

A LONG STORY OF OPPRESSION OF INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

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Abstract. *Canada's colonial past may be arguably described as the process of forcibly disconnecting Indigenous peoples from their land, disintegrating their traditional ways of life, and destroying their system of values over an extensive period of time, before confining these communities to reserves. The detrimental consequences of physical segregation enforced through the Residential School System and life on the reserves are seen to this day through the fact that most Indigenous peoples were left disconnected from their traditional culture and economically impoverished in modern-day society. One of the ways to get an accurate insight into this methodical disempowerment process would be to experience it from the Indigenous point of view by reading their literature. Thus, this paper aims at analyzing the works of Beth Brant ("A Long Story"), Emma Lee Warrior ("Compatriots"), and Emily Pauline Johnson ("A Red Girl's Reasoning") in the postcolonial framework in order to expose instances of both spiritual and physical discrimination as well as economic marginalization imposed on Indigenous characters in these stories.*

Key words: *postcolonial studies, Canada, Indigenous people*

1. SYSTEMATIC COLONIZATION AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

The main objective of this paper is to uncover instances of spiritual and physical discrimination as well as economic marginalization which are imposed on Indigenous characters in the three short stories written by the following Indigenous authors: Beth Brant, Emma Lee Warrior, and Emily Pauline Johnson. The stories of these authors were selected for analysis because all three of these writers are Indigenous rights advocates who strove to uplift the voices of Indigenous women in society. Beth Brant, also known as

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Degonwadonti, was a Mohawk writer and essayist from the Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte. Her father was a member of the Mohawk, while her mother was of Scottish descent. Brant's mixed-blood heritage influenced her writing and prompted her to speak about issues related to the colonization of Indigenous peoples. Additionally, her personal experience of being a lesbian and a victim of domestic abuse greatly impacted her work and led her to incorporate feminist details into her prose. Furthermore, Emma Lee Warrior was a contemporary Blackfoot author who was a member of the Peigan tribe. Warrior's fiction focuses on "depicting some stereotypes of appropriation and notions of what it means to be an Indigenous native in contemporary society" (McKinnon 1998, 56). She also focused on discussing the epistemological question of how Indigenous peoples produce knowledge and pass it down from generation to generation. Finally, Emily Pauline Johnson, also known as Tekahionwake, was an artist, performer, and orator who was proclaimed to be a Person of National Historic Significance. Johnson "has made important contributions to Indigenous and Canadian oral and written culture" (Robinson 2008).

The paper will firstly make a brief outline which will describe the colonization process of the Indigenous peoples living across Canada with the aim of shedding light on detrimental consequences of civilizing these peoples through the centuries. Various postcolonial critics will be evoked with the purpose of inspecting how the white settlers managed to subdue and disempower Indigenous peoples who inhabited the land long before the European fleets arrived from across the sea. The introductory section of this paper will briefly examine the facts of Canada's colonial history by comparing and contrasting them to the works of various postcolonial critics. Multiple instances of discrimination of Indigenous peoples will be categorized into three sections: discrimination on the physical level, which is defined as the unjust treatment of individuals on the basis of perceivable racial differences (Schaefer 2008, 1113); discrimination on the spiritual level which is defined as the unfair treatment of individuals in the society due to their religious preferences (Weller 2011); and on the economic level, which is viewed as the process of segmenting groups or individuals from the economy in general and leaving them in an inferior position to certain groups who enjoy considerable economic privileges (Christiano 1996, 23). Thus, the latter sections of this paper will aim at illustrating these instances of discrimination by locating them in the works of Indigenous authors Beth Brant ("A Long Story"), Emma Lee Warrior ("Compatriots"), and Emily Pauline Johnson ("A Red Girl's Reasoning").

Systematic colonization of Indigenous peoples and their territories in Canada is a complex process leading to the "physical, spiritual, and economic marginalization of these peoples" (Jenkins 1991, 32). Bearing this in mind, one should be aware that Canada's early history is integrally linked with the practice of imperialism and colonialism, with large parts of it being arguably nothing but the story of Canada's creation as a colonial state and of its relationships with other imperial powers (Owram 1998). From the very beginning, European settlers viewed the land as being completely vacant for they did not register Indigenous Peoples as legitimate landowners. However, when the Europeans invaded and began to settle in North and South America, they encountered free, vibrant, sovereign Indigenous nations with complex forms of social and political organization and territorial jurisdiction that were older (3000-30,000 years), more populous (60-80 million) and more variegated than those in Europe. Despite the fact that these findings "initially stunned the incomers", the process of European colonization continued and developed through the destruction of indigenous societies (Asch 2004:152). Once one inspects the complex

relationship between the settlers and Indigenous Peoples, further instances of abuse will be detected such as attempts at civilizing Indigenous peoples through Christian missionaries which aimed to ameliorate the condition of Indigenous Peoples in Canada (Austin, Scott, 2005): “The missionaries coming to Canada only saw a wilderness and named it uncultivated. Thus, the landscape became uncultivated in spiritual and ethnic terms, ‘a heathen and mortal desert’, where Christianity can burst upon the gloomy scene of heathenism” (Austin, Scott 2005,22). The colonizers were aware that the Indigenous peoples had a unique relationship with their traditional land and resources. One aspect of Indigenous cosmology that appeared to transcend cultural and geographic boundaries was “the veneration of certain natural areas as sacred sites” (Burton 2002). Thus, the destruction of sacred sites which formed part of the spiritual, psychological, and social foundations of many Indigenous communities was one of the means of subduing their spirituality, followed by the story of civilizing them in order to put an end to their wandering and unsettling habits by preaching the words from the Bible (Neihart 2013,91).

As Aime Cesaire explains in his essay “Discourse and Colonialism” (1955), the colonized society was “drained of its essence”, its culture was “trampled”, its institutions “undermined, lands confiscated, religions smashed” (1955, 43). The government officials withheld food from Indigenous peoples until they agreed to move to their appointed reserve, meaning that one’s freedom was being traded for rations (Stanley 1947,8). Once on reserves, food was stored away in ration houses instead of being given to the masses. Therefore, although officially promoted as a protective place for the endangered population, the reserves served one significant goal: to make room for new European settlers and create a new economic system based on farming where the traditional Indigenous ways of living had no place. This logic is in line with the statement Franz Fanon makes in his book, *The Wretched of the Earth* (1965), in which he argues that “the zone where the natives live is not complementary to the zone inhabited by the settlers” (1965,38). The settlers’ town only has room for white people, while the native town, or in this case, reserve, is “a hungry town, starved of bread, of meat, of shoes, of coal, of light” (Fanon, 1965,39). Scholars suggest that these reserves served as “social laboratories” where First Nations inhabitants were to become productive, civilized Canadians (Tobias 1978,41). Finally, in the 1880s, The Indian Residential School (IRS) system was introduced as one of the key mechanisms by which the government attempted to achieve their goal of eliminating their “Indian problem” (Dessault 1996). The system ran from the 1880s until the last school closed in the mid-1990s. By 1930, roughly 75% of all First Nations children between the ages of 7 and 15 attended IRS, as did significant numbers of Métis and Inuit children (Fournier & Crey 1997). Children as young as 3 were forced, by law, to leave their families and communities in order to live at schools designed to “kill the Indian in the child” (Dessault 1996,312). These schools taught Aboriginal children to be ashamed of their languages, cultural beliefs, and traditions and were largely ineffective at providing a proper education (Rude 2004). In addition to the significant number of mortalities and children who went “missing” from these schools, many were also victims of chronic mental, physical, and sexual abuses, and neglect (Dessault, 1996,316). Among colonial policies, residential schooling has been especially damaging to Indigenous peoples. Those who survived the system tried to readapt to the traditional way of life that they had been forced to reject (Miller 1996). Moreover, research has shown that residential school survivors often suffered from drug and alcohol addictions, depression, higher rates of suicide, and poor relationship and parenting skills. Additionally, the children and other

family members of Residential School survivors often suffered the continuing effects of their parents' experience in the schools. The children remained hindered from connecting to their culture because the parents were unable to transmit their own language, customs, and moral framework to their kin (Wesley-Esquimaux, Cynthia, and Smolewski 2004, 20).

2. SPIRITUAL DISCRIMINATION

Religious discrimination acts as an umbrella term for a range of different types of discrimination based on the unfair treatment of certain groups of people due to their different belief systems. Among various instances of religious discrimination the most prominent ones include 'religious disadvantage', which is experienced by all religious groups that are not from 'established' churches; 'religious prejudice', which is attitudinal, can wound individuals, and can form a basis for exclusion; 'direct religious discrimination', which is deliberately unfair action based on religion and 'indirect religious discrimination', which is a consequence of unexamined practices or procedures (Weller 2011).

In "A Red Girl's Reasoning", Johnson tells a story about the marriage between a white Canadian named Charlie McDonald, and an Indigenous woman, Christine. The story focuses on the "white refusal to accept the sanctity of the tribal marriage ceremonies" (Ruoff 1992,252). The main conflict in Charlie and Christine's relationship arises when Christine reveals that her parents were never in fact married according to Christian customs, as it was the standard socially-acceptable procedure, but by Indian rites. Angered, Charlie argues that Christine's parents, unlike her ancestors, lived in more modern times, when priests and magistrates were easily available to officiate wedding ceremonies. Nevertheless, the truth is that Charlie is genuinely terrified of the possibility that his public image may become besmirched. If Charlie married a woman who was, according to Christian morality, illegally born into this world, he would face the risk of being ridiculed or even excluded from society. Johnson also cleverly questions Charlie's insistence on Christian regulations by describing their marriage ceremony: *There had not been much of a wedding ceremony. The priest had cantered through the service in Latin, pronounced the benediction in English, and congratulated the happy couple in Indian* (Johnson 1913,2). Thus, Charlie's emphasis on Christian conventions should be taken with a grain of salt for he himself despises *all the regulation gimcracks of the usual marriage celebrations* (Johnson 1913,2), as is stated in the illustration of their wedding ceremony which was described as an incongruous mixture of Latin, English and Indian traditions. Bearing this in mind, one sees how unfair it is of Charlie to demand that his wife respects his traditions when he himself does not place much value on them. Furthermore, Christine reveals the hypocrisy of Charlie's argument by juxtaposing a Christian ceremony to the Indigenous rites of marriage (Johnson,1913:5):

There is no ceremony at all, save a feast. The two people just agree to live only with and for each other, and the man takes his wife to his home, just as you do. There is no ritual to bind them; they need none; an Indian's word was his law in those days, you know.

Christine explains that unlike a Christian wedding, which is based on written confirmation, the Indian is dutiful enough to stay true to their word without any mediator being present such as a priest. She, therefore, emphasizes the fact that one's promise is of greater value than artificially constructed norms. Moreover, Johnson points out that Christine readily accepted all

of Charlie's customs without question and hence transformed herself in accordance with the expected social standards. As a dutiful wife, she learned all the English manners and etiquettes, and even tried to assimilate herself into an unfamiliar, foreign culture. Johnson was aware of the "injustices under the law which were endured by Indigenous women" and that she strove to depict Christine as someone who was ready to "make sacrifices on behalf of her spouse as was expected of an Indigenous woman" (Ruoff,1992:249). Contrary to this, Charlie repaid Christine's loyalty by degrading and diminishing the value of her traditions and ultimately betraying her in the end. Christine was expected to forsake the system of values of her people in order to avoid being discriminated against. However, she made a conscious choice to defend her national identity even though it meant losing the person she loved. Ultimately, Christine maintains her sense of "virtue and self-worth as a mixed-blood and as a woman" but nullifies her marriage (Ruoff 1992, 252).

In Emma Lee Warrior's story, "Compatriots", a different kind of attitude towards spirituality is introduced. In her story, Warrior shows the readers how white men have come to adopt and use Indigenous spirituality for their own commercial interests and how Indigenous peoples themselves have become disconnected from their spirituality as a consequence of colonization, displacement, and erasure of cultural memory. Warrior's humorous story revolves around Lucy, an Indigenous woman and a pregnant mother of two children who agrees to take Hilda, a woman visiting from Germany, to a sun dance. Hilda, much like Charlie from the previous story, wants to learn more about Indigenous cultures by studying the accounts of white people who seem to be experts on the subject: *He seems to know a lot about the Indians, and he's been accepted into their religious society. I hope he can tell me things I can take home* (Warrior 1987,50). Warrior's usage of irony is depicted in this quote as Hilda directly tells an Indigenous woman that a white man from Germany is a more adequate source for learning about Indigenous culture than an Indigenous woman, all because he has written a book on the subject. This vacuous act exemplifies how shortsighted Hilda actually is for she believes in an idealized image of Indians, portrayed by the profiteering members of the dominant culture, instead of opening her eyes and realizing that she has been given a direct insight into life on the reserves. At one point in the story, Lucy declares that she had never visited a sun dance: *It's mostly those mixed-up people who are in it. You see, Indian religion just came back here on the reserve a little while ago, and there are different groups who all quarrel over which way to practice it. Some use Sioux ways, and others use Cree* (Warrior 1987,51). Based on Lucy's answer one can conclude that Indigenous peoples no longer live in accordance with their traditions because white people have disrupted the transmission of their values and practices over generations, consequently destroying their spirituality. Lucy explains that in an attempt to revive their spirituality, every band began performing the rituals in their own way and mixing different religious traditions in the hope of regaining their connection with their culture. However, this new spirituality is confusing and is only a poor remnant of their past traditions. There is an attempt on the part of Indigenous bands to revive spirituality, but confusion arises due to their loss of touch with the old traditions. Interestingly enough, the tepee belonging to Helmut, a German man-turned Indian, immediately stands out from the rest, as it is the largest one there, with a Winnebago parked outside of it. Besides being grand from the outside, his tepee is described as opulent from the inside as well. The teepee is depicted as being both "roomy" and "stunning", with numerous buffalo hides, artifacts, and wall hangings. This proves that Helmut only incorporates the stereotypes from the Indigenous culture, but surrounds himself with all the luxury of modern civilization.

Namely, “Helmut’s romantic construct of the Indian rejects the marginality that surrounds these peoples” (McKinnon 1998, 63). Moreover, Helmut’s appearance is a source of humor as well: *Lucy had never seen Helmut in anything other than Indian regalia. He wore his hair in braids and always wore round pink shell earrings. Whenever Lucy saw him, she was reminded of the Plains Indian Museum across the line* (Warrior 1987,57). Helmut’s costume resembles a stereotyped image of an Indian found in western movies or museum exhibitions. It is clear to see that Helmut embraces those images of Indians which are conjured by white men and which are based on the overgeneralizations of Indigenous culture. In her reading of the story, Ann McKinnon (1998,58) explains that “Helmut is a figure of parody because his European ethics and conceits informs his quest for subjective identity”.

A different kind of spiritual discrimination is depicted in Beth Brant’s *A Long Story*. She writes a story about the physical separation of children from their mothers, which is endorsed by the system throughout the centuries. One plotline of her story, taking place in the 1890s, shows the grief of a nineteenth-century Indian mother whose children have been wrenched away to boarding school: *All the girls dress alike. My son, his hair cut. Dressed as the white men, his arms and legs covered by cloth that made him sweat* (Brant 1999,91). Annie’s two children are completely stripped of their national identity as the agents board them on the train heading towards a Residential School. The children are all forced to conform to the standard norm in an attempt to initiate assimilation. Their clothes are replaced by those that were typically worn by the white people in order to make the transition smoother, while the children’s braids are cut in an attempt to eliminate any traces of their real identity. Bearing in mind that the Mohawk people considered long hair to be the source of power, by cutting off the braids, white people attempted to disconnect these people from their power source (Bonvillain 1992). Apart from changing the children’s physical appearance and dressing them in western clothes, the children also get assigned new names. Annie’s children *He Catches the Leaves* and *She Sees Deer* get renamed into Daniel and Martha, two strange names which Annie does not recognize once she receives a letter from them. Changing the children’s given names was also part of the strategy to subdue their Indian identity by forcibly erasing any traces of their culture. Tara Prince-Hughes (1998, 9) explains that “a central concern in contemporary Indigenous fiction is that of identity and the individual’s attempt to preserve his native heritage”, thus, in this short story, Brant chose to depict how devastating it was for a mother to learn that her children have been stripped of their identities. Besides her son and daughter, Annie’s brother willingly decides to renounce his culture in order to get ahead in society: *He works for the whites and understands their meaning. He has taken the sign of the wolf from over the doorway. He pretends to be like those whites who hate us* (Brant 1999, 92). Annie’s brother works for a white employer and has learned how to communicate in English in order to fit into the dominant society. Moreover, he has removed one of the symbols of their tribe from his front door in an attempt to distance himself from his culture and to evade being associated with the Indigenous identity. According to Alan Cairns (2004, 56), for those Indigenous communities who practice Indigenous religions, land, beliefs, and practice remain intimately connected. It is clear that her brother is attempting to sever all the ties with his heritage and adopt the image of a white man because he understands that is the only way to climb up the social ladder.

3. PHYSICAL DISCRIMINATION

Physical discrimination is based upon social perceptions of biological differences between people. The perceived racial and ethnic differences lead to the belief that some races are ranked as inherently superior or inferior to each other due to shared physical features, traits, and qualities (Schaefer 2008). Physical discrimination can take various forms ranging from instances of prejudicial and unjust treatments of individuals in the public, cultural, economic, and social spheres of life, up to extreme cases of racial segregation enforced by law (Sayce 1998).

The most prominent example of the cruelest form of discrimination, which is labelled as “segregation” according to psychologists such as Thomas Schelling (*Models of Segregation* 1969,489) can be viewed in Bath Brant’s grief-filled story *A Long Story*. Brant’s story was created in order to shed light on the alarming issue of the legal separation of Indigenous children from their parents that was endorsed by the legal system. In Brant’s story, “the weakest and most marginalized members of the national community retell the devastating events that had befallen them during the colonial era” (MacDonald et al. 2012, 427). In the first plotline, the traumatic and horrifying effects of this separation are conveyed through the emotions of Annie, a grieving Indigenous mother, who just witnessed both of her children being taken away by government agents to a Residential School: *I hold myself tight in fear of flying apart in the air. The others try to feed me. Can they feed a dead woman? I have stopped talking, when my mouth opens only air escapes. I have used up my sound screaming their names* (Brant 1999,91).

In the nineteenth century, the mere fact of being an Indian was enough to characterize an indigenous mother as unfit to raise her children in a civilized manner (Cranston, 1991). This was one of the reasons why the authorities thought that the removal of Indigenous children from their own culture was beneficial for their assimilation into the dominant culture. Although Annie was deemed as ‘uncivilized’ according to European standards, the excerpt Beth reveals that she is overwhelmed with pain after losing both of her children. The barbarity of those who set up the standards is exposed once the initial idea behind the Residential schools is paralleled to the experience of the mother who sees no justification for the child stealing. Annie’s experience is not a specific case, but a universal one that depicts the experience of a whole generation of parents who lost their children due to the system. The readers are given a glimpse into the Indian side of this process of civilization, exemplifying how it actually affected Indigenous families.

Brant elaborates on this issue by introducing another storyline happening in the twentieth century in order to show that the pattern of forcibly separating the children is still recurrent, despite the fact that the institutions have changed. In the other storyline, Mary, a modern lesbian mother, loses custody of her daughter in court to her husband. Mary’s perspective on the event is depicted in the following lines: *She is gone. The room is empty, lonely. They said it was in her best interest. How can that be? She is only six, a baby who needs her mothers. This has not happened. I will not believe this. Oh God, I think I have died* (Brant 1999,91). Being a homosexual woman herself, Brant was able to depict the struggles of a lesbian couple, Mary and Ellen, who lose their child on account of a court decision. Interestingly enough, if in the nineteenth century the mere fact of being Indian was enough to deem a mother inappropriate to raise her children, now, in the twentieth century, being a lesbian was enough to label Mary as an unfit parent. Namely, society dictates that in order for her to be recognized as a parent, Mary must discard her lesbian

identity because she cannot be both a mother and a lesbian. However, all the negative connotations immediately presupposed by someone's sexual identity are put into question by Brant who depicts Mary's true feeling for her daughter, as is seen in the passage above which focuses on Mary's intense feelings of grief and anger.

Jace Weaver (1992:253) explains that "Indigenous and mixed-race women face greater hardships in society than those faced by white women", therefore, deviating from the "heterosexual norm" only added to the criticism Mary faced from others. It is clear to see that Mary has a profound love for her daughter, a kind of selfless love only a mother could have towards her child. Mary misses Patricia and even states that life has become such a nightmare that Mary believes she must have died. On the other hand, Patricia's father, who now has custody over her, tries to win Patricia over by bribing her with presents. *Daddy got me a new bike and shoes* (Brant, 1999,93), Patricia writes in the letter that Mary and Ellen receive, proving that his love for her is shallow and based on material gifts. Her father is attempting to buy Patricia's love and use her as an asset, more precisely, as a means to get back at his former wife and achieve revenge. Patricia's father directly stands for the whole dominant patriarchal system and its rigid rules which consequently oppress women (Weaver, 1992:254).

A different instance of physical discrimination can be seen in Emma Lee Warrior's "Compatriots". In this story, the characters face unequal treatment in the social and economic sphere of life which immediately places them in an inferior position to that of a white person. A very revealing instance of physical discrimination is depicted in the scene where Lucy's uncle, Sonny, approaches her in search of assistance: *The cops said I have to leave town. I don't want to stay because they might beat me up* (Warrior 1987,52). Sonny appears to be panic-stricken and is desperately seeking help because he is afraid that the police will physically punish him: *The cops had probably tired of putting him in jail and sending him out each morning* (Warrior 1987,52). Based on these lines, it is evident that her uncle had many encounters with the law due to his continuous drinking problem. Apparently, he has been incarcerated on multiple occasions already and was now given the instructions to leave town before being discovered in an intoxicated state. Despite all of the warnings issued by the officers, the problem of alcoholism remains unsolved. The authorities offer Sonny no solution for his alcohol abuse problem and only apply force in order to threaten him into good behavior. The use of force by law enforcement officers becomes necessary in extreme circumstances such as self-defense or the defense of another individual; however, in Sonny's case, it is completely unnecessary because he is not a person inviting aggression, but a person in need of protection. Lucy's uncle, who stands for the majority of the Indigenous community, is invisible in the eyes of the law and, therefore, the government is doing nothing to protect him. The main problem is that institutional help is missing; people who suffer from alcohol addiction are punished and shunned by society and no meaningful attempt is made to understand the reasons why they turn to drinking in the first place. At first, the government segregated Indigenous peoples from the mainstream community and confined them to reserves, and then, it deprived them of the opportunity to engage in any meaningful work by limiting their ability to advance in the economic sphere. McKinnon (1998, 63) points out that Warrior wanted to include all these instances which depict the physical and material hardships that the Indigenous peoples face in order to place emphasis on the fact that these people were "actively marginalized in society and that this kind of behavior was deemed as the norm".

Finally, when examining Pauline Johnson's story in order to uncover instances of physical discrimination, the most prominent example appeared to be a prejudicial and demeaning way people viewed Christine's appearance. On numerous occasions, she has been ascribed various attributes, based on her visible features: *She was all the rage that winter at the provincial capital. The men called her a deuced fine little woman. The ladies said she was just the sweetest wildflower* (Johnson 1913,3). As mentioned at the beginning of this segment, physical discrimination may take many forms and, in this story, it is portrayed by people's misconceptions and assumptions of Christine which are based on her unique ethnic appearance. Some view her as an exotic being that sparks men's interests, while others see her dark skin and facial features as a fashionable trend, which is currently in style. Johnson contradicts people's comments by revealing that Christine is just an ordinary person and not this foreign and extravagant image that others have conjured of her. Christine's body is "romanticized" and the people who admire her appearance "chose to focus solely on those physical traits that make her figure deviate from the white norm" (McKinnon 1998,59). None has taken the effort to get to know Christine, and, hence, they have all formed their opinions of her on the basis of commonly upheld stereotypes. There is another moment between Charlie and Christine which is very suggestive of repressed violence. While arguing, Charlie grabs Christine's wrist, hurting her in the process: *Oh, God! You are hurting me; you are breaking my arm!* (Johnson 1913,9). Angered by Christine's behavior, Charlie resorts to violence and squeezes her wrist with such force that Christine gasps out in pain, warning Charlie that he will break her hand if he were to continue. This moment illustrates the aggressive colonial patterns which are integrated into Charlie's behavior even though he is attempting to move beyond these tendencies and towards cultural tolerance and mutual understanding.

4. ECONOMIC MARGINALIZATION

Economic marginalization is a multidimensional process in which particular groups are prevented from participating fully and equally in the economic life of their city or metropolitan area. It occurs when people experience acute economic disadvantage over an extended period of time and are unable to improve their economic circumstances or enable their children to escape them. The individuals who are economically marginalized are in an inferior position compared to certain groups who enjoy considerable economic privileges (Christiano 1996, 23). Based on this definition of economic exclusion, this chapter will aim to illustrate various examples of economic marginalization which the characters in the three stories endured.

To start with, Emma Lee Warrior's story, "Compatriots", immediately catches the readers' attention with its vivid and detailed descriptions of the living conditions Indigenous peoples faced on reserves. In order to give the audience an accurate insight into life on the reserves, Warrior chose Lucy, a common Indigenous woman and a pregnant mother of two, to be the protagonist because her experience stands for a collective experience of those living within the borders of the reserves. The story begins with the description of Lucy's property, immediately signaling out the fact that her home did not possess indoor plumbing because an outhouse was stationed in the garden: *She had been caught in the outhouse a few times and it still embarrassed her to have a car approach while she was in there* (Warrior 1987,48). An outhouse is an outbuilding containing a toilet, typically with no plumbing but a pit latrine. Lucy feels ashamed

to have been seen exiting the privy because people would immediately be able to presuppose what she was doing while being in there and, thus, her privacy would be violated. McKinnon (1998,63) explains that “although Lucy may feel embarrassed about having an outhouse instead of a toilet, her position in the third-person narrative has the effect of flouting marginalization”. By retelling the events from the third person perspective, Warrior (1987, 63) succeeded in prompting the reader to “pity the disadvantaged Indigenous community” and “to parody Helmut’s authority”.

Lucy’s pride and dignity suffer as a consequence of not having any access to basic human necessities. Unfortunately, this was the state of the majority of houses on the reserves, and entire families, like Lucy’s, were forced to live in such substandard conditions: *Lucy poured some water from a white enamel basin and washed her hands and face* (Warrior 1987,49). Water supplies were usually stored in jugs and employed for various purposes when the need for water arose. Apart from using some as drinking water, these water supplies were used for washing one’s face and hands, doing the dishes, as well as cooking and cleaning. Bearing in mind that Lucy has a large family and a third child on the way, this water deficiency proves to be a great hindrance in completing daily chores. The problem of scarce water supplies takes on a different dimension once summer starts and the heat waves begin to plague the city: *“Lord it’s hot,” exclaimed Lucy to Hilda. It must be close to ninety-five or one hundred* (Warrior 1987,54). In order to escape the scorching heat, Lucy suggests that they head to her aunt’s house because it has access to a water source, something which is considered a rare commodity on the reserve.

Besides not being able to afford air cooling, Lucy and her husband struggle to afford a decent meal for her children as well: *Hilda complimented Lucy’s cooking even though it was only the usual scrambled eggs and fried potatoes with roast and coffee. After payday, there’d be sausages and ham, but payday was Friday and today was only Tuesday* (Warrior 1987,50). Unfortunately, Lucy’s family lives from paycheck to paycheck. The whole household is financially dependent on Lucy’s husband as he is the only working parent. Once he is paid his wages, the family can afford more nutritious foods such as pork or chicken, but until then, they have to get by on cheaper products like eggs and potatoes. The fact that the husband receives paychecks every Friday indicates that he is a manual worker who receives payments on a weekly basis, suggesting that his income is rather minimal and not enough to support a family of two children and a soon-to-be-born baby. Nevertheless, despite the poor financial situation in Lucy’s household, there are examples of other characters in the story who are facing even greater hardships and are living on the very verge of poverty. Walking down the street, Hilda and Lucy encounter a vagabond, asking them for some change: *He wants money. Don’t pay any attention to him. He always does this. I used to give him money, but he just drinks it up* (Warrior 1987,51). According to Lucy’s explanation, the unkempt Indian man who dogged them was related to her husband. He is regularly seen on the streets, begging for money which he would only use to satisfy his alcohol addiction. Lucy is well aware of the fact that even if she were to take pity on him due to his shabby appearance and hand him a few banknotes, the man would only drink away the money and continue roaming the streets again. Alcohol abuse was a recurring problem within the Indigenous communities on the reserves. Characters such as Hilda, fail to acknowledge the fact that Indigenous peoples on the reserve live on the margins of society, devoid of basic life necessities. Hilda “actively erases Lucy’s lived identity by not acknowledging Lucy’s drunken husband Bunky, her sobering-up uncle Sunny, the man who begs for money to buy the vanilla extract, and the house full of junk” (McKinnon 1998, 59).

Some traces of economic marginalization are also exhibited in Beth Brant's story, "A Long Story". In her second plotline, happening in 1979, Brant describes the working conditions in the factory where Mary is employed as being rather strenuous and tiring: *My back is sore from the line, bending over and down, screwing the handles on the doors of the flashing cars moving by. No one talks. There is no time to talk, the noise is taking up all the space and breathing* (Brant 1999,93). Based on the description Brant provided, it is most likely that Mary works in a factory that produces car parts. Presumably, she is one of the workers who are assigned the task of attaching the given components onto the vehicle frame by hand. Mary's back hurts because her work requires her to be constantly bending over the line as new items appear which she needs to tend to. It is suggested that the workers have no time to talk with one another as the line is moving very quickly and all their focus is directed at the task at hand so as to avoid making any unnecessary mistakes. The noises in the factory are deafening because the machines at work produce loud and shrill sounds, overpowering any attempt at human conversation. This description of Mary's working environment serves to illustrate the kind of arduous jobs people from the Indigenous community were hired to perform. The manual work Mary is doing takes quite a toll on her and results in her having constant back pains. Daniel Heath Justice (2001,258) clarifies that Indigenous workers are denied "privileged positions on the job market due to "the commonly upheld belief that these working groups are less superior compared to other layers of society who are offered high-paid job positions".

When analyzing Johnson's story, "A Red Girl's Reasoning", so as to locate instances of economic marginalization imposed on the characters, the most convincing example of economic marginalization is found in the description of Christine's living conditions once she has separated from Charlie and moved to a different home. Ruoff (1992, 253) argues that "A Red Girl's Reasoning" depicts the "oppression of Indigenous women and how they fought back", while foregrounding the notion that "Indigenous resistance will always be strictly punished by society". Johnson uses the following terms in order to describe her new dwelling: *Charlie reached the outskirts of the town, opened up the wicked gate, and walked up the weedy, unkept path leading to the cottage where she lodged* (Johnson 1913,11). Once Christine annulled her marriage with Charlie and left the relationship, she immediately lost all the social privileges ascribed to a wife of a white Canadian. Thus, if the upper classes used to tolerate Christine due to her socially acceptable position as a wife, now they were free to discard her completely as she does not adhere to the dominant social pattern. Firstly, Christine's skin color serves as ocular proof of the fact that she is different from the majority of the population. Her darker complexion immediately places her in an inferior position to those individuals of European origin. Secondly, regardless of her skin color, Christine is also a woman which is a gender role that carries certain connotations with it. However, Christine's choice to willingly leave the institution of marriage results in her exiting the ascribed norm. Thus, as a result, she is excluded from society both socially and psychically, as is exemplified by the fact that her cottage is isolated from the community and stationed at the outskirts of town. There is no road leading to her house, but an overgrown path, symbolically illustrating the fact that she is cut off from the rest of the society. Additionally, there are no houses situated in her vicinity, suggesting that Christine is prevented from socializing with other human beings. She is, therefore, alienated from any human contact.

5. CONCLUSION

Three short stories were chosen for analysis in order to illustrate the effects of the colonization process as depicted by the Indigenous writers. Stories were selected to be the main medium for portraying these injustices due to the fact that literature, as a form of art, is a powerful tool for fighting against social problems and raising public awareness of the current political issues. Stories are known to have the power to create and preserve a nation, as well as to teach and unite people. As a Hopi American Indian proverb states: "Those who tell stories rule the world." Alarming problems of physical and spiritual discrimination, and economic marginalization of Indigenous peoples are dealt with in the three short stories: "A Red Girl's Reasoning" (Emily Pauline Johnson), "A Long Story" (Beth Brant), and "Compatriots" (Emma Lee Warrior). The collective experience of a generation of Indigenous peoples is illustrated through the experience of a single character in each of these stories, making the reader become aware of the difficulties and hardships these people endured. Moreover, although each story focuses on one of the prevalent issues mentioned, all three display instances of discrimination and marginalization mentioned, proving that these problems were prevalent throughout different time periods. These stories enable a reader to get acquainted with Indigenous culture and to learn about these peoples turbulent past. As Beth Brant once mentioned: "I was obsessing about the past, but writing gave me insight into the future, writing calmed me down" (Brant 1994). It is clear that stories can help people make sense of reality and direct societies' attention to ongoing issues in order to prevent the same destructive patterns from repeating again. And so, even though there has been significant progress in the process of improving the position of Indigenous people in modern-day's society, a lot of work still remains to be done in order to prevent the marginalization of Indigenous communities. The contributions of Indigenous writers are a crucial step forward towards integration.

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DUGA PRIČA O UGNJETAVANJU DOMORODAČKIH NARODA

Kolonijalna prošlost Kanade se može opisati kao proces nasilnog odvajanja autohtonih naroda od njihove zemlje, dezintegracije njihovog tradicionalnog načina života i uništavanja njihovog sistema vrednosti tokom dužeg vremenskog perioda, pre nego što su ove zajednice bile prostorno ograničene na rezervate. Štetne posledice fizičke segregacije nametnute kroz rezidencijalni školski sistem kao i posledice života u rezervatu se i danas mogu videti kroz činjenicu da je većina autohtonih naroda ostala odvojena od svoje tradicionalne kulture i ostala ekonomski osiromašena u savremenom društvu. Jedan od načina da se dobije tačan uvid u ovaj metodički proces ugnjetavanja je da se doživi sa stanovišta starosedelaca putem čitanja njihove literature. Ovaj rad ima za cilj da analizira radove Bet Brant (duga Priča), Eme Li Vorijor (Sunarodnici) i Emili Paulin Džonson (Rezonovanje Jedna Indijanke) u postkolonijalnom okviru, pozivajući se na spise kritičara kao što su Frans Fenon i Aime Cezare kako bi se razotkrile instance duhovne i fizičke diskriminacije, kao i ekonomske marginalizacije sa kojima se suočavaju domorodački likovi u ovim pričama.

Ključne reči: *postkolonijalne studije, Kanada, starosedeoci*