

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Politics of the Canon and Literary Activism: A Select Reading of Indigenous Narratives by Oodgeroo Noonuccal and Maria Campbell

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ABSTRACT

Indigeneity functions as a vital hermeneutic for interrogating race as a socially constructed category. Entangled within hegemonic power structures encompassing ideology, political economy, and cultural politics, indigenous social formations remain susceptible to systemic violence and subjugation. Literature, situated at the nexus of the liberal humanities and social sciences, provides a crucial site of critical intervention. It not only maps the aesthetic modalities of racial representation but rigorously interrogates the attendant ethical and political dimensions. Consequently, literary authorship precludes objective neutrality; rather, an author's ideological subjectivity fundamentally mediates the aesthetics and ethics of their representational praxis. The textualisation of indigenous histories, systemic marginalisation, and identity formation thus operates as a modality of ethical activism, significantly shaping public discourse. This essay examines select works by Oodgeroo Noonuccal and Maria Campbell to analyse their literary engagement with racial politics, indigenous historiography, and the articulation of selfhood. Both authors, prominent activists within indigenous liberation movements, inextricably link their political praxis with their literary output. Ultimately, this study investigates how these writers negotiate their authorial subjectivities to articulate indigenous realities.

Keywords: indigeneity, literary authorship, ideology, race

FULL RESEARCH PAPER

Introduction

Literary authorship is a problematic category, for it is constituted by and constructed through the personal and the political. Within Western literary culture and textual production, the word 'author' is implicated within a domain of authority or power-someone who has control over this process. The tradition of authorship- and theories associated with it- thus explores the nature of an author's identity, role and relationship to their texts. Within this tradition, the author has transformed from an individual creator into a public entity entrenched in political, cultural, and historical structures. From serving as the Aristotelian moral guide to becoming a post-colonial voice of resistance, the figure of the author as a public intellectual has evolved. Literary authorship is thus an act of activism, informed by the relationship an author establishes with the text and its context (Burke 1995). The author's ideology, positionality, and point of view work towards exposing the matrices of power embedded in the production of the canon and against which a counter-canon needs to emerge. Indigeneity as a literary domain falls within this purview of investigation. As a socio-political issue within the discipline of literature, it encompasses a dualistic approach-a humanist subjective one, as well as a scientific objective one. The representation of indigeneity in literary texts depends on the personal and historical context of the indigenous author, as well as on the agenda and intent of the narrative. Intersectionality has thus been a chosen vantage point in critiquing and portraying indigeneity in literature. Indigenous writers have depicted their stories and histories from intersectional standpoints of race, gender, class, ethnicity, geopolitics, and many other dimensions. This essay examines the ideological machinations through which the Eurocentric literary canon has functioned, and the author-activist's literary strategies to subvert it. I have selected two literary authors whose bodies of work are the direct outcome of their activism and their experience of historical marginalisation as indigenous citizens. Oodgeroo Noonuccal and Maria Campbell have written, spoken and acted on causes surrounding land rights, women's empowerment and indigenous struggles. Their lifelong striving to speak 'history from below' has decentred traditional representations of literature and given new narrative formats to the issues they speak on. I will be discussing Noonuccal's *Dark Unmarried Mothers* (1966) and Campbell's *Half-breed* (1973) as texts that narrate the indigenous woman's experience of settler-colonial nationhood. These experiences-one in the form of a 'propaganda poem' and the other a life-writing-speak from the ideological standpoint of the two indigenous authors and the narrative experiments they devise, thereof.

Employing their position as literary authors and public intellectuals, Noonuccal and Campbell have explored various aspects of indigeneity- systemic oppression, institutional complicity, selfhood of the indigenous protagonists, their trauma, their silences and their speeches. My approach in this essay is thus dual: to explore the idea of literary activism against canonical hegemony and then to converge it with the portrayal of indigeneity in literary works.

Survey

The emergence of the author as a part of the political and economic establishment dates back to the coming of modernity in Western culture. While the concept of canon existed since medieval times, until the Enlightenment it mostly consisted of texts with a theocratic worldview. The secular canon, consisting of literary texts, has resulted from the rise of the middle class, a bourgeois economy and the growing importance of the literary author in promoting cultural capital. It might be necessary to briefly record the structural change in Western European societies initiated by the Enlightenment, climaxing eventually in the French Revolution. An alternative model of sovereignty and nationhood began to replace the church as a public institution. A secular code of ethics – humanist and critical in its mode of enquiry-started to influence ways of reading and interpreting history, philosophy, science and political economy. The mantra of 'Liberty, Equality, Fraternity' brought about epistemological changes in the way individual and social interactions were perceived. Liberal democracy and its principles problematised class structures – the proletariat and the bourgeoisie became oppositional as well as complementary to one another. A competitive free market and capitalism started fuelling Europe's imperial ambitions abroad. European banks began sponsoring the civilizational mission of the 'White Man's Burden' as the race for resources in the colonies gained pace. Within national boundaries, discontent arose over growing inequalities. There were riots over grain as villages kept on feeding cities. The coming of consumerism paralleled the rise of mass politics and socialism. Economic and political forces thus catalysed nationalism and identity politics. Race, language, ethnicity, territoriality and other categories of identity moulded questions of citizenship (Hobsbawm 1995). Between the 18th and 19th centuries, many Romantic writers advocated for individual freedom, political revolutions, nationalist movements, and, at times, even anarchic actions. The author was the interpreter of literary imagination as well as of cultural nationalism- from Shelley to Pushkin, the literary author was now connecting creative expression to political advocacy. Increasingly, the author's position as a public intellectual, influencing public thought and opinion, comes to the fore. In a post-Industrial

Revolution society, the author is a commodity whose work can be circulated, bought, sold and diagnosed. This gives rise to a nationalist ideology, capable of binding people together and conferring a civilisational identity. The author became part of a process of canon formation, in which qualities of 'literary merit' and 'timelessness' also bound them to power. The literary author was in several ways a suitable candidate for this ideological enterprise. As part of a liberal, 'humanising' pursuit, the author could provide 'universal human values', 'eternal truths' and 'beauties' (Eagleton 2000). The Victorian literary author was an imperialist, a nationalist, and a liberal humanist. He worked on behalf of the empire to promote literature that glorified it. It would give the reading public a pride in their national language and identity. The writings of Arnold and Kipling bear testimony to this. Thus, to be a literary author was to be a part of the elite establishment.

The two world wars, fascism and anti-colonial movements forced a re-examination of the role of the literary author. Theodore Adorno subverted the liberal-humanist role of the literary author and the author's complicity in the processes of power. Opposition to established literary canon became a leading concern among critics of diverse viewpoints- deconstructive, feminist, Marxist, postcolonial schools. These views laid the theoretical groundwork for revisiting the figure of the literary author. Barthes' *Death of the Author* (1967) *proposes a new definition of literary reading, liberated from the psychological, social, and biographical references to an author.* He argues that since literature is part of a discursive game, the actual author of this game is always in question. The author is nothing but the effect of the action of reading, wherein the reader becomes the author-scriptor. This decentring of the author and privileging the reader's role as meaning-producer revolutionised the way we look at the literary author. Foucault's *What is an Author* (1969) proposed the concept of 'author-function', whereby the author is not an individual but a social function assigned to texts. The author's personal identity is not important, but the work's legitimacy is. In fact, Foucault says, the author is not only a subject within a network, but also a subjective function-he is the producer of and participant in the discourse. In the post-colonial era, we increasingly shift towards a non-Eurocentric idea of authorship-the author is no longer connected to establishments, but engaged in challenging power structures. Gayatri Spivak's essay "*Can the Subaltern Speak?*" (1988) *can be a good entry point for understanding the post-colonial thinker's position as a literary author.* In her essay, Spivak argues about the possibility of subalterns speaking in a way that is truly autonomous and unmediated by the privileged writer. She critiques the positions of intellectuals who assume they can represent the subaltern as a subject. This intellectual creates a political and cultural gap in the

portrayal of the subaltern, who are trapped within alien knowledge frameworks. Thus, indigenous episteme is often silenced, as the subaltern is spoken for, rather than having the agency to speak. Spivak therefore calls for ethical representation, especially in literary authorship, which must be self-critical and self-aware of their own privilege. In the use of language, voice, narrative style, emplotment, and characterisation, literary authors must explore the nuances of power and control in their own roles (Nayar 2023). The Subaltern Studies Collective has repeatedly emphasised this location of privilege, or lack of it, in our reading of history and subjectivity. Subaltern Studies, an important offshoot of Postcolonial Studies, introduced a new revisionist lens through which the literary author could examine history, anthropology, race studies, and cultural studies. Historians like Ranajit Guha, Partha Chatterjee, and David Hardiman gathered new modes of researching 'Third World' history. Inspired by Marxist and Post-structuralist thought, this group of thinkers examined South Asian historiographies and their representations of the subaltern in the contexts of gender, caste, and ethnicity. Chatterjee's *The Nation and its Fragments* (1993) was critical in revising literary authorship from the perspective of ordinary women and their accounts of everyday life. The literary canon was shaped by privilege, privileging only select humanist portrayals, thus silencing alternative modes of storytelling.

Context and Purpose

Western canon and liberal humanism's essentialist position has enforced violence on expressions of minority cultures. Thus, the minority's construction of collective subjectivity through alternative forms of narrative is critical in regaining cultural and intellectual agency and capital. Since the 'universal' tropes of Western humanism were themselves created through the intersecting nature of race, gender, class, and nationality, expressions of minority resistant selfhood must employ the self-same strategies of intersectionality. Thus, Bama's autoethnographic account *Karukku* (1992) cites multi-structural forces of caste, class, religion, and gender inflicting oppression on the Dalit community. Through manifestos, confessions, testimonios, life-writings, 'propaganda poetry' -the poetics and politics of resistance are mapped out. The Eurocentric is displaced; the once de-centred 'writes back'. The category of "minorities" in critical theory and literature has expanded with the emergence of Critical Race Theory. Pramod Nayar, in his book *Contemporary Literary and Cultural Theory: From Structuralism to Ecocriticism* (2010), traces the pathways through which Critical Race Theory has emerged. He observes that, while it is a central component in cultural and political theory, it is also seminal in legal theory, in framing questions of racism and racial injustice. Race is political for the simple reason that it is both

individual and collective. Therefore, what forms the locus standi of race-related exclusions are questions of citizenship, rights, and belonging—understanding the multidimensional structure of race and of ethnicity involves social processes, prejudices, resistance and complicity. Literary texts fall within this ambit of control and manipulation (Nayar 2010, 217-218). Re-reading, and therefore re-writing, of the literary canon from the point of view of race is thus a political and critical act. Race Studies came into being with sociologist W. E. B. Du Bois' critique of scientific racism. Racial hierarchisation was largely 'proven' through tools of totalitarianism and imperialism- Social Darwinism and Eugenics. However, Du Bois observed that racial difference must not be used to argue for racial superiority or inferiority. Therefore, according to Du Bois, racist resistance must arise through community collaboration and not individual dissent. Aboriginal and First Nation People in Australia, Canada and the USA have been at the violent discriminatory end of the racial difference theory. Law, economy, education, healthcare, employment, and residence are divided and distributed along lines of apartheid. Similarly, cultural texts, records, accounts of the community's history and heritage are removed. Citing Michael Banton's *The Idiom of Race: A Critique of Presentism* (2000), Nayar explains the various implications of race-race as descent, race as type and race as subspecies. This resulted in biological, gendered and social re-mapping of a race-divided nation. Therefore, Critical Race Theory foregrounds the need to understand the multiple axes of racial oppression. Indigenous narratives help us unpack this systemic exploitation through oral as well as literary modes-these narratives align with literatures of resistance and hence with postcolonial literature. Jeffrey Sissons attempts to define the aesthetics and politics of indigenous narratives by identifying indigenous struggles against settler-colonial nationhood, localisation in individual histories and cultural survival through the community (226-228). Aboriginal Writings encompass resistance to settler colonialism, struggle against socio-economic injustices, the locating of agency to preserve and celebrate indigenous traditions, and the discovery of modes of survival in a globalising culture (Nayar 2008).

Indigeneity as a critical lens helps us understand race as a social category. In its interaction and engagement with power structures of race, ideology, social economy and cultural politics, indigeneity as a social formation is thus vulnerable to violence, coercion and oppression-both overt and covert. Literature, at the intersection of Liberal Humanities and Social Sciences, has a unique role in intervention. As a discipline, literature not only explores narratives and the aesthetics of representing race as a subject; it must also ask questions about the politics and ethics of that representation. The literary writer, hence, is neither third person nor

'objective', nor are they politically neutral. The ideological position of the literary writer informs the aesthetics and ethics of what they represent. The portrayal of indigenous histories, social exclusion, and subsequent identity formation falls within the purview of literature as an act of ethical activism. This essay examines Oodgeroo Noonuccal's poem *Dark Unmarried Mother* and Maria Campbell's memoir *Half-breed* to explore how literary authorship engages with the portrayal of racial politics and the construction of indigenous history and selfhood from the point of view of women activists. The essay examines how these two indigenous writers have engaged with the portrayal of indigenous identity and explored their own subject positions in literary authorship. Indigenous narratives explore symbiotic relations with the environment, interconnectedness of the self and the community, the evolving dynamics of indigenous culture and heritage, colonial and neo-colonial systems of oppression, cultural stereotypes, gender exploitation and intergenerational trauma. Through these broad thematic pathways, indigenous narratives find different strategies of decolonising. Women authors within indigenous communities work at the intersection of gender, race, and ethnicity to highlight women's roles as bearers of culture, survivors of systemic injustice and therefore as agents of resilience and transformation. Louise Erdrich, Joy Harjo, Leslie Marmon Silko, Jacinta Kerketta, Temsula Ao, and Easterine Kire are examples (Brennan 2022).

Discussion

Oodgeroo Noonuccal was an activist, an anti-colonial thinker and an engaged writer. Noonuccal was of indigenous origin, being born to the Noonuccal people and their traditional lands of Minjeribbah in Queensland. Early in her career, she served in the State Aboriginal Organisation of Queensland, working towards the granting of full citizenship to Aboriginal people and the removal of discriminatory clauses from the Australian Constitution. During a 10-year referendum campaign, she went door to door, publicising the campaign and collecting signatures for the petitions. Alongside other indigenous leaders, Noonuccal worked with women's organisations, churches, students, trade unions and service clubs, to forge networks with indigenous people from different countries. She travelled overseas to connect to indigenous movements to establish a common platform for First Nations people. Her relentless activism brought to light the systemic discrimination and oppression carried out against Australian Aborigines for generations. First within a colonial and then within a neo-colonial structure, Aboriginal rights to land, healthcare, employment, education and mainstream life were extremely limited. She wrote and spoke voraciously on how laws affected everyday Aboriginal life-how and where they lived, where they could travel

or what happened to their children. In 1965, she led a protest against a new law which had unequal voting rights for indigenous people. Her untiring campaign for indigenous voting rights came to light in 1967. Noonuccal was also deeply committed to the cause of education and sensitisation of Aboriginal history and culture. As such, she established the Noonuccal-Nughie Education and Cultural Centre, where children of all communities and races could access education. She returned her award of Member of the Order of the British Empire, as a gesture of protest. Noonuccal's poetry is intimately connected to her activist stance, her ideological commitment to indigenous justice and her political awareness of structural inequities. Critics of canonical literature often dismissed her poetry as sloganistic, propagandist, simplistic and plain. It only underlined the extent to which indigenous voices had been held hostage to white nationalism. As a literary author, Noonuccal had to break the mould of Eurocentric poetic genres to dismantle cultural imperialism. Drawing on folklore, mythology, and songs, she explored issues of dispossession, displacement, and ecological degradation in Aboriginal lives. Works like *We are Going, No More Boomerang, Dreamtime, Namatjira* speak about the pain and anguish of Aboriginal men and women of her land. Noonuccal's engagement with gender-based violence also grew out of her activism for Aboriginal justice. Aboriginal women had been victims and survivors of generational violence inflicted on them within colonial and neo-colonial systems ("Oodgeroo Noonuccal Poems > My Poetic Side", n.d). In her poem *Dark Unmarried Mothers*, Noonuccal records the scale and extent of violence suffered by Aboriginal women under triple axes of race, gender and class. Aboriginal women were leaders in sustainable ecological practices, including the preservation of waterholes, the use of water for food and medicine, and the protection of land and endangered species. Thus the bodies of Aboriginal women harnessed the economy of colonial-era sheep stations. They mustered cattle and sheep, maintained food gardens, washed wool, cooked and cleaned and raised the boss' children (Tauri 2020). However, this self-same body of the Aboriginal women was also the site for continued violence. The frontier ideology and pioneer rhetoric of Australian nationalism disguises the history of sexual abuse committed against Aboriginal women. Sexism, misogyny, racism and sexual exploitation have characterised this masculinist ideology (Andrews 1997). Station after station, there was no effort even to hide these power dynamics, where every white man was to have a 'piece of the black velvet'. Aboriginal women's consent was taken to be implicit in this bondage of ownership and servility. This predatory scheme was also rationalised through the Aboriginal women's apparent polyamory, promiscuity and availability. Abductions and rapes were also part of the colonial game to re-assert frontier nationalism and masculinity of the colonial

class. So while 'dishonour' done to white women was a threat to white colonial nationhood, sexual violence of Aboriginal women was 'necessary' to uphold colonial masculinity. However, accounts of frontier literature have remained silent on this issue. Judith Wright's *South of My Days* nostalgically re-builds the prototype of the brave frontiersmen, while remaining silent on the victims and survivors of the frontier. Anthropologist WEH Stanner coined the term 'Great Australian Silence' to show how critical areas of indigenous history have lapsed into a cult of forgetfulness (McBride and Smith 2021). This unspeakable nature of gender-based violence carried forth from the frontier era to the post-colonial era, when Aboriginal women continued to be easy targets. In *Dark Unmarried Mothers*, Noonuccal discusses the lack of safety in public spaces for Aboriginal women. Cutting across age groups, mobility of Aboriginal girls and women is severely under threat as they are turned to 'fair game', 'low grade animals', 'safe prey'. This dehumanisation is re-affirmed through institutional silence within family, community and society at large. Using sarcasm and irony, Noonuccal exposes how criticism against the establishment is often read as 'bad taste'. The duplicity in following standards of sexual morality continues as 'white girls' are shown to deserve dignity, while 'dark girls' are rightfully disciplined for their acts of seduction. There is anger and pain in Noonuccal's voice as she addresses the perpetrators as a 'dog' with no accountability for their acts of violence. Her criticism has no ambivalence, as she compares the establishment to Pilate washing his hands of the issue. The reference cuts to the heart of the biblical canon, using its moral and ethical basis to legitimise her own anger against sexual violence. If the Bible regards Pilate as the unethical bystander, then Noonuccal's reference to Pilate makes her argument against the Australian privileged class more valid. Noonuccal's activism has informed her writing and writing style-argumentative, conversational, dynamic and experiential. As a literary author, Noonuccal serves as a historiographer and a witness-poet. Her re-reading of mainstream colonial history and her participation in Aboriginal Rights movements underline her ethical activism. The same is extended to her writings, as unlike Pilate of the canon, she refuses to be a bystander.

Postcolonial migration, globalisation and the rise of cosmopolitan multicultural cities propelled Mixed Race Studies. With the increased featuring of non-white public intellectuals in mass media, the race question gathered momentum. Anthropologists like Geertz and Clifford indicated that pure race was never a possibility and the unitary nature of Euro-American culture is a myth. Narratives on non-white lives could be traced back to the European Renaissance, when non-white cultures travelled to and mingled with white societies. Jane Ifekwunigwe, in *Mixed Race Studies: A Reader* (2004), lays out the contexts of this academic category: colonialism, slavery, race and

gender, and the consequent importance of identity politics (Nayar 2010). A significant genre in Aboriginal Writing is life-writing-individual, collective and ethnographic. The testimony and life-writing genre explores the double consciousness of the personal and the political, with an emphasis on events, attention to landscape, and cultural values. Decolonising the grand narrative of storytelling and conventional plot structures, the life-writing format brings about a new method in literary activism. Feminist Studies have examined indigenous women writers and the various ways in which they have narrated gender and nation, and the day-to-day negotiation with the 'mainstream', its trappings of modern lifestyle and crime, and its impact on indigenous psyches (Nayar 2008). Maria Campbell's *Half-breed* is an important testimony in this regard. This memoir of her own experience and struggle against substance abuse and prostitution also doubles up as a record of the Metis people's historical identity. The book emerged during a period of growing indigenous activism in Canada, aligning with movements like the Red Power movement. Campbell's narrative brought attention to the injustices faced by Métis people, contributing to broader discussions about Indigenous rights and reconciliation. It speaks to contemporary issues such as missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, land rights, and cultural revitalisation. An author, an activist and a community mobiliser, Maria Campbell was the eldest of eight children. With a nativist upbringing in a family with mixed ancestry of European and indigenous lineage, Campbell grew up with self-doubt and dilemmas about her own individual and community identity. She grew up with a father who had alcoholism and was later trapped in an abusive marriage, which forced her into sex work and substance abuse. In Vancouver, as Campbell worked within a community of sex workers, she faced prejudice as a Metis woman. After 17 years, she returned to Saskatchewan to a life of alcohol rehabilitation, community mobilisation and activism. *Many Laws* (1969) -a handbook on the systemic challenges that confront First Nations people in the cities- was one of her early works. Through indigenous anecdotes and oral tales, Campbell wrote a testimony that focuses on her personal struggle of womanhood, her community identity as a Metis person, and her understanding of systemic racism and exclusion. The memoir does not shy away from discussing the impact of addiction within Métis communities. Campbell recounts her own struggles with substance abuse, which she frames as a coping mechanism for the trauma and despair she experienced. The memoir also accounts for the solidarity that Campbell forged with her siblings against the community's experiences of poverty, abuse, discrimination and shame for being 'half-breeds'. Tripping the priest with rabbit wire or chasing authoritarian neighbours testify to this familial solidarity (Johnston 2021). However, what makes *Half-breed* unique is her critique of pan-indigeneity as a

'universal' category. She questions, through her personal experience of Métis exclusion, the legitimacy of a 'pure' indigenous heritage and lineage. Within the context of a multicultural Canadian society, she contrasts the differential social positions and status of the whites, the Indians and the half-breeds. The Eurocentric classification of race and communities is called into question as Campbell exposes the hybrid nature within colonial and indigenous communities. The idea of the 'native' as a biologically 'pure' category is an essentialist trope in history and race studies. Indianness fixed by blood and socio-religious practices is a colonial tactic and classificatory method that segregates native communities and prevents a unifying spectrum of anti-colonial cause. Campbell overturns the Eurocentric 'science' of bloodline as a cultural determinant by valorising the uniqueness of the half-breed. Campbell's exploration of Métis identity is central to the narrative. She navigates the tension between her Indigenous and European heritage, reflecting on the challenges of being caught between two worlds (Xue 2022, 43-48). The term "half-breed," used both as a slur and a reclaimed identity, underscores the marginalisation Métis people experience within both settler and indigenous communities. The Métis community dates back to unions between Indigenous women and European fur traders. In the late 19th century, the Métis community organised political mobility and confronted the Canadian Government in a bid to assert independence. Armed resistance led by Métis leader Louis Riel fostered a sense of 'national' identity as Métis rebels protested the transfer of Métis territory from the Hudson's Bay Company to the Dominion of Canada. Riel was later charged with treason and executed. For successive generations, Riel's position was used against the Métis people to project them as a community of traitors. Campbell rips apart the shame and prejudice that have blanketed the community across generations. Within this framework, the memoir critiques the systemic oppression of Métis people, highlighting the impact of colonial policies, land dispossession, and cultural erasure. Campbell calls for a process of "healing" from the trauma of being "forgotten people" by forming spiritual alliances with family and community. Her own experiences of sexual violence, domestic abuse, and societal expectations reveal the compounded challenges faced by indigenous women. This intersectional lens enriches the narrative, showing how gender and race intertwine to create multi-fold forms of marginalisation (Udhayakumar 2021, 64-69).

Conclusion

Sourit Bhattacharya, in his book *Postcolonialism Now: Literature, Reading, Decolonising* (2025), establishes the relevance of rereading nation stories. He cites Benedict Anderson to argue that identity politics in globalised nation-states urgently enforce “a life-long allegiance from their citizen subjects” (Bhattacharya 2025, 38). The minorities of a nation, precarious on the geographical, linguistic, cultural, gender and social borders, are coerced into re-imagining their subjectivities as citizens and as resisters to a majoritarian representation of citizenship. What Partha Chatterjee terms the ‘fragments’ might refer to the several margins that continually subvert nationalism’s totalitarian agenda. Within critical and literary discourses, there is an insistence on reclaiming the subaltern, although the ethics of representing it remains a problematic question. Thus the category ‘minorities’ offers a critical framework that is anti-colonial, creative and heterogeneous. Caste, class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, race and, of course, indigeneity are lenses through which re-reading of nation-narratives can be carried out. These narratives critique outcomes of colonialism and neo-colonialism and the “politics of resistance” (Bhattacharya 2025, 39). Following Gauri Viswanathan in *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India* (1989), we can reiterate that cultural colonialism created racist hierarchies of knowledge systems and social practices. From the Marxist to the Negritude to the Deconstructionist - resistance as an act has been located in what has been written and how it has been written. Writing as resistance, resistance against theory and theorising towards resistance -all have formed the bedrock of resistance literature. Written in the context of the Algerian War of Independence, Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) explores the role of the native intellectual in framing a language of resistance. This native intellectual-in the Gramscian sense, an organic intellectual, someone capable of mobilising his class-must try to understand why and how resistance can be built up through understanding of colonialism, use of violence, mechanisms of oppression and decolonising the native nation. Fanon calls for a pan-Africanism that must return to myths, legends, practices through which Black identity could be resurrected. The native intellectual must go through stages of imitation, rejection and re-adaptation; however, he must also critically question his own culture and its prejudices. Fanon suggested a national literature/national culture, a collective Negritude movement where Black-African writers theorised about the capacity and agency of native literature to resist colonialism. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o, in *On the Abolition of English Departments* (1972) and *Decolonising the Mind* (1986), discusses how Eurocentric scholarship deflects attention from colonialism and turns to abstractions such as universalism and humanism. English and the English canon have forced natives to internalise imperialist logic; therefore, he advocates a return to

Gikuyu and the rejection of English. Thus, the role of literature and language in resisting imperialist practices and Eurocentric narratives was emphasised by post-colonial thinkers (Nayar 2010). Thus, 'centre' as a pure or homogeneous concept is itself suspicious (Bhattacharya 2025, 40). Abdul JanMohamed and David Lloyd explain that the institutional space of academia was confronted with the multiple margins of gender, race, and ethnicity, as well as the epistemological and cultural consequences of minorities' struggles against hegemony. Spivak, in *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (1987), observes that an alternative politics of the heterogeneous is imperative for the displacement of the centre (Spivak 1987). Thus, the language of the margin, Spivak argues, narrates a dislocation, a constant manoeuvring between the inside and the outside. As writer-activists, crafting their resistance through their indigenous reality, Noonuccal and Campbell forge new paths for literary authorship- this mode of authorship writes back to hegemonic assumptions within the canon. It yet poses as critical insiders to their own native histories.

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