

Heinous Act in the Acuity of Culture in Maria Campbell's *Halfbreed*

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Abstract

Maria Campbell is one of the most well-known figures in Canada. She belongs to the group of people of mixed ethnic heritage called Metis. These Metis people are recognized as the aboriginals in Canada where they are ill-treated and battered to the death. Their undergone experiences are plainly shown and picturized in her novel named "*Halfbreed*". This novel is her autobiography and she expressed for the suppression and oppression of half breed women in Canada. The domination of white people, their occupation of the Metis land and wiping out their identity from them is clearly described in the novel. This paper analyses the heinous act in the perception of culture in this novel.

Keywords: Culture, Identity, Domination, Survival, Feminism, and Suppression

I write this for all of you, to tell you what it is like to be a Halfbreed woman in our country. I want to tell you about woman in our country. I want to tell you about joys and sorrows, the oppressing poverty, the frustration and the dreams... I am not bitter. I have passed that stage. I only want to say: this is what it was like, this what it is still like. (*Halfbreed*)

The intent feeling of the author plainly addressed the reader in the very beginning of the novel. Maria Campbell made every reader to understand the concept of her bottomless feeling with anecdotes. The novel recounted her life as an unembellished child named Maria who belong to the Metis community. She as a protagonist of the novel elucidated her experiences that she undergone throughout her miserable life. Her life, full of poverty and that made them to lose hope in everything and future.

I hurt inside when I think of those people. You sometimes see that generation today: the crippled, bent old grandfathers and grandmothers on town and city skid rows; you find them in a bush waiting to die; or baby-sitting grandchildren while the parents are drunk. And there are some who even after a hundred years continue to struggle for equality and justice for

their people. The road for them is never-ending and full of frustrations and heart-break. (*Halfbreed* 13)

Each and every line from the book dived in the reader to the story and those subjugated Metis community undergone poverty, racism, alcoholism, violence, domination, prostitution, drug addiction, and inequality in their own place. They don't find the feel of home being in their home. They lead and live their life with the sense of homelessness. Maria Campbell's quest for the search of life never ends. From her childhood life to the end part she started to narrate it to the reader in a chronological manner. The book becomes a model for other Native writers to justify their inner thoughts and feelings about their community.

We call the people who belong to the mixed community of European and aboriginal ancestry in Canada a Metis. They are the poorest people in Canada and their houses were built improperly and poorly constructed. As they don't have any particular habit of living life to the fittest and their deep depression made them to commit suicide. Comparing to other population, suicide rates of these peoples were high. Upshots of dislocation, experience in the foster homes and schools, matter of abuse, fight for equality, poverty, victimization, prostitution, drug addiction

and poor living circumstances in the road sides are the major results of Metis people. The Canadian State controls the definition of 'Aboriginal' or 'Indian' and attaches benefits to those who meet this definition. The aboriginal people do not know how their identity is defined. This prompts the liberal principles that have prompted changes to the constitution Act of 1982. It is only in 1982, the Métis were included in the list of the aboriginal peoples to set right the wrong done to the people who for a long time have been suffering from the same racist discrimination as the other First Nations, but were denied their special status. Louis Riel, a political leader of Metis people echoed that "We may be a small community as that- but we are men, free and spirited men and we will not allow even the Dominion of Canada to trample on our rights"

Maria starts her novel from her happy childhood days where she spent with her parents and her brothers and sisters. The tradition they follow and enjoyment they had though they were poor lead their life to live joyfully. Maria started to face flaws on her side when her mother dies and her family's burden falls on her. The full text interweaves itself around the world of her grandma Cheechum. Maria on telling her own experiences, she replicates the customs of the native people. As the people are half-breed, they get ill-treated and they objectify as a sexual tool for white men. Maria clearly knitted the story of her ancestors how they came to be in the beginning of the text. Once Maria's mother died, she takes up all the responsibilities and has to take care of her siblings. This made her to feel deeply that she couldn't study properly and understand the life of their community. When she wants her siblings to stay with her forever, she was compelled to marry a white man at the age of fifteen by lying to her father that she was pregnant. This mistake turns her life up and down. Slowly, her siblings were taken away from her from the child care system and her white husband started drinking. At one point of time she with her baby left her home and started living her own life with what she has. She befriends with many people and lives along with the society. She worked in the restaurant, parlor and in many places for her daily needs. Due to her frustration, loneliness and poverty she gets addicted to drugs, affected by nervous breakdown and attempted suicide for twice. She crossed her life of just 5 to 10 years with the experience of the 100 years. Later on after giving birth to her next child, she moves to see her

grandma Cheechum and her father. She came to know about her sisters and brothers who were long back taken to the foster homes and were grown up.

Campbell explains the inability of the natives to fight against the white peoples and their humiliation in the society always made them to frustrate more. These stressful situations drive them to self destruction. Such behaviors are usage of drugs, addiction to alcohol, out from their family and children etc. this lead them to attempt suicide at last. Alcoholism becomes the typical social problem among the native peoples. Campbell in her words:

So I was back on pills-along with the whisky they kept me going for awhile... I kept them (my babies) clean and fed, but I completely neglected them as far as playing with them or letting them know they were loved... finally, I made up my mind to commit suicide... suddenly I seemed to wake up and realize what I was doing. I shut off the gas and raced around opening the doors and windows. I was sick at what I had done. I cried as I put them to bed, wondering what in God's name was wrong with me. I was determined to straighten myself out, and to stop drinking, and to get off the pills. (Halfbreed 139-140)

Hence, to obliterate reality, which is completely filled with frustration, despair, stress and hopelessness, native peoples resorted to self hatred. Through Campbell, the life of native which is dominated by white society has been easily understood in a lucid manner. The heinous acts of the white people on the natives are penned by Campbell to enhance the society to comprehend their level.

Works Cited

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