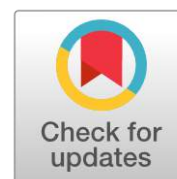


NATIVE AMERICAN HISTORY AS COUNTER-DISDISCOURSE IN JAMES WELCH'S NARRATIVES: THE EXAMPLES OF "FOOLS CROW" AND "KILLING CUSTER"

Issa Omotosho Garuba
University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria



Abstract

A peculiar dimension in the Native American writing is the documentation of the history of the Native Americans' traditional lives before, during and after their encounter with the white settlers. It is a development that is essentially explicable within the purview of postcolonial discourse, given that, in some contexts, historical distortions from the perspective of the 'other' have been asserted as the rationale for such creative explorations on the part of the Native writers. In the context of this study, such a dimension, with particular reference to James Welch's novels, is considered as, indeed, counter-discursive. Two of his novels, *Fools Crow* and *Killing Custer*, are selected with a view to assessing how the historical documentations in the texts translate to counter-discourses in the context of the Native Americans' historical evolution. The study reveals that, while the Native American histories in the texts dovetail into each other, they are largely inspired by the Native Americans' colonial experience vis-à-vis the need to represent their history from the perspective of 'us' as opposed to 'other'. It concludes that the narratives have, in a significant way, performed the allegorical configuration function, as a counter-discourse strategy described by Slemon (1987). This holds in that they have conceivably assumed 'readings' and 'contestations' of the previously textualised colonial experience of the Native Americans from the perspective of the 'other'.

Keywords: Native American history, counter-discourse, postcolonial discourse, James Welch, *Fools Crow*, *Killing Custer*

Article history:

Received: 17 January 2024

Reviewed: 06 February 2024

Revised: 31 May 2024

Accepted: 01 June 2024

Published: 22 June 2024

Copyright © 2024 Issa Omotosho Garuba




This open access article is published and distributed under a [CC BY-NC 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/) which permits non-commercial use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited. Permissions beyond the scope of this license may be available at omotoshoissa@gmail.com If you want to use the work commercially, you must first get the authors' permission.

Citation: Garuba, I. O. (2024). Native American History as Counter-Discourse in James Welch's Narratives: The Examples of "*Fools Crow*" and "*Killing Custer*". *English Studies at NBU*, 10(1), 191-205.

<https://doi.org/10.33919/esnbu.24.1.11>

Issa Omotosho Garuba holds a PhD degree in Literature-in-English from the Department of English, Faculty of Arts, University of Ilorin, Nigeria. He attended Bayero University, Kano, Nigeria and University of Lagos, Nigeria for his Bachelor of Arts degree in English and Master of Arts degree in English Literature respectively. His publications have featured in various reputable national and international journals.

E-mail: garuba.io@unilorin.edu.ng

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3538-9493>

Literature has, indeed, played a significant role in the historical documentation of the American racial structure; from hegemony of the majority Euro-Americans to resistance by the minority races, most especially the African Americans and Native Americans. The latter, in particular, have creatively explored American society with specific emphasis on their encounter with the colonial culture of the white settlers. In this way, considerable numbers of their acclaimed master narratives have assumed counter-discourses, having been primarily constructed with a view to correcting the distortions in the images of the Native Americans in stories and reports from the Euro-Americans' perspectives. Historically speaking, according to Xhang and Liu (2011), American mainstream media have tended to distort the images of the American Indians, and the development has consequently occasioned misinformation and or misconception in the formation and representation of Native Americans' identity. Indeed, this tradition is relatable to what Brotherson and de Sa (2002) report of American critics and historians of literature and culture, that they have "often proceeded along lines that, in practice, continue the great work of destruction, dispossession and denial that began with the arrival of Europeans in 1492" (p. 2). Such colonial discourses would constitute what, echoing Bhabha (1994), Champagaee (2024) regards as attempts by the colonizers at depicting the colonized as racially inferior with a view to legitimizing invasion and reestablishing control through "administrative and educational structure", with the ultimate impression that "the colonized are the 'other' in social reality". (p. 139). Against this backdrop, therefore, counter-discourse becomes fundamental to the writings of the colonized, which are particularly aimed at redirecting the course of the supposedly distorted historical accounts of their encounter with the acclaimed 'superior'. This can be further averred in the prominent historical (ethnographic and autobiographical) dimensions by which the Native American writing has evolutionarily become characterised. Connette (2010, p. 9) notes this peculiar evolutionary trend in their writing alongside its reception thus:

During the twentieth century, the study of Indians changed from a strictly anthropological point of view (outside cultures writing about Indians) to an ethnographic and autobiographical point of view (Indians writing about Indians). Instead of reading texts or literature produced by the white observer, scholars and general readers placed more value on an authentic version of the Indian point of view.

Indeed, Native writers are famous for their constant penchant for revisiting and rewriting their alleged distorted history, as explicitly noted by Welch in the prologue to one of the texts selected for this study, *Killing Custer*. For Welch, in this particular non-fictional account, it is emphatically established that the battle of the Little Bighorn and the fate of the Plains Indians narrated in the text is told:

[...] not only because it happened to my own people, but because it needs to be told if one is to understand this nation's treatment of the first Americans and to understand the glory and sorrow of that hot day in June 1876 when the Indians killed Custer (1994, p. 23).

Similarly, in the introduction to the Penguin Classics Edition of *Fools Crow*, Mcguane (1987, p. xi) notes the rationale for Welch's penchant for history in his narratives. In his report, "Welch was frustrated at the inexorable deracination of the Native Americans. 'Indians don't know anything about Indians', he once told me in exasperation". In view of this, therefore, it is of paramount importance to Welch that the image of his people; before, during and after their encounter with the white settlers, be properly presented to the current and coming generations, given the inherent contradictions by which accounts from the two perspectives would usually be characterised.

Counter-Discourse in the Postcolonial Context

The evolution of the concept of counter-discourse in the postcolonial context has been largely credited or traced to the French critic, Richard Terdiman, in his book, *Discourse/Counter-Discourse: The Theory and Practice of Symbolic Resistance in Nineteenth-Century France*. Although the concept is originally employed by Terdiman (1985) to reexamine, particularly via caricatural images, the French literature of the early nineteenth-century by demonstrating the manner in which such images could potentially discredit or invalidate the bourgeois culture, it has been thus ideologically adopted by the larger circle of postcolonial critics mainly to:

describe the complex ways in which challenges to a dominant or established discourse (specifically those of the imperial centre) might be mounted from the periphery, always recognizing the powerful 'absorptive capacity' of imperial and neo-imperial discourses. (Ashcroft et al., 2007, p. 50)

Indeed, according to Terdiman (1985), the theoretical project is counter-discursive because it presupposes the hegemony of its 'other' by projecting a division of the social space, and seeking to segregate itself to allow for the prosecution of its critique. This critical paradigm, in the postcolonial context, means that "certain literary texts inhabit the site of allegorical figuration in order to 'read' and contest the social 'text' of colonialism, and the ways in which they perform this counter-discursive activity are inherently differential and diverse" (Slemon, 1987, p. 11). This implies that counter-discourse primarily seeks to represent reality differently with a view to challenging the dominant discourse by which the understanding of social reality is being ordered and/or controlled (Amirouche, 2021). Terdiman's (1985) identification of what he refers to as the "confrontation between constituted reality and its subversion" as "the very locus at which cultural and historical change occurred" (p. 13) is apparently a pointer to this understanding. Therefore, as a postcolonial discourse, the critical practice of counter-discourse is fundamentally "informed by the responses of the postcolony to colonialism and all that it inspired." (Okunoye, 2008, p. 79)

Native American History as Counter-Discourse in Native American Writing: An Overview

A phenomenon that is peculiar to postcolonial discourse has been the hegemonic control of the understanding of social reality by the culture of the 'coloniser' and the symbolic resistance by which such development has been, in turn, confronted with by the 'colonised' culture. Indeed, a close scrutiny of the indigenous American Indian literary production will continually yield an awareness of the foregoing force, often disguised but especially important and inherent, in the literature: colonisation and its aftermath. This peculiar understanding can be largely placed within the context of what Slotkin (2024, p. 12) describes as the myth of the frontier. In his account:

The stories that constitute the Frontier Myth are legion, appearing in every medium and many genres — histories, personal narratives, political speeches, popular fiction, movies — and they refer to episodes from colonial times to the heyday of westward expansion and the jungle wars of the twentieth century. The Myth of the Frontier locates our national origin in the experience of settlers establishing settlements in the wilderness of the New World.

Indeed, the foregoing phenomenal force has consequently generated changes in the attitudes of the Native people of the United States vis-à-vis the social and political realities and as such, it has assumed the common defining feature or element as well as the backdrop of their entire literature.

Against the above development, for a group of acclaimed Native American writers, such as Scott Momaday, James Welch, Leslie Marmon Silko, Gerard Vizenor, Sherman Alexie, among others, colonialism symbolises a single, socio-culturally unhealthy phenomenon: a break, a terrible separation from their culture and sacred land, bearing in mind the strong value that they attach to their entire socio-cultural milieu. Hence, all of them have, to a great degree in their various narratives, given voices to the anguish of what is describable as their first and original crisis – a separation from their ancestral land, originally occasioned by their movements to reservations by the white settlers. This ‘mythical trend’, in the Native American sense, is largely aimed at explaining the character and or evolution of America as a nation state. For example, in a poetic prelude to her acclaimed most successful Native American narrative, *Ceremony*, Silko (1977, p. 2) conveys this definite idiosyncrasy in the Native American literary project thus:

I will tell you something about stories,
[he said]
They aren't just entertainment.
Don't be fooled.
They are all we have, you see,
all we have to fight off
illness and death.
You don't have anything
if you don't have the stories.
Their evil is mighty
but it can't stand up to our stories.
So they try to destroy the stories
let the story be confused or forgotten.
...
Because we would be defenseless then.
[...]
There is life here
for the people
And in the belly of this story(ies)
the rituals and the ceremony
are still growing.

Apparently, the writer's concern in the above is the centrality of the art of documenting the American Indian history in their narratives, from their indigenous perspectives, as opposed to the perspectives of the 'other'. This, understandably, being the only way the evil of the 'other', in the form of imperialists' hegemonic accounts or distorted images of the natives, can be effectively combatted. It is only when this has been ensured that the so-called native identity, as characterised by the 'rituals' and the 'ceremonies', can ever be revived and sustained. Indeed, this position corroborates the Native American project that is presumably upheld in their writings, generally. It is a literary project and/or tradition targeted at reviving and/or breathing life into their ancestral socio-cultural values which, allegedly, have been deracinated by the whites. Holistically, therefore, Silko's position is largely subversive and challenging in the sense that it adequately conveys communal cum identity consciousness and the need for its preservation, via self-perspective historical documentation, with every sense of respect and pride.

Against the above background, thus, James Welch, in particular, can be said to have contributed immensely to the growth of Native American literature. Specifically, he has earned his fame in being one of the foremost Native American writers who have creditably chronicled the historical contact of the American Indians and the Europeans which began in the colonisation and European expansionist era. He wrote up to six novels and a collection of poetry before his death in 2003, and all these works are primarily focused, among other things, on the realities of the historical contact of the two civilisations. Largely, his works reflect the ripple effects of the American government's systematised subjugation, tribal separation, and captivity of the Native Americans, which led to long-drawn wars between them. Hence, to a considerable extent, his works can be said to have assumed a narrative whole in time and space. For instance, in *Fools Crow*, Welch narrates the tribal life of the American Indians before western invasion and the fall. In *Killing Custer*, the resilient struggle of the Natives against the white settlers who are taking over their revered territories and confining them to reservations is narrated. The ripple effects of the fall are given voices in other novels, notably *Winter in the Blood* and *The Heartsong of Charging Elk*, thereby offering peculiar chronicles of the Native American history.

Welch and the Narrative of Natives' Resistance to Whites' Encroachment and Control in *Fools Crow* and the Implication for Identity Formation

Like many of Welch's novels, *Fools Crow* is a historical novel set in Montana Territory in 1870. It is a panoramic view that captures the entire life of a people – the Native Americans – at a given period or stage of history. On the one hand, the narrative dramatises a setting of tribes, which makes up the native community, sharing boundaries. Early in the novel, via the eyes of the protagonist, White Man's Dog, Welch narrates the competitive rivalry between two native tribes, the Lone Eaters (a Pikuni community) and their long term enemies, the Crow. On the other hand, the narrative represents the confrontation of the Native Americans with the Napikwans (white settlers) over the encroachment on, and control of, their territories which are considerably sacred to them as a people.

In an attempt to address the complexities and complications of the foregoing colonial experience, the narrative of *Fools Crow* is critically two-faced. This is the sense in which the challenges of the distant past of the Native Americans are brought to the present in the narrative in order to envision future challenges. On this note, the novel adopts the narrative technique of flashback at the resilient but failed struggles of the Native Americans against the Euro-Americans' domination at the point of their heavy and overwhelming movement into their land. Moreover, it also looks forward to the hopes and challenges of the Native Americans in the new America. In the novel, this critical view is essentially conveyed in the natives' struggle with the dilemma of whether to fight the Whiteman and secure their future or live submissively in humiliating poverty and confinement on reservations. The conversation between a native chief, Rides-at-the-door, and his two sons, Running Fisher and White Man's Dog, is significant in this regard:

"... These seizers will rub us out like the green grass bugs." "Someday we will have to fight them," said Running Fisher. "Already the white horns graze our buffalo grounds." "Perhaps someday that will come to pass, my son. But for now it is better to treat with them while we still have some strength. It will only be out of desperation that we fight." "I know you are right, my father. But I am afraid for the Pikunis. Last night I dreamed that we had all lost our fingers like poor Yellow Kidney." "It is good for you to be concerned, White Man's Dog. But you must remember that the Napikwans outnumber the Pikunis. Any day the seizers could

ride into our camps and wipe us out. It said that already many tribes in the east have been wiped away. These Npaikwans are different from us. They would not stop until all the Pikunis had been killed off." Rides-at-the-door stopped and looked into the faces of his sons. "For this reason we must leave them alone, even allow them some of our grazing grounds to raise their white horns. If we treat wisely with them, we will be able to save enough for ourselves and our children. It is not an agreeable way, but it is the only way." (Welch, 1986, p. 90)

The foregoing is evidently revealing of the cultural universe of a people already undergoing colonial subjugation, hence the ensuing deliberations over the deployment of either direct confrontations or appeasement, going forward, by the population trying to survive the white settlers' domination. Apparently, the natives are divided over this crucial measure. While some native chiefs choose to relate with the whites peacefully, others are angrily hesitant. In the same vein, among the youths, while some have indifferently resigned to fate, some young Pikuni warriors take it upon themselves as communal responsibility to fight the whites with a view to protecting and sustaining their identity. To this group of youths, community's or elders' approval or disapproval is of no importance. What is rather important is the impact they can make in securing their territory against any form of invasion that is perceived as capable of spelling doom on their cultural identity in the present and in the future.

The native community described in the novel is that which is structured along youths and elders with a centre of control being headed by certain chiefs. The centre is eventually broken owing to the division of the natives along hostile and friendly lines on their relationship with the whites. This development assumes a manifestation of the hidden ethno-racial conflict between the natives and whites running parallel to the ongoing crisis between the two native tribes – the Lone Eaters and the Crows. The ethno-racial conflict is made visible through the activities of some young native warriors led by Owl Child, Bear Chief, Black Weasel and, joining them later, Fast Horse. They are the group of aggrieved youths who decide to exile themselves from the Lone Eaters camp to fight the whites from behind as a group in resistance to the encroachment and control on their land. This evidently represents direct military confrontation with the colonial incursion observed to be capable of redefining their culture and existence as a people. They carry out this task by launching open attacks on the whites, killing and stealing their horses.

The development thus breeds stronger hostility between the two races. Prominent figure among the aggrieved youths, Owl Child, responds in this regard while they are being cautioned against causing troubles with the whites by another indifferent and more tolerant young Pikuni peer, Three Bears:

Someday, old man, a Napikwan will be standing right where you are and all around him will be grazing thousands of the white horns. You will be only a part of the dust they kick up. If I have my way I will kill that white man and all his white horns before this happens." He looked at Fast Horse, his eyes the gray of winter clouds. "It is the young who will lead the Pikunis to drive these devils from our land. (Welch, 1986, p. 62)

At the above point in time, Owl Child succinctly justifies their hostile relations with the whites. They see themselves as the future of the native land and the only bequest they have is their sacred territories that are highly symbolic of their culture and tradition. To this end, to them, theirs is the future against which adequate protection must be ensured, regardless of the elders' position(s) on their actions. White Man's Dog's father, Rides-at-the-door, laments to his son the anarchy that has, as a consequence, taken over the atmosphere thus:

We are leaderless people now. I have tried my best but I do not inspire the young ones to listen. I am too old and I do not possess the strength. Look around you, White Man's Dog, do you see many of our young men? No, they are off hunting for themselves, or drunk with the white man's water, or stealing their horses. They do not bring anything back to their people. There is no centre here. That is why we have become such a pitiful sight to you. (Welch, 1986, p. 98)

It is apparent from the above that law and order has broken down in the land, especially on the part of these young native warriors. The Owl Child's group has succeeded in establishing themselves before the whites and the American government at large as an open enemy, as they ceaselessly pose serious threats to the whites' expansionist project, with their activities. In order to curb the development, the whites in turn serve the native chiefs serious notes of warning, threatening to wage war on the entire territory if they fail to call the young dissidents to order with immediate effect. Upon invitation, some native chiefs led by Rides-at-the-door and Heavy Runner, therefore, meet with the whites on peace terms. A three-point condition which must be

met without delay is given to them as communicated by a white General, Sully. The first condition is that the Government of the United States requires the assistance of all the Blackfeet people to aid the arrest of, or capture, dead or alive, the leaders of the dissidents – Owl Child, Bear Chief and Black Weasel. Two, they shall return all the estimated thousands of horses and mules the whites have been dispossessed of by the group in the last six months. And lastly, all the forms of hostilities against the citizens of the United States must henceforth cease.

From the foregoing, it is evident that the group of the native youths succeeded, at some critical moments in the historical development, in establishing themselves as a strong force that the whites would have to reckon with. This is in spite of the latter's acclaimed racial superiority and civilisation. That is, it is conceivable that the idea of threatening to wage war on the entire community is borne out of the sheer fear of being overwhelmed or consumed by the tactical force by which they are being engaged by this specific group of native youths. Hence, it becomes imperative to nip such a potentially disastrous development (to their imperialist mission) in the bud. Otherwise, they could have ignored their supposed 'inferior' tactics and simply capture them, with ease, with their own 'superior' ones. This understanding of the narrative, as it relates to a people's definitive perspective of themselves (as the colonised), largely positions the narrative essence of the text as counter-discursive to the constructed views of them (by the coloniser), at that critical stage in their historical evolution.

Between the 'Uncivilised' and the 'Civilised': A Narrative Re-Appraisal of the Native-White Encounter in *Killing Custer* and the Implication for Cultural Redefinition

In the prologue to the narrative, the writer emphatically notes:

Much has been made of this incident by the whites, the only truly hostile encounter of the Lewis Clark expedition, but more was made of it by the Blackfeet. From that time forward, they considered the Americans their enemies... (Welch, 1994, p. 26)

The above quotation is reminiscent of the first European expedition of the Indian territory of Montana in 1806 led by Lewis and Clark, on the one hand; it provides the background to the age-long hostility between the two races, on the other. In the course of the expedition, the group runs into some Pikuni warriors; the encounter appears to be peaceful and friendly initially, but eventually left one Indian killed and another wounded

(Welch, 1994, pp. 22-26). Thus, since that very first contact, the Indians have considered the whites their enemies, and this assumes the genesis of the warring contacts between the two ethno-racial groups that last for decades. For every contact, for every single Indian, the often held impression against the whites boils down to suspicion and deception. In other words, the Indians always believe that the coming of the whites is deceitful; thus, if they are allowed and welcomed, they will eventually rob them of one thing or the other:

But the Plains Indians were equally outraged by the notion that an invasion force of whites was seeking to conquer them, perhaps annihilate them, certainly take their land, kill all their buffalo, and reduce them to prisoners on reservations where they would be forced to deny their religion, their culture, their traditional methods of supporting themselves – in short, take away their way of life as they had practised it for centuries. They had learned at Sand Creek, the Marias, and the Washita that the whites would stop at nothing to bend the Indians to their will. The arrogant invaders would not stop until the Indians were forced to adopt the ways of the white man – or were executed. (Welch, 1994, p. 145)

Apparently, from the above, the hostility within them grows more and stronger both consciously and unconsciously. Indeed, in the narrative, it is offered that by the second half of the nineteenth-century, the whites have already settled; occupying territories and confining the Indians to reservations based on the treaties signed with natives in 1868. This development is consistent with the world described in *Fools Crow*, that which is inevitably witnessing socio-cultural transformation as a result of colonial incursion. Nonetheless, despite several warnings as well as issuance of deadlines for the natives to be on reservations, there are many resilient ones, regarded as free Indians, who have defied such confinements, especially in the territories being led by two Indian warriors – Crazy Horse and Sitting Bull. To Sitting Bull, in particular, he “would rather die an Indian rather than live [as] a white man” (Welch, 1994, p. 265). This is a strong declaration of self-identity and socio-cultural values which the American Indians are conscious of and seek to protect at all costs, not just for the people of that period, but also for the coming generations.

Killing Custer is James Welch’s only non-fictional work which chronologically details the account of the historical contact between the American Indians and the Euro-

Americans; from invasion to confinement, from resistance to surrender, and from violence to dialogue. In this novel, with the research assistance of Paul Stekler, a documentary film maker with whom the film version of the novel – *Last Stand at Little Bighorns* – had earlier been produced in 1992, Welch offers what can be described as a sweeping historical account of the coming together of the two races from a Native American perspective. It is described as ‘a sweeping narrative’, indeed within a postcolonial counter-discursive context, in the sense that the author himself in the prologue of the novel, as cited earlier on, notes the existence of the previously distorting and fallacious Euro-American perspectives of the historical contact. Hence, from the novelist’s (i.e. Native American’s) perspective, it is pertinent to set the historical reality proper in order to have the American Indians’ colonial image and experience reshaped. This is adducible in that, in practice, predominant issues and concerns in postcolonial writing ‘are often fused as writers tend to respond to many of the realities generated by the colonial experience’ (Okunoye, 2008, p. 81).

The story primarily centres on the Battle of the Little Bighorn, in which an American Civil War hero, General George Armstrong Custer, and his seventh cavalry troopers suffered a historical heavy defeat at the hands of Indian warriors led by Crazy Horse and Sitting Bull. Significantly beyond this, the volume actually chronicles the white/Indian contact and conflict from the expedition of Captain Meriwether Lewis and William Clark in 1806 to the present from the viewpoint of the Indians. Again in the prologue of the novel, the author explains:

I begin my account of the conflict between whites and Indians with an event that occurred on January 23, 1879, more than six years later before Little Bighorn, in which 173 Blackfeet men, women, and children were slaughtered by U. S. soldiers. The Massacre on the Marias River was more representative of what happened to Indian people who resisted the white invasion than Custer’s Last Stand. (Welch, 1994, p. 22)

He then moves on to the story of Custer. Regarded as the best Indian fighter, Custer was a Civil War hero who nonetheless suffered a demotion and ordered to fight the Indians on the Western frontier. Several destructive preliminary attacks have been launched on the Indians since he activates the battle. But on that fateful day, precisely 25th June, 1876 in history, Custer and his 7th Cavalry troopers attack a large Indian

village of Sioux and Cheyenne people on the Little Bighorn River and are wiped out by a swarm of Indian warriors. He makes his 'Last Stand' and dies gallantly on a hilltop. A character flaw (hubris) in Custer, which is associated with his foolish prioritisation of glory over good sense, is remotely noted to be the cause of this huge defeat at the hands of the Indians. Moreover, the military might and skill demonstrated by the so-called 'uncivilised' Indians, of immediate cause, end the story of the heroic record of General Armstrong Custer – from Civil War to the Little Bighorn.

To a considerable extent, the Native American's narrative perspective of the encounter therein can be conceived as counter-discursive. It is said to have assumed such a counter-ideology to the whites' because a key understanding of the context of the encounter largely borders on the perceptiveness and skillfulness of the supposed 'uncivilised' people to proactively and reactively respond to the looming challenges that the arrival of the 'civilised' (the white settlers) was heralding. Interpreting the context of the battle in this manner essentially renders the narrative account subversive, as it strongly challenges the whites' notion of the American Indians as an inferior race. The fundamental question which underlies this conception is that, if the American Indians of that historical period were, indeed, raw and wild, and therefore inferior, how come they were able to timely discern the ulterior motives and manipulations of the white settlers to redefine them as a people (via colonialism), apparently against their wish? This is because in the colonialists' ideology, "the naming of other people as irrational, barbarian, Indian, animal like was simultaneously an act of evaluation usually of downgrading" (Boehner, 1995, p. 80). This obvious contradiction between who a people is, as constructed by themselves, and how they have been constructed by the 'other' essentially sets the narrative as counter-discursive, hence redefining the Native Americans ideologically and culturally.

Conclusion

It is assertive from the foregoing analysis that the narratives in the two texts have, in a way, substantially performed that function of allegorical configuration, as a counter-discourse strategy described by Slemon (1987). This holds in that they have conceivably 'read' and 'contested' the previously textualised colonial experience of the Native Americans from the perspective of the 'other'. It is noteworthy that such a peculiarity in

the Native American writing essentially further foregrounds the postcolonial discursivity of the Native American literature at large, which assumed a fundamental subject of critical debates in the evolution of their distinctive literary tradition. Moreover, this understanding is evidently deducible from the novelist's claims in this regard and which have, in turn, largely given impetus for these specific historical narratives. In other words, the realities surrounding the encounter of the natives and the whites have been represented differently from the dominant white discourse to which Welch's narratives are essentially responsive. Hence, among other things, in particular, the narrative contexts in the novels collectively assume a counter-discourse in the documentation of the history of the Native Americans by challenging the dominant Euro-Americans' ideologies which emphasize their (colonisers') supremacy. Generally, against the foregoing backdrop, the entire Native American writing is fundamentally construable as constituting a veritable tool with which generations of survivors of colonial invasion and forced assimilation, like them, have their cultural heritage renewed and reconnect with their lost lands, amidst the struggle within dominant culture(s) that continue to belittle and misrepresent them.

References

- Amirouche, N. (2021). Counter-discourse in Postcolonial African Novel. *El Omda Review in Linguistics and Discourse Analysis*, 5(2), 520-532.
- Ashcroft, B., Griffiths, G., & Tiffin, H. (2007). *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- Bhabha, H. K. (1994). *The Location of Culture*. Routledge.
- Boehner, E. (1995). *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature*. Oxford University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780192892324.001.0001>
- Brotherston, G and de Sa, L. (2002). First Peoples of the Americas and their Literature. *Comparative Literature and Culture*, 4(2), 2-16. <https://doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.1149>
- Chapagae, R. P. (2024). Post-Colonial Discourse in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Management and Social Sciences*, 5(1), 137-146.
<https://doi.org/10.3126/ijmss.v5i1.62670>
- Connette, T. L. (2010). Sherman Alexie's Reservation: Relocating the Center of Indian Identity. [Unpublished Master's thesis, East Carolina University].

- Liu, K. and Hui Z. (2011). Self-and Counter-representations of Native Americans: Stereotypical Images of and New Images by Native Americans in Popular Media. *Intercultural Communication Studies*, 20(2), 105-118.
- Mcguane, T. (1986). Introduction. In: Welch, James. *Fools Crow* (pp. ix-xv). Penguin.
- Okunoye, O. (2008). Modern African Poetry as Counter-Discursive Practice. In Raji-Oyelade, A. & Okunoye, O. (Eds.), *The Postcolonial Lamb: Essays in Honour of Dan Izevbaye* (pp. 73-93). Bookcraft.
- Silko, L. M. (1977). *Ceremonies*. Penguin.
- Slemon, S. (1987). Monuments of Empire: Allegory/Counter-discourse/Post-colonial Writing. *Kunapipi*, 9(3), 1-16.
- Slotkin, R. (2024). *A Great Disorder: National Myth and the Battle for America*. The Belknap Press. <https://doi.org/10.4159/9780674297036>
- Terdiman, R. (1985). *Discourse/Counter-Discourse: The Theory and Practice of Symbolic Resistance in Nineteenth-Century France*. Cornell University Press.
- Welch, J. (1994). *Killing Custer*. Penguin.
- Welch, J. (1986). *Fools Crow*. Penguin.

Reviewers:

1. Tadd Graham Fernée, Université de Tours, France
2. Anonymous

Handling Editor:

Stan Bogdanov, PhD
New Bulgarian University