



AN OUTSIDER WITHIN HIS LAND ALIENATION AND BELONGING IN JAMES WELCH'S *FOOLS CROW*

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ABSTRACT

'Alienation' and 'belonging' are less explored themes in the novels of James Welch and this paper aims to investigate the same in his novel *Fools Crow*. As advocated by Lewis Feuer: "the word 'alienation' is used to describe the subjective tone of self-destructive experience". He further states: "Alienation is used to convey the emotional tone which accompanies any behavior in which the person is compelled to act self-destructively" (Feuer, Lewis 116-132). And another meaning of the term is recorded as "to make estranged, to estrange, or turn away the feelings or affections of any one, to convert into an alien or stranger, to make averse or hostile or unwelcome". Humans have a natural 'sense of belonging' and it is so crucial for survival that Maslow had placed it in his needs of hierarchy ahead of safety and psychological needs. Scholars like Hagerty, Lynch-Sauer, Patusky, Bouwsema and Collier (1992) have defined feeling of belonging as "the experience of personal involvement in a system or environment so that persons feel themselves to be an integral part of that system or environment" (Collier, 172). "For a sense of belonging to develop it is necessary that the individual experiences a fit, acceptance, or connection with people, groups, organizations or environments" (Hagerty et al, 1992).

Key Words: *Fools Crow*# James Welch# Alienation# Belonging# European Colonization

INTRODUCTION

James Philip Welch was born on November 18, 1940 and he died on August 4, 2003. He was born to parents from Blackfeet and A'aninin cultures. He grew up within these two cultures in Browning, Montana reservation. James Welch was a Native American author and poet and is considered as the leading writer of the Native American Renaissance. *Fools Crow* won him several national literary awards. Welch has defined himself as equally an "Indian writer" and "an Indian who writes". When he began his career, for a great period of time many Indian authors were unknown to the masses. Richard Hugo, Welch's poetry teacher at the University of Montana, became his greatest source of motivation. Though Hugo recognized that Welch had known little about poetry he urged him to write about life on reservation. Since Welch was born on the Blackfeet Reservation Hugo understood that Welch can comprehensively write about the reservation life experiences from his growing years at Fort Belknap reservation. Hence he began to write about life on reservations and people living on them.

Many of Welch's novels depict through their characters the double vision that Welch had about his experiences. Almost all of his novels are set across Montana reservation lands and the stories covering the lives of the central characters like that of Welch belong to the Blackfeet ancestry. With his works he tried to arrive at the 'Universal' through the 'Particular.' His novels have a strong theme concerning the uneasy contact the Native American culture had with an alien culture which almost destroyed it. This has occurred rarely as a theme in most of the American fiction. This paper has attempted to explore the themes of alienation and belonging in the novel *Fools Crow* and its historical relevance that will further show how the characters representing the tribes and different bands get severely impacted by the European colonization and how the native people undergo 'alienation' and also feel the need of 'belonging' towards their native ethos in the process of trying to assimilate within the new dominant white culture.

The novel is set in the region of Western Montana in 1860s and narrates the tale of Fools Crow, an adolescent man who belonged to the Blackfeet tribe. The novel talks about the struggle that he and his tribe face as a response to the intruding white civilization. It was until 1860s that nearly for a century the Blackfeet tribe benefited from being the dominant power in the northern plains. The novel *Fools Crow* shows how the traditional culture of the Native Americans (Blackfeet tribe in the novel) gets impacted with the increased encroachment of

the white settlers (Napikwan) and how there was a conflict of worldviews and values of two strikingly different cultures where the Blackfeet people perceived nature as an abode of compassion, love, tranquility and reverence to God and an asset common to all. The Napikwan had a contrasting rather materialistic view of the nature according to which nature existed to be profited from and can be exploited and taken as a private property.

The novel also shows how the Blackfeet fear dislocation and assimilation into the foreign culture. It also illustrates the encounter Blackfeet had with the whites which was certainly forced in circumstances of imbalanced authority and most importantly the element that the native people owned something which the white settlers desired and that was land. This greed of grabbing the land from the Blackfeet native tribe resulted in the dislocation, forceful removal and assimilation of the tribe after a ghastly massacre led by the Napikwan. The characters in the novel go through a constant sense of acculturation and displacement driven by the angst of alienation. *Fools Crow* is written in a language that is entirely native to the Blackfeet tribe depicting the authenticity and the connectedness the tribe had with the nature and the land. “Now that the weather had changed, the moon of the falling leaves turned white in the blackening sky and White Man’s Dog was restless. He chewed the stick of dry meat and watched Cold Maker gather his forces” (Welch, 3).

ANALYSIS

The protagonist White Man’s Dog is an eighteen years old Pikuni warrior who later wins the title of the novel *Fools Crow* and he is called so because he succeeds in fooling one of the warriors (Bull Shield) from the enemy tribe ‘Crow’ and killing him in a raid. Rides-at-the-door is a war chief of the Lone Eaters band and also White Man’s Dog’s father. The novel shows how the encounter between the whites and the natives had brought about tremendous impact on the Native American history, culture and the lives of the communities. Not only did the whites colonize the native lands, but also their oral tradition and stories. *Fools Crow* along with the other characters in the novel experiences loss of self, feeling of alienation and also a struggle to hold on to the native culture along with a disinclined and demotivated impulse to assimilate themselves into the white culture.

As the novel progresses, White Man's Dog (Fools Crow) is seen transforming from an unhopeful youth to a man of great vision. He and his people are deeply rooted in the tribe's subterranean culture and spiritual traditions. Fast Horse, a fellow Pikuni and a friend of White Man's Dog together go on a night raid against the Crow Indians to steal a herd of their horses. The introduction of two novelties, horse and the gun gave immense support and power to the already powerful Blackfeet. In Mexico and American Southwest the colonizers from Spain, introduced horses to the Plains Indians while the guns were introduced to them by French traders. The Blackfeet managed to obtain both horses and ammunition. The act of seizing and scalping horses gave honor and recognition to the tribe's warrior and hence the young warriors of Blackfeet sought to grab this honor during the raids.

White Man's Dog was considered to be weak and inept. However, before the raid he was counseled by the medicine man Mik-API. Yellow Kidney trusted that White Man's Dog would return victorious. He sings warrior songs as he led the herd away from the Crow camp, and kills a scout of the Crow who appears to stop the raid. Fast Horse in a haste yells in a way that the Crow village wakes up to retort and Yellow Kidney in order to save himself hides in a lodge filled with people sleeping. He manages to slide under the robes of a young girl and he eventually gets arose and rapes her before realizing that she was suffering and dying from small pox. Baffled and panicked he tries to escape when the Crow shoot him down and mutilate his fingers. He was tied to a horse and let out in the bone freezing snowstorm.

Failing to bring Yellow Kidney back to the camp, White Man's Dog, feels guilty and decides to provide the family with provisions. However, the raid had bought him honor and fame among his people and he was named Fools Crow. The members of the tribe invested their faith in Fools Crow for his bravery and chivalry. He was married to Red Paint who was Yellow Kidney's daughter and on many occasions was guided by different spirit animals. Yellow Kidney retrieves to the encampment and narrates the blunder committed by Fast Horse. Feeling mortified Fast Horse abandons his tribe and joins Owl Child and his gang who were on a dedicated vow to kill the encroaching white settlers.

Blackfeet's reputation for their warrior skills and their far off location made the U.S. government approach them with a treaty. This happened nearly half a century after the Louisiana Purchase. The treaty affirmed that there would be uninterrupted harmony concerning the Blackfeet tribe and the United States and also demarcated the lands of the Blackfeet Nation in the United States. The purpose of the treaty could not survive as expected instead it started deteriorating during the early years of the 1860s. This steady and gradual fall out was a result of monopolization of the government's attention towards the Civil War (1860-63). Towards the conclusion of the Civil War in 1863, the Blackfeet saw more and more number of settlers streaming through the Blackfeet lands in search of gold that was unearthed at Bannock in the Blackfeet chasing grounds. The Blackfeet initially were skeptical about the less number of Napikwan, later a huge number of them started to settle all over the Blackfeet territory. Their anxiety and fretfulness to protect and retain their ancestral lands is clearly echoed in the novel Fools Crow which is analyzed in this paper.

A sense of futility pushed Yellow Kidney too to abandon and isolate himself from his own community as he felt demoralized and incapable to lead a life with no fingers. However, he later gives up the thought and decides to return to his camp and name his grandchild Yellow Calf. Avenging the terror unleashed by Owl child and his renegade a Napikwan shoots down Yellow Kidney. Unable to come to terms with the events unfolding one after the other, Fast Horse hands over the dead body of Yellow Kidney to the tribe and sets out alone towards North to live an isolated life away from his people.

Towards the climax of the novel Fools Crow visits Feather Woman, a mystic figure who was believed to be the partner of Morning Star and the mother of Star Boy. She was banished from the Above Ones for having dug a forbidden tunic, an incident that is similar to Eve being forced out of heavens for eating the forbidden apple. Feather Woman reveals and warns of the destruction that Fools Crow's tribe would be facing in the future with the rigorously growing numbers of white settlers, a war and a spread of disease killing great numbers of his tribe. The scourge of small pox that was brought to North America by Europeans started killing large numbers of the Blackfeet people. The incursion of small pox played a key role in decimating countless Native Americans. The Blackfeet was grappled in two major small pox epidemics that killed and reduced the Blackfeet population by two thirds. Post each epidemic it required several years for the Blackfeet to recuperate the lost population. The novel

Fools Crow brilliantly depicts the historic outbreak of the small pox epidemic also called the “white-scabs disease” in 1869-70 that proved to be the major epidemic to have struck the Blackfeet.

The Feather Woman shows Fools Crow the destiny of the Blackfeet being controlled by the white Napikwan and the tribe’s immense grief and dilemma about spiritlessly getting assimilated into the alien culture while dearly wanting to hold on to their native roots and identity. Fools Crow reaches a point where he wants to hold on to his traditional ways and at the same time was apprehensive about the fearful future of his people. Feather Woman cautions and counsels Fools Crow by revealing that a desolate forthcoming would make his people face starvation, live on reservation lands, and cultural alienation would be impending. “Much will be lost to them. But they will know the way it was. The stories will be handed down, and they will see that their people were proud and lived in accordance with the Below Ones, the underwater People-- and the Above Ones” (Welch, 359-60).

This study shows how certain characters in the novel suffer alienation as a result of their actions and also their response to the white encroachment. White Man’s Dog (later named Fools Crow) is teased by his peers for being unlucky in terms of having wealth and owning wives. He considers himself, and also by the rest of his tribe’s members specially the men, as being ‘without luck’ (Welch,7) The impact of the White Scabs disease was so impressive in the minds of the tribes that Yellow kidney thought White Man’s Dog’s misfortune would stretch to other young men of the community like the disease was contagious. This shows how the white settlers deliberately began impacting the basic psyche and the will power of the native tribes. This sense of misfortune and bad luck drives him to loneliness: “Not so lucky was White Man’s Dog. He had little to show for his eighteen winters. It was up to him, perhaps with the help of a many-faces man, to find his own power” (Welch, 8).

He feels like a failure, later he wins for himself a name, good reputation among his tribe and also marries Red Paint the daughter of Yellow Kidney. Lupton states, “The hero leaves the community to perform acts of bravery, then returns to claim a position of honor so that he can be suitable for tribal leadership” (Lupton, 132). Another character in the novel, Fast Horse, is the son of Boss Ribs and a childhood friend of Fools Crow. He gains trust as a promising warrior with a knack of attracting women owing to his charm and good looks. He aims of acquiring great wealth and good number of wives in a short period of time. He was arrogant and boastful of his skills.

Before the raid on the Crows he saw a dream in which he was commanded to fulfill a vow that was in accord with the Pikuni lore but he fails to deliver it and this brought about his downfall subsequently during the raid when he lets out a war cry alarming the enemy village who, as result capture Yellow Kidney and mutilate his fingers.

This mistake committed by Fast Horse is severely criticized and admonished by his tribe because according to Blackfeet cosmology, Hans Bak states: dreams “are directly connected to a person's life or the fate of the community not only may they be the source of personal and tribal “power,” they may also prefigure future events, and be a source of guidance to personal or tribal action” (Bak, 38). As a result, in the Pikuni world view, there is “no separation between the realm of myth and reality; one flows naturally into the other; both are equally real” (Bak 38). Yellow Kidney had to pay the price of Fast Horse’s ignorance of the dream and his leniency in not fulfilling it. The tribe refuses to accept him back into the community as he had broken the sacred bond with nature and that he chose his personal interest over the tribe’s well-being and safe future. Fast Horse loses his power along with a lost faith in Pikuni lore and remedy.

Fast Horse is out casted from his tribe, an outsider within his own band. He stands expelled and exiled from his culture whereby he picks “individual freedom” and a short cut to amass great fortune. For this, he joins the gang of radical murderers and marauders lead by Owl Child. Fast Horse feels guilty of his mistake and decides to return to his tribe the dead body of Yellow Kidney who was shot by one of the Napikwan and was left to rot in the heavy snow. He does so and decides to alienate himself as he no longer felt a ‘sense of belonging’ within his own community. He admits his personal failure which makes him realize that he had reached a point where there was no return: “a solitary figure in the isolation of a vast land” (330). He moves to the north in order to lead a lonely life “the whiskey forts in the north, where there are many men like him living on their own” (334). Fast Horse’s doom highlights the alienating loss of culture, tribal connection and self. “He had become an outsider within his own band. He no longer sought the company of others, and they avoided him. Even his own father had begun to look upon him with doubt and regret” (71).

Yellow Kidney is one of the warriors in the Lone Eaters band and the husband of Heavy Shield Woman and father of Red Paint. He was the one who laid trust in White Man’s Dog when no body from the tribe did. During the raid on the Crows when he was capturing one of the horses Fast Horse boastfully and loudly taunts the Crows

which alerts them and Yellow Kidney in an attempt to save himself hides in a lodge filled with people sleeping. He slides in the clothes of a young girl. He feels aroused and rapes the girl and to his shock realizes that the girl was dying of White-scabs (small pox) disease.

He escapes from the lodge and gets captured by Bull Shield who cuts his fingers off and ties him to a horse and abandons him in the freezing snowstorm. He was treated for several days in the lodge of Spotted Horse People when he was on the verge of dying. However, he returns to his tribe in a devastating condition with pockmarks all over his body and his hands gravely impaired. He could no longer hunt a game or participate in wars. He starts feeling hopeless and disgruntled. He no longer desired for his wife and children and stayed alienated from his tribe.

Yellow Kidney considers his act of raping the girl as humiliating and that he had stripped the girl off of her honor. He believes that getting infected from the small pox disease and losing his fingers was a punishment to make him realize that he had transgressed the Pikuni honor and dignity of respecting women. “In fornicating with the dying girl, I had taken her honor, her opportunity to die virtuously. And so Old Man, as he created me, took away my life many times and left me like this, worse than dead, to think of my transgression every day, to be reminded every time I attempt the smallest act that men take for granted” (Welch, 82).

The girl raped by Yellow Kidney had actually appeared in the dream of White Man’s Dog in which she reckons him with eyes full of desire. This indicates the dangers presented to the Native Americans, by the white colonizers where they desired for Native American land along with having the Natives assimilated into the European culture. However, feeling alienated from within, and with no will power to pick himself up he decides to leave his family and the tribe to live a solitary life and die alone. He stays in the lodge of Spotted Horse People and later feels that he should give himself a second chance to rebuild his conscience and believed he could do things in a better way with his injured hands “if he did them deliberately and without haste”(240) He felt he ‘belonged’ to his people and his family and therefore he decides to go back to the Lone Eaters camp but before he could reach he was shot and killed in his sleep by a Napikwan, whose wife was raped and killed by Owl child and his gang. Yellow Kidney becomes the victim of hate for Napikwan that Owl Child radically carries and exhibits.

Yellow Kidney being shot in his sleep foreshadows the massacre of hundreds of Pikuni who were burnt to death in their sleep when the Napikwan attacked the camp of Heavy Runner.

Owl Child is another important character in the novel that appears to be violent and hateful towards the Napikwan and couldn't bear their presence in their territory. He belonged to the Mountain Chief's band and owned a bad reputation for himself for his violent acts of killing and murdering several Napikwan around. "No, he was on his own and he liked it that way. Owl Child would make a name for himself and that would make them all, Pikuni or Napikwan, tremble to hear" (211). Owl child right from the beginning had remained detached and abandoned his community, the tribal notions and Pikuni way of life, in order to take revenge against the Napikwan. While the Pikuni principles demand its member's loyalty for the safety of its people, Owl Child prioritizes his hunger for glory and revenge against Napikwan over the commands of his leaders and safety of his people. After the failed pact of concord between the U.S. administration and the Blackfeet, yet another treaty was signed in 1865 which stated that the Blackfeet lands situated south of the Teton River would be surrendered as the white wished to occupy them on the basis of yearly payments in cash to the Blackfeet. By 1869 the clashes reached to their peak when the brother of Mountain Chief was killed by the whites at Fort Benton and this accelerated into revengeful killing of a well-known settler Malcolm Clark.

Owl Child's vehemence causes him to kill Malcolm Clark and also a member of his own tribe, Bear Head. He was considered wicked and corrupt like the white settlers, for he had betrayed the values of his own tribe and had put the lives of his people in danger by invoking the wrath of the white settlers. "He had been hearing around the camps of the Pikunis that Owl Child and his gang had been causing trouble with the Napikwans, driving away horses and cattle it would only be a matter of time before the Napikwans sent their seizers to make war on the Pikunis" (16). Owl Child's attitude towards his tribe and towards the Napikwan puzzles Fools Crow whether Owl Child had call upon his people uncertainty and fear or an opportunity to survive and retain their lands and native heritage. "Now they are angry with me because I try to rid this land of the Napikwans. They hate the Napikwans as much as I do, but when I fight they say I do wrong...They say I bring harm closer to them. Perhaps I bring them an opportunity to stand up and fight". (Welch, 299)

Owl Child was certain that the land that he was standing on would soon be taken away by the Napikwan and he would be turned into dust. He disagrees with the chiefs and ignores the warning from the Sun Chief: “If these foolish young men continue their raiding and killing of the Napikwans, we will all suffer. The seizers will kill us, and the Pikuni people will be as the shadows on the land. This must not happen” (61-62). Owl Child’s gang was too loyal to their purpose and also the idea of freedom was very much alluring to the young men. “It was this freedom from responsibility, from accountability to the group that was so alluring” (213). The fact that remaining bound to the tribe was quite a task and therefore Owl Child had it cut off and was alienated thereafter. But, the purpose of him cutting off ties with his people was to drive away the Napikwan settlers at all costs. However this was interpreted by Owens as: “Ironically, the renegades who fight most vehemently against the intrusion of the whites are already the most displaced Indians in the world and in their alienation they come to resemble the displaced whites whom they kill” (*Other* 161). In their desperate efforts to drive away Napikwans from the native lands they subconsciously adopted the Napikwan’s ways more than anybody could. They were inclined towards the Napikwan way of dressing, their women and goods. This shows how the white culture started impacting the Native American community lives.

General Sully demands that the Pikuni handover Owl Child and his gang dead or alive for all the killings they had done and more importantly the murder of Malcolm Clark. There was a contrasting difference between the Napikwan and the Blackfeet about authority and power. This difference was apparent and surprising to the Blackfeet when Sully warns them of a deadly retaliation against the entire tribe if they fail to surrender Owl Child. He put forth his expectation about holding the entire tribe responsible for Owl Child’s violent deeds just like they would be accountable for a soldier’s error. “It angered them that the seizers thought he [Mountain Chief] could control Owl Child, as one hobbles a horse that has a tendency to wander. Now the seizers were determined to make Mountain Chief pay for the crimes of Owl Child. That was like shooting one gopher because another gopher had bitten a child’s finger” (159). Even though Clark was married to one of the Pikuni Women it could not save him from the attack by Pikuni. The new Blackfeet agent, General Alfred Sully, met with the Pikuni Chiefs to discuss the growing pressures by ordering the Pikuni to hand over the killers either dead or alive or they would have to face the U.S. army. However, Sully presumed that the Pikuni would fail a great deal in handing over the killers hence he launched an attack on the friendly Pikuni band led by Heavy Runner who initially agreed to

surrender the murderers. The attack was led by Colonel E.M. Baker. The tribes were already engulfed in the small pox epidemic that kept decimating the tribal population and the able-bodied men of the tribes were away hunting buffaloes and those who were left in the camps were mostly women, children and the elderly. E.M. Baker on January 23, 1870, following the instructions from the Lieutenant General, P.H. Sheridan struck the camp violently. "If the lives and property of citizens of Montana can best be protected by striking the Indians, I want them struck. Tell baker to strike them hard" (Rives and Blair, 1577).

Baker carried out a heinous massacre killing helpless unarmed women, children and the weak elderly. This was clearly an attack on the innocent band of Pikuni. This can be justified in the words of a survivor of the massacre who was just twelve years old when the ghastly cold blooded killing of the tribe took place. "(A)t once all of the seizers began shooting into the lodges. Chief Heavy Runner ran from his lodge toward the seizers. I saw a few men and women escaping from the lodges, shot down as they ran. I sat before the ruin of my lodge and felt sick. I wished the seizers had killed me, too" (J.W. Schultz, 298-305).

In "Blood on the Marias," writer Paul R. Wylie in his preface of the book writes: "Over my now lengthening years, my own eyes have witnessed some terrible things. These have been sad personal events, but nothing makes me sadder than to think about the killings of the innocent Indian people that January 23 on the Marias River in 1870" (Wylie, Paul R. (2016) Pg. XIII). General Alfred Sully, Lieutenant W.B. Pease, Blackfeet Indian agent and the Superintendent of Montana Indians were informed about the massacre and they demanded that a public enquiry be carried out on Baker. In the testimony Major Baker said: "We succeeded, about 8 o'clock, in surprising the camp of Bear Chief and Big Horn [hostiles]. We killed one hundred and seventy-three Indians, captured over one hundred women and children, and over three hundred horses. Too much credit cannot be given to the officers and men of the command for their conduct during the whole expedition" (National Archives, 16-17).

The report of Baker proudly defending his act as being courageous was fervently supported by the General of the Army, General Sherman, when the reports set an outrage and severe protest by the Congress and the East. He "preferred to believe" what was mentioned in the Baker's report: "The majority of those killed in Mountain Chief's camp were warriors, a hundred women and children were allowed to go free to join the other bands of the same tribe camped nearby, rather than the absurd report that there were only thirteen warriors killed and that all

the balance were women and children, more or less afflicted with smallpox” (National Archives, House Exec, 72).

Major Baker, his generals and the civilian attendants who carried out the massacre were never investigated and put to hearing. The government made no efforts to give compensation to the survivors nor was the mass grave ever sited in order to mark their graves as a sign of memorialization and paying homage to the victims. The inaction and incapability of the government in stopping the massacre was highly called out, questioned and criticized by Indiana representative Daniel Voorhees, during the deliberation concerning the Indian Appropriations bill in the House of Representatives. Daniel resolutely states: “Now, what a curious spectacle it will be to see the President of the United States upon the one hand welcoming his Indian agents ...welcomes and sustains a man who strikes in mid-winter at sick and dying women and children, at people who were not at war but who were at peace, according to the report of his own officials of his own appointment”.(Cong. *Globe*. 41st Cong., 2nd Sess.Sess.1870 (1581))

Owl Child dies of White Scabs disease and still remained cut off and alienated from his own people. The white colonization and the forceful usurping of native lands had plagued the lives of many outcasts like Owl Child and also the tribes who believed in maintaining harmony despite being cheated and looted. What belonged to the Natives, the Napikwans kept them from owning it and simultaneously made them isolated from the roots that held them united and strong. “It has never been my thought to bring trouble to the Pikunis. I scorn them for what they allow the Napikwans to get away with, but I do not wish them harm. They are foolish, but I too am a Pikuni” (300).

This gives an insight into what made Owl child so compelled to isolate himself from his people and how the Napikwan way of life was impacting the young Pikuni Warriors. Running Fisher is the younger brother of Fools Crow and the son of Rides-at-door. He seemed more courageous than his elder brother and was thought of as a potential and promising warrior of the tribe. But he fails to live up to the expectations of his people when he cowardly steps back and guards only the outskirts of the Crow village during the horse raid conducted by Yellow Kidney and Fast Horse.

While his brother White Man's Dog receives all the commendations Running Fisher could not distinguish himself and prove his worth. This makes him sullen and bitter. He feels ashamed of himself for being a coward and this hate drives him into having an illicit affair with his near mother Kills-close-to-the-lake. Initially he was quite boastful, and over confident about his goals and emphasizes his personal glory just like Fast Horse would do. All his promises and expectations run dry and vain when he cowardly withdraws from participating in the raid against Crows. He alienates himself from his tribe though he was given a second chance unlike Fast Horse; he was however banished from his camp by his father for dishonoring him and having an affair with his wife. He was ordered to move to north and live with the Siksikas who were the relatives of his mother and could return if he managed to purify himself. "The far north people" (346) Running Fisher admits his failings and agrees to leave the camp. "I knew I was a nothing-one," (347).

Towards the climax of the novel a mystic character Feather Woman, appears who cautions Fools Crow and warns him about the future of the Lone Eaters. Even Feather Woman like the human characters of the novel had gone through a phase of alienation and separation from her people. According to the Pikuni legend, Sun Chief and Night Red Light had a son Morning whose wife was Feather Woman. Sun Chief banished Feather Woman along with her son Star boy for not abiding by the commands from Night Red Light and pulling out the sacred turnip that eventually made a hole in the sky.

She was thrown on earth where she rejected the people and died of a broken heart. To remind her of her transgression Sun Chief had sent her into the realm of magic and not the Shadow land where people go after their death. She remained alienated and died alone away from her family and eventually was made to shoulder the suffering of the Pikuni people as the hole created in sky made way for sufferings to spread among the Pikuni. The lodge where Fools Crow encounters Feather Woman reflects her mourning and the inner pain and emptiness that she goes through every day after being separated from her family. Fools Crow "did not know what to make of her. From a distance she had looked old, but as she drew nearer the years seemed to fall away. Her face, beneath the gray cut-off hair, was wrinkled, but the wrinkles were those of a person who laughs much, who grows old but remains young. And yet she wore the short hair of one who mourns" (332).

The transitional stage and the estrangement that the Pikuni were experiencing are visibly symbolized through her lonely world. Feather Woman suffers separation and is distanced from her people. “I do not live much in your world. I do not fully understand the ways of the Pikunis anymore” (333). Not only this, she also suffers alienation from her own self. “I do not see many of your people and I forget myself” (333). The world of the Pikuni appears whitened owing to the impact of white settlers and Feather Woman symbolizes this through her character. Fools Crow realizes Feather Woman’s suffering “And for the first time, he came to think of them, the Above Ones, as cruel spirits to allow Feather Woman to suffer so. And to allow what he had seen about the future on the yellow skin” (359). She represents the hybrid position the Blackfeet tribe was already into and whose lives can never be alienated from the whites. The Pikuni and the Feather Woman both live in two worlds and yet remain estranged from both.

CONCLUSION

George Lynn Cross and Gary Clayton Anderson research professors of history working at the University of Oklahoma expressed their displeasure over the Marias Massacre: “the Bear River Massacre goes down in history as the worst war crime ever committed by American soldiers against Indians” (Anderson, 244). There were works before 1890 by authors who attempted to bring to light the agonizing and heartrending plight of the Native Americans. A self-published book written by Helen Jackson *A Century of Dishonor* in 1890 discussed and presented a detailed picture of the troubles faced by Indians both due to settler colonialism and the atrocities of assimilation and dislocation to which they were ceaselessly subjected.

A group of women writers too between 1930s and 40s through their writings brought to people’s notice the grave atrocities carried out on the Indians. However, they too failed a response from the readers. Instead of these works getting recognition what garnered focus was the analysis of the Western Frontier that was presented by Frederick Jackson Turner (four years after the massacre in 1893), He argued in favor of the ideology of the whites that America was made unique and different from its European roots by converting the wilderness into a civilized society and bringing in social order. Turner’s definition of development indicates how limited his knowledge

about Indian culture and civilization was. Yet, he had Blackhawk speaking in his favor by terming Turner's thesis as being "partially correct" and his idea about expansion as "the foundational experience of American history" had drawn a flak from Blackhawk in his book "*Violence Over the Land*", where he points out Turner's opinion about Indian civilization describing it as a conversion and progression from "disintegration of savagery" to a "city and factory system" though it never was a substance of requirement. The end result of United States expanding and coming up with a multitude of cities and factories cannot be measured as a sign or degree of civilization. The paper has thus attempted to show how the European colonization and the subsequent settling of the whites in the Native American lands had brought about immense sense of alienation and belonging in the lives of the native tribes leaving on their minds an everlasting trauma of loss and pain.

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