature." (ELDER: 1992, 18) The image of the bird is a very important characteristic of Aboriginal culture, mysticism and orature. In this sense, the bird is a symbol of Daisy's reconnection to her home and to her past. The bird is a metaphor in Daisy's life and it will never let her forget where she came from and where she belonged to. The bird also links Sally Morgan to Aboriginal history and orature. In relation to the presence of oral stories in *My Place* by means of images like that of the bird call, Elder believes that it is the text itself that connects written form and oral culture. The critic makes clear that "It is the structure of *My Place* […] that most closely links it to the strategies and meanings of traditional oral story telling." (18) The lack of chronology is one of the most important influences of Aboriginal oral storytelling in Morgan's autobiography. Elder points out that:

> [The text's] ironic, non-linear effect is aroused by a narrative expected, since it is an autobiography, to follow a chronological sequence, but which instead, layers instance upon instance of Sally Morgan's and her family experience, rather than providing a tidy cause-and-effect, logical progression. Sally's own narrative of her childhood and maturation, the typical stuff of autobiography, becomes backgrounded once she discovers her Aboriginal heritage and begins her search for details about her family's history. (ELDER: 1992, 18)

The subversion of linearity and the lack of chronology in Morgan's text proves it to be a subversive narrative that refuses to follow traditional autobiographical standards and embraces the characteristics of orature, which is important for Indigenous people. Morgan's choice for a narrative that explores cultural aspects of her people shows her commitment to selfhood and belonging rather than to the constraints of the traditional autobiographical genre. Morgan is able to change the readers' attention throughout the narrative. Her personal life is no longer important when her quest for her Aboriginal

past makes the personal aspects of her life seem uninteresting and less important. Elder points out that "Our attention, like hers, is invested in discovering the variety of truths about her heritage. The story quickly becomes self-referential; *My Place* is largely a story about writing *My Place*." (ELDER: 1992, 19) In this way, Morgan's quest becomes a historical, psychological, literary and authentic pursuit of identity, belonging and heritage. The result of her work is a change of focus: Morgan's life becomes a background to other events and stories that guide her into her quest. The other stories and voices present in *My Place* also contribute to the reproduction of orature and the maintenance of Aboriginal culture and beliefs. According to Elder, "The Aboriginal truth of *My Place* rests in its multi-voiced structure, reproducing the communal nature of traditional orature." (20) Elder concludes that these three authentic Aboriginal voices in Morgan's autobiographies highlight Morgan's "[…] search for her family's experience which she expresses with minimal editing in their own tape-recorded words." (20) The presence of several voices in Sally Morgan's autobiography can be interpreted as a literary strategy named polyphony. According to Phyllis Margaret Paryas:

> Polyphony, a term originally derived from music, is a unique characteristic of prose literature described and illustrated by Mikhail Bakhtin, whereby several contesting voices representing a variety of ideological positions can engage equally in dialogue, free from authorial judgment or constraint. (PARYAS: 1994, 610)

The use of polyphony, according to Paryas, is a strategy that allows the author to be "[…] democratically positioned among or 'alongside' the speeches of the characters so that no single point of view is privileged." As a consequence, "[…] the multiple perspectives of unmerged consciousness are granted equal validity within the text." (PARYAS: 1994, 160) Paryas states that "[…] this free play of discourses precludes the dominance of any point of view, including that of the author." (160) In the case of *My Place*, polyphony is an essential strategy that allows the author to present the events from different perspectives. The voices of Arthur, Gladys and Nan, not only help Morgan to find the meaning of what means to be Aboriginal, but they highlight the fact that *My Place* is a work which contests Australian whiteness and which refuses to present history from a privileged or biased perspective.

In relation to the compilation of these three testimonies, Sheila Collingwood-Whittick states that:

> The product of three generations of miscegenation, Sally Morgan's entire life-history might be described as a palimpsest, the (Ab)original "text" of which has been all but deleted by the aggressive de-culturation policies favoured by white Australian society. (COLLINGWOOD-WHITTICK: 2002, 54)

According to Collingwood-Whittick, the use of a palimpsest image is very useful to the analysis of *My Place* because it highlights the relationship that exists between the orality and the "[…] superimposed, textualised representation of that orality that Morgan has been obliged to enlist in order to liberate truths otherwise destined to remain interred within the confines of the Aboriginal community." (COLLINGWOOD-WHITTICK: 2002, 49-50) The moment Morgan confronts the hegemonic discourse of a literate society and offers the orality of her Aboriginal ancestry, the author chooses to disseminate the oral and historical material in literary form. (50) Such liberation of truths by means of the intersection of three Aboriginal narratives does not only calls attention to the author's skill in subverting traditional literary boundaries, but it aims at giving voice to selves which had been silenced by oppression. Collingwood-Whittick suggests that the metaphor of palimpsest can "[…] evoke the psychological processes (those of inscription and deletion) to which the author's identity as a person of mixed-race has been subjected in the highly racialised environment of Australia." (54) Much more than revealing the truths about Native people and subverting literary patterns, Morgan challenges the current situation of Aborigines in Australia. According to the critic, Daisy's and Glady's voices represent those people who "[…] were on the receiving end of the assimilation policy pursued by successive Australian governments […]" and who have been forced to think "[…] of their aboriginality as a congenital disease, almost, or an embarrassing deformity." (54) Morgan refers to this rejection when she enquires herself about her mother and Daisy's refusal to accept the fact that they were not white people. She states that: "The fact that both Mom and Nan made consistent denials made me think I was barking up the wrong tree. I could see no reason why they would pretend to be something they weren't." (MORGAN: 2003, 131) Pretending to be something they were not, according to Whittick, was an evidence of a

process “[…] of self-rejection; a deliberate erasure of the self, […] and a simultaneous internalization of the ideal proposed by white culture.” (54) Kathryn Trees suggests that Morgan’s attempt at revealing the truth about Aboriginal people in Australia is a confrontation of the injustices carried out against her ancestors and it is a public exposure of “[…] the repeated atrocities that Aborigines have been subjugated to […]” (TREES: 1991, 71)

One of the examples of oppression imposed on Aborigines by white people is the principle of paternalism. It is the sense of superiority of white people and the consequent inferiority of other peoples that is denounced in *My Place*. According to Trees, “Paternalism ensures that the government and its representatives manage the country and its people as would a ‘father’” (TREES: 1991, 71) According to Trees, station owners, like the Drake-Brockmans, after taking control of Aboriginal lands “[…] were deemed to be protectors or caregivers – this ‘care’ often extended to fathering the children of Aboriginal women.” (71) Arthur, in his analysis of the disastrous interference of white people in the Aboriginal way of living, calls attention to the fact that:

> […] colonialism isn’t over yet. We still have a White Australia policy against the Aborigines. […] They say there’s been no difference between black and white, we all Australian, that’s lie. I tell you, the black man has nothin’, the governmnet’s been robbin’ him blind for years. (MORGAN: 2003, p. 266)

Arthur’s criticism towards white domination and the Aboriginal erasure, points to the difficulties faced by people who have lost their rights over their lands, their children stolen, and their culture effaced. Hypocrisy is one of the marks of Australia’s white community, which claims being equalitarian but in fact still imposes the same colonial ideologies from two centuries ago. Arthur’s explanation of the current society they live in shows all the oppression his people have always been through. The control over their people, over their tradition, language and even children is represented in *My Place* by the Drake-Brockmans’ family and their Station. Both Daisy and Arthur were directly affected by white paternalism. As a mixed-blood child, Daisy was sent to work in the station’s main house, while Arthur, also considered a mixed-blood child, was forced to work hard at the station. Both had to live under the paternalist status of servants of the

white family which ruled and controlled their lives. Besides paternalist practices, Aboriginal people were forced to leave behind their original languages, their communities and their traditions. Such abandon is explained by Trees as a strategy of alienation and she states that:

> During the time of Arthur's childhood, when *whites* were segregating the *half-/ quarter-caste* children and teaching them (but not their parents) to speak English, the use of English forced Aboriginal children to lose their links to defined *Aboriginal* community status. The *white* language designations *half-/ quarter-* also disqualified them from membership in the *white*/ English/ dominant discourse. (TRESS: 1991, 73)

All these processes of assimilation of Aboriginal culture explain and justify the behavior of Native people who, like Gladys and Daisy, deny their Aboriginal origins. Sheila Collingwood-Whittick states that "Since being black in white colonial society is synonymous with being powerlessness, despised, worthless, sub-human, it is not unusual for indigenous to seek to obliterate the external signs of their racial origins." (COLLINGWOD-WHITTICK: 2002, 55) Although Daisy and Gladys refused at first to admit their Aboriginal origins, they accept to talk about it in the end and such catharsis could be compared to a healing process. Collingwood-Whittick agrees that Morgan's attempt at writing down and revealing her family's memories and stories is part of a "[…] therapeutic project to re-indigenise herself (and them) by openly acknowledging the Aboriginality that was hidden throughout her early life." (57) Once she faces her real background, Morgan chooses to identify with her multi-vocal narrative and with her Aboriginal past.

At first, *My Place* presents itself as an apolitical narrative which stresses the quest of a woman who searches for her real identity, origins, and for a place to belong to. However, Sally Morgan's work is much more than a traditional autobiography: it is her life intertwined with the lives of other people and it is the work of a woman aware of the effects of policies of assimilation. Her book is a denouncement of oppressive practices toward Aboriginal people and it is a call for respect, dignity, rights, survival and inclusion. With the help of her mother Gladys, her grandmother Daisy and granduncle Arthur, Morgan is able not only to trace back her origins and recreate her lost history, but she gives voice to people who have always been silenced by white power, by history and by colonialist practices. Arthur, Gladys and Daisy are responsible

for helping Morgan in her search for herself, but, more importantly, they are responsible for breaking with the barriers of silence and denouncing the layers of oppression hidden by a society which "proudly" claims to be equalitarian. *My Place* is a call for help to Aboriginal people and an alert to Australian society. Collingwood-Whittick concludes that:

> Despite the lack of any ostentatiously polemical discourse, *My Place* is […] fundamentally political in its motivation. On the one hand, all of the respective narratives both spring from and are bound together by the same subversive desire to expose the bad faith on which essential aspects of white Australian society have been founded. On the other, there is a more positive didactic intention guiding Morgan's master narrative towards its conclusion. For the author is not *just* concerned with challenging the hypocrisy of her white compatriots. In showing how she, her mother *and* her grandmother all, in the end defiantly embrace their aboriginal descent, *My Place* also addresses a rallying message to today's largely de-cultured Aboriginal community. (COLLINGWOOD-WHITTICK: 2002, 58)

Despite all the oppression and all the suffering Aborigines have been through, *My Place* is a call for all Native peoples to defend their origins, claim for their rights and reveal their pasts. Collingwood-Whittick believes that only by doing this Aborigines will have the power to resist "[…] being written over and eventually rubbed out by the monomaniacal and inalterable script that colonial societies endlessly dictate." (COLLINGWOOD-WHITTICK: 2002, 58) Morgan's autobiography then proves that in spite of all the fear of assimilation and the impositions of silence, Aborigines have to resist and remain strong to guarantee the survival of their traditions, stories and Dreaming.

4. CONCLUSION

The idea that Canada's and Australia's societies could be analyzed from the perspective of two Indigenous women writers was particularly interesting and as I have tried to discuss in the chapters of this dissertation, the connection between these two countries is closer than we could possibly imagine. It is not only the aspect of language and of their being former British colonies, that links both countries, other issues have

been proved to be responsible for the possibility of tracing parallels between Canada and Australia.

Contemporary postcolonial literary texts like *Halfbreed* and *My Place* are, as Graham Huggan suggests, "[…] a revisioning of the history of European colonialism." (HUGGAN: 1997, 407) Considering the presence of Indigenous women in the literary field, Julia Emberley calls attention to the fact that:

> Native women's writings currently represent an important site of cultural intervention for examining both the ideological contradictions in dominant social formations as well as various subjugated modes of resistance and alterity that emerge to combat patriarchal, capitalist, and colonial oppressions. (EMBERLEY: 1993, 4)

According to Huggan, postcolonial works from Indigenous writers like Maria Campbell and Sally Morgan:

> […] suggest a shift of emphasis from the interrogation of European colonial history to the overt or implied critique of unquestioned nationalist attitudes which are viewed as 'synchronic' formations particular not to post-colonial but, ironically, to colonial discourses. (HUGGAN: 1997, 407)

Social and political movements as well as literary criticism and production committed to transformations in both Canadian and Australian societies, have called attention to the weaknesses of nationalist and colonial discourses. Considering the development of contemporary Canadian and Australian literary production, Graham Huggan explains that:

> A characteristic of contemporary Canadian and Australian writing is a multiplication of spatial references which has resulted not only in an increasing range of national and international locations but also in a series of 'territorial disputes' which pose a challenge to the self-acknowledging 'mainstreams' of metropolitan culture, to the hegemonic tendencies of patriarchal and ethnocentric discourses, and implicitly, […] to the homogeneity assumed and/or imposed by colonialist rethoric. (HUGGAN: 1997, 408)

Works like *My Place* and *Halfbreed* represent a need for multiculturalism, pluralistic attitudes and heterogeneity. Campbell's and Morgan's autobiographies prove that there is space for discourses which challenge colonial beliefs and which give voice to people who strive for dignity and equal rights. In this sense, Huggan claims that contemporary Canadian and Australian literatures suggest "[…] a desire on the part of their respective writers not merely to deterritorialize, but also to reterritorialize their increasingly multiform cultures." (HUGGAN: 1997, 408) Huggan also claims that "[…] most recent literary texts indicate a shift of emphasis away from the desire for homogeneity towards an acceptance of diversity." (408) Huggan's assertion marks the need of writers like Maria Campbell and Sally Morgan for spaces in which they can genuinely belong to and where they can resist to colonial forces and subvert fixed boundaries. More specifically in the case of Indigenous Canadian and Aboriginal Australian women, the boundaries they try to overcome are spaces of oppression which are represented by racial, gender, social, sexual and religious conflicts, to mention just a few. Due to the efforts of Indigenous women writers, like Campbell and Morgan, oversimplified spaces of patriarchal representation have shifted to "[…] a series of intermingling lines of connection which shape shifting patterns of de- and reterritorialization." (409) Such shifting on Indigenous women's roles and the possibility of occupying new spaces in both Canadian and Australian societies proves that social and cultural revisionisms have contributed to the subversion of dominant practices and the displacement of patriarchal and nationalist discourses. (410)

Subversive practices, as attempts to challenge the position of Native women in society, have been responsible for the development of theories concerning Postcolonial, Feminist and Indigenous Women Studies. Along with the contemporary Indigenous women literary production, Postocolonial and Feminist theories have been of great importance to the analysis of the transformations in former British colonies like Canada and Australia. Considering the theoretical articulations relating postcolonialism and feminism to Native women writings, Julia Emberley refers to the importance of critical practices in the discussion of the role of Indigenous women in society up to the present. (EMBERLEY: 1993, 3) Emberley suggests that the two major theories which encompass Indigenous women' writings, postcolonialism and feminism, analyze the female subject from different perspectives. Emberley states that:

> In Feminism […] the representation of women, sexual difference, and the gendering of male and female subjectivities constitute major sites of investigation, whereas issues of racism, economic dispossession, cultural autonomy, literacy, and self-determination have been, and continue to be, some of the foremost issues in the contemporary discourses of decolonization. (EMBERLEY: 1993, 3)

In spite of the attempts of both theories to develop a criticism that challenges the position of Indigenous women in society, neither postcolonialism nor feminism seem to establish a relationship which produces one single theoretical movement. According to Emberley:

> The discontinous relationship between these two critical practices produces a double session of theoretical movement: on the one hand, the need to decolonize feminist epistemology, to challenge its underlying imperial assumptions; and, on the other hand, the need for a feminist critique of the unacknowledged gendered assumptions in postmodern neocolonial discourses. (EMBERLEY: 1993, 3-4)

Emberley's proposal to solve the conflict between Postocolonial and Feminist theories and then to broaden the studies regarding Native women's literary production is presented as *Feminism of Decolonization*. Emberley suggests that *Feminism of Decolonization* "[…] posits a different notion of gender formation within gathered/hunter societies and in relation to dominant capitalist societies." (EMBERLEY: 1993, 4) Julia Emberley believes that a *Feminism of Decolonization* will be able not only to provide an articulation of feminist and decolonial critical practices, but it may "[…] provide a critical theory that enables a reading of Native women's writing." (4) However, the critic calls attention to the problematic relationship of *Feminism of Decolonization* and Native women's writings which may emerge from the conflict between the theoretical body of knowledge and the alternative ground of Indigenous women writings. Emberley calls attention to the fact that Indigenous women's writings is based on "[…] interests which run along a different stream of historical and cultural (dis)continuities not necessarily commensurable with that of a paradigmatic feminism of decolonization." (4) Despite the difficulties in articulating these different theoretical trends, Emberley believes that contradictions and clashes within postcolonialism, feminism and Native women's writings are "[…] productive

sites of struggle, ones that disclose an ideological positioning of Native women as subjects to and of their own historical making." (4)

Sites of subversion and transgression have given contemporary writers the chance to stand their ground and offer new perspectives on their struggle towards inclusion, acceptance and equality. Campbell's and Morgan's autobiographies call attention to the importance of subversion in relation to traditional patterns of genre and of oppression. Finding a space which reterritorialize women and which gives them voice to speak against a white-male-empowered system is their resource to challenge silence and abusive colonial practices. Considering the formalities of the autobiographical genre, contemporary writers such as Campbell and Morgan have been able to transgress the privileged space of the autonomous, white, male writer and have disrupted and transformed it into a free, plural and heterogeneous space. Autobiographically speaking, the disruption of the male literary tradition by women's texts, according to Sidonie Smith, is a process of inclusion against the pressures of the androcentric and patriarchal discourses. Smith believes that such disruption can be interpreted as a counter discourse to the traditional patterns of the autobiographical genre. Smith states that:

> In fact, the pressure of androcentric discourse, including autobiography itself, to repress the feminine and to suppress woman's voice, betrays a fundamental fear and distrust woman's power, which while repressed and suppressed continues to challenge the comfortable assertions of male control. (SMITH: 1987, 40-41)

This transformation from "Other" into "self" is present in *Halfbreed* and in *My Place*. According to Smith, the writers were able to take possession of the genre and seek to represent themselves and their communities rather than to remain mere representations of the male imaginary. Smith concludes that the subversion of the autobiographical genre proves that:

> Women have done so because they are not only signs, serving as a medium of exchange that underwrites the phallic order, but also purveyors of signs as well, and thus purveyors (and imbiders) of all prevailing discourses. (SMITH: 1987, 41)

In this sense, oppressive practices which “othered” Indigenous women from former British colonies, such as Canada and Australia, have been unveiled by works such as *Halfbreed* and *My Place*. The process of revealing the erasures, the silence and the exploitation of Indigenous Canadian and Aboriginal Australian communities can be seen as historical, social and literary subversive strategies to include silenced voices in their respective societies and, from within, eliminate traditional patriarchal and colonial practices.

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