

# The Un-named 'Native Informant': A Subjective Academic Narrative

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## Abstract

In this paper I address educational matters that challenge academic and scholarly 'givens' so as to enrich knowledge. This acts in two ways to alert educators to the Eurowestern enculturization of knowledge and to propose some useful insights. Firstly, I make a personal scholarly narrative about the situation of the un-named native informant in postcolonial times. I call this a 'subjective academic narrative' to highlight that cultural stories are all subjective and personal narratives even when (maybe especially when) they claim to be scholarship that arises from disinterested data collection. Through the stories that are told we come to a view of the native informant that needs reconsideration. Secondly, this paper looks at such stories, at postcolonialism and at decolonization of knowledge, asking us to look anew at what we think of as black and white. Throughout I interpolate quotes from relevant narratives that admit their fictional genre. This paper considers how it is very startling to question the givens of Eurowestern knowledge structures when we see anew the foundations upon which they lie. In surveying this, I suggest that it is not sufficient merely to identify the colonised mind in the workings of the academy: it is also necessary to do something about introducing change. There is no way to recover an unchanged idealised past once colonisation has occurred. Today postcolonialism issues a challenge to the once geographically and now electronically colonised as well as the colonisers. It is to see how they can transform themselves into a culture that can reinstitute elements of the past in a culture that has been both traumatised and enriched by colonisation. This is a massive challenge as cybercolonisation occurs with its inevitable globalisation of cultures into EuroAmerican ways of being, thinking and knowing.

**Keywords:** Education; Postcolonialism; Decolonization of knowledge; Indigenous resistance; Scholarly narrative

## 1. Introduction

Education and literacy are sought after areas of knowing and have essential importance for teachers and learners as well in our modern global economy. This paper aims to alert educators to the encultured nature of scholarship and knowledge in our postcolonial world. In doing so it proposes that there are alternative ways of knowing (epistemologies), ways of being (ontologies) and ways of doing (axiologies) and that exploring these within education enriches teaching and learning processes. By looking at academic and fictional representations of the 'un-named native informant' this paper brings into focus postcolonial realities that are of vital importance in enabling the colonised, silenced 'other', to be acknowledged in scholarship.

This is my personal scholarly narrative survey of some elements of the un-named native informant. In this paper, I tell my story as an academic and writer about my insights into postcolonialism in today's global world. I draw upon scholarly and creative works as well as follow the more usual forms of an academic refereed paper. I have published widely in academic refereed papers about this insight into the subjective academic narrative (see, for example, Arnold 2010). A central theme of this discussion is that all knowledge production arises in scholarship from a personal story and culturally embedded narrative about the research.

The geographic world was largely dominated by European expansionism from the 17<sup>th</sup> century through to the 20<sup>th</sup>. Indeed: 'from the Renaissance to the late nineteenth century, European colonial powers invaded, occupied or annexed a huge area of the globe. That movement 'outwards... advanced so relentlessly that it has come to determine the cultural and political nature of the world' (Ashcroft 2001:1). This Eurowestern colonialism has been revisited, reinforced and replaced by Ameriwestern media leading to neo-colonialism and cyber-colonialism, so its resonances remain dominant.

As maps of the period show, during the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the English colonisation of the world was so vast and widespread that the sun never set on the British Empire and the international language of power, of government and of politics was English. The tyranny of the English language existed in stories as well as in governmental organizations and gubernatorial regulations. The English language taught in British schools provided stories that showed the English at home the grandeur of the Empire. Boys were sent from home as young as eight to boarding schools so that they could be prepared to go out alone, solitary, and run the Empire. For the English who ran the Empire, it provided an

opportunity to display the Imperial (and imperious) nature of English itself and the subservient nature of any other language and hence any other culture. In this paper I will look at examples from Africa, India and Australia.

Taking cultural norms for granted makes us blind to the ways they enable some and silence others. Colonial metanarratives remain a powerful force in education and literacy that continue to act to empower one group over another. They do this by accepting and even teaching one series of actions, knowledge production and even behaviours and activities as natural. The correlative of this is to marginalise as ‘unnatural’ all who are different from them. This paper enters into this discussion by identifying, examining and critiquing some colonising cultural metanarratives. In doing so it alerts educators to the complexity of real-life situations and gives insights into the power of speech when the subaltern is acknowledged and heard.

In training us in ‘How To Read Literature’, Terry Eagleton (2013), who speaks so strongly about the educative use of the English novel, is curiously blind to its Eurowestern influences when he advises us on how to read literature: ‘Literary works are pieces of rhetoric as well as reports. They demand a peculiarly vigilant kind of reading, one which is alert to tone, mood, pace, genre, syntax, grammar, texture, rhythm, narrative structure, punctuation, ambiguity – in fact to everything that comes under the heading of ‘form’ (Eagleton 2013:13).

This ‘form’ also informs not only the storylines or poems, but also the assumptions of cultural sameness that normalise the English ways of being, doing and knowing. In doing so, they silence other narratives from other cultures. In some cases, as in Australia, they literally silence these as many languages from Indigenous states have disappeared. When languages are no longer used, whole ways of understanding culture are also under threat.

As general free and compulsory education spread during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, becoming especially established in England, literature itself became colonising force. Accepted or canonical ‘high’ fiction then spread to colonial schools and there also it played an important role in civilizing through mass education the ‘natives’ of the Empire, especially mission schools. Terry Eagleton says of this:

Literature would rehearse the masses in the habits of pluralistic thought and feeling, persuading them to acknowledge that more than one viewpoint than theirs existed – namely, that of their masters. It would communicate to them the moral riches of bourgeois civilization, impress upon them a reverence for middle-class achievements, and, since reading is an essentially solitary, contemplative activity, curb in them any disruptive tendency to political action. It would give them a pride in their national language and literature: if scanty education and extensive hours of labour prevented them personally from producing a literary masterpiece, they could take pleasure in the thought that others of their own kind – English people – had done so (1989:25).

The important words in the context of this paper are ‘of their own kind-English people’. These are the norm of the colonizer and these silence the other: the un-named native informant. Gayatri Spivak (2005) agrees, seeing that for the un-named ‘native informant’ in the stories of the glory of the British Empire, on which the sun never set in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the canonical view of ‘fictional truth’ meant an education in the British literary classics. Embedded in these as sub-text agreed upon and not open to discussion much less dispute, were social received notions. Because such a procedure was civilizing, there was no understanding that this completely ignored and de-valued the colonised culture and language was also ignored. The Nigerian born Igbo writer Chinua Achebe says of this:

... it was only these foreign aspects of my upbringing that we dignified with the title of education. For us that word was not about Igbo things; it was about faraway places and peoples; and its acquisition was generally painful. Igbo things did not vanish from our lives; they were present but taken for granted, unacknowledged. (2000:19-20)

The colonized people’s and cultures’ own cultural position was always ‘subaltern’. Spivak says that the exploitation of the colonized means that: ‘...the subaltern cannot speak’ (Spivak, 1998:308). Even today, there is no way to reconstitute precolonial times, although Leela Gandhi (1998) writes of how postcolonial countries apparently have the opportunity to establish themselves as having renewed the PRE-colonial cultural integrity. However, this is not a realistic possibility in a globalised world. Colonised countries, and the colonising peoples and cultures themselves, are marked and marred by the powerful imposition of colonisation in which the native was only important as the ‘informant’ who furthered the needs or wants of the colonising European power. The European colonisers were in the colonised country to further the power and prestige of their own cultures and of themselves as Europeans. This dominant and authoritative text is still apparent in postcolonial cultural constructions and there is no Eden-like pre-colonial past that can be returned to by contemporary ex-European colonies. Globalization itself provides a powerful model for the experiences of Western neo-Imperialism.

In colonial documents, the ‘native informant’ is regularly without a name unless it is a European one such as the ‘Jacky-Jacky’ given by the so-called British ‘explorers’ in Australia to native trackers in their party. Despite this, the unknown native across colonies acts to introduce the colonial settler/invaser to the country. Why, then, does the native informant remain nameless and unrecognised?

## 2. India

According to Spivak (2000), '[T]he 'native informant...I borrow the term from ethnography, of course' is 'denied autobiography'. Spivak asserts that he (and occasionally she) 'is a blank...European is the human norm': the usual benchmark is the white man from Europe. The 'native informant' helps the colonial European to understand and live in the colonised land. However, the 'native informant' has no status of her or his own. They are without a name or personality. Spivak (2000) looks at the postcolonial 'native informant' through the tracks of philosophy, literature and history.

Born an Indian of the Hindu religion and living as an academic in the USA, Spivak has lectured and published widely on the impact of British Colonialism on India as it remains today. Although she aims to act to redress the influences of European colonialism, she is paradoxically involved in trying to undo the Gordian knot of decolonization of knowledge, language and social practices through her work within the academy, the English language and Eurowestern publications.

Today, Spivak (2000: 274-5) speaks of a '...new world order' that has grown in the postcolonial 21<sup>st</sup> century. She sees the contemporary cheap Asian labour as a direct result of '...nineteenth century territorial imperialism.' The once geographically colonised are now economically colonised and global communications systems as well as international investment companies out of Europe and America continue to act to keep the indigenous subordinate. Postcolonialism, then, is for her an idea, a geographic improbability, that has no substance in a globalised world. She notes that while postcolonial countries apparently obtain the opportunity to establish themselves as having renewed the PRE colonial cultural integrity, this is a fantasy.

The British are an outstanding example of colonisation for self-empowerment at both governmental and personal levels in the construction of the British Empire. For example, in establishing the East India Company in India in the 17th century the British were interested in commercialisation, not cultural exchange. By the 18th century the original East India Company formed as an association of traders found itself the colonial Raj that exercised political power and educational standards over the largely unknown colonised land and completely subaltern people. Over time these rulers became known as the British Raj. There was no recognition of Indian social and cultural practices, for all that was not British was lesser. Indian culture was 'native' and to be disdained and rejected. Finally, commercial and racial Imperialism became territorial.

*No money and no preferment would have drawn Creighton from his work on the Indian Survey, but deep in his heart also lay the ambition to write 'F R S' after his name. Honours of a sort he knew could be obtained by ingenuity and the help of friends, but, to the best of his belief, nothing save work — papers representing a life of it — took a man into the Society which he had bombarded for years with monographs on strange Asiatic cults and unknown customs. Nine men out of ten would flee from a Royal Society soiree in extremity of boredom; but Creighton was the tenth, and at times his soul yearned for the crowded rooms in easy London where silver-haired, bald-headed gentlemen who know nothing of the Army move among spectroscopic experiments, the lesser plants of the frozen tundras, electric flight-measuring machines, and apparatus for slicing into fractional millimetres the left eye of the female mosquito. By all right and reason, it was the Royal Geographical that should have appealed to him, but men are as chancy as children in their choice of playthings.*

*'Kim' Rudyard Kipling Chapter 10*

There is no way to recover an unchanged idealised Indigenous past once colonisation has occurred. Postcolonialism issues a challenge to the once geographically and now electronically colonised to see how they can transform themselves into a culture that can reinstitute elements of the past in a culture that has been both traumatised and enriched by colonisation. This is a massive challenge as cybercolonisation occurs with its inevitable globalisation of cultures into EuroAmerican ways of being, thinking and knowing.

Homi Babha says of the postcolonial that it is embedded in colonialism as it aims to preserve cultural identities and minority narratives in a global world it is: 'A salutary reminder of the persistent 'neo colonial' relations within the new world order and the multinational division of labour. Such a perspective enables the authentication of histories of exploitation and the evolution of strategies of resistance' (2012:9)

The stories of resistance may be seen in Bollywood movies that are denied existence by the EuroAmerican movie distributors, critics, actors and audiences. The 'other' is silenced. Written in the language of the coloniser and for a global audience dominated by EuroAmerican practices, books such as "A Suitable Boy" by Vikram Seth have flourished:

*Whenever she opened a scientific book and saw whole paragraphs of incomprehensible words and symbols, she felt a sense of wonder at the great territories of learning that lay beyond her - the sum of so many noble and purposive attempts to make objective sense of the world... All over India, all over the world, as the sun or the shadow of darkness moves from east to west, the call to prayer moves with it, and people kneel down in a wave to pray to God. Five waves each day - one for each namaaz - ripple across the globe from longitude to*

*longitude. The component elements change direction, like iron filings near a magnet - towards the house of God in Mecca.*

Spivak says that she will ‘fight tooth and nail-and I have both tooth and nail-against white racists’ demands to keep what is conceived as the European dominant in power.’ (Darius et al 1993:230) Describing herself as a ‘Europeanized postcolonial’, her interest in cultural inscriptions emphasises the economics of capitalism as a form of white racism, a ‘neocolonial inscription of knowledge’ (46). This European alliance with power makes the ‘other’ into ‘fools’. She speaks of ‘subalternity’ as a ‘position without identity’ (2005:5), and says she came to the descriptor through her studies of Marx stating that some classes ‘cannot represent themselves: they must be represented’. Thus she began to understand the question of agency: of being enabled.

### 3. Africa

Stories continue to come out of Africa. For example, *Nervous Conditions*, written by Tsitsi Dangarembga in 1989, is based upon the writer’s discovery that she has lost her African self because she has been educated in England. Her story tells of her return to Africa and her friendship with an African girl, Tambu, of much the same age. Whilst Tambu longs for an education initially denied to her because she is a girl, she plays a traditional role on her family farm in Umtali. Told in novel form, this is a story common to Africans who experience the vast differences between European culture and African culture. It builds a strong understanding of the continuing and devastating impact of colonisation by another culture.

*Can you cook books and feed them to your husband? Stay at home with your mother. Learn to cook and clean. Grow vegetables.* (Nervous Conditions)

The otherness of black Africa is well-established and postcolonial activities have not altered the European view of African ‘otherness’. Both Achille Mbembe and Chinua Achebe ask us to look at this anew, and in this paper I bring to scholarship something of my understanding of their position as black Africans.

“Fine fellows—cannibals—in their place.” So Conrad in *Heart of Darkness* emphasises the extreme differences between the civilized coloniser and Africans, and as a result Mbembe (2001) states that the west experiments with Africa as it sees its people as ‘absolute otherness’ (3). Can this always be impenetrable to scholarship? Certainly Mbembe claims that it is only seen through ‘*negative interpretation*’ (1: his italics), as Africa is ‘the world par excellence of all that is incomplete, mutilated and unfinished’. Such absolute otherness means that scholarship itself is involved in silencing Africa as ‘possessing things and attributes properly part of “human Nature”’. In this sense we might see it as a plantation world where the slaves have no sovereignty and the overseers have the right to life and death (necropower) over them. Mbembe (2008) sees the colonies represented, then, as inhabited by savages or animal life ruled over by civilizing influences that are based on the violence of the state. This colonisation is not over today. For Africa, this means that: ‘populations are then disaggregated into rebels, child soldiers, victims or refugees, or civilians incapacitated by mutilation or simply massacred on the model of ancient sacrifices while the “survivors”, after horrific exodus, are confined in camps or zones of exception’ (2008:34). Yet even those most despised Africans, the Bushmen and Bushwomen of the Kalahari express their finer feelings:

*The Bushmen in the Kalahari Desert talk about the two "hungers". There is the Great Hunger and there is the Little Hunger. The Little Hunger wants food for the belly; but the Great Hunger, the greatest hunger of all, is the hunger for meaning... .* (Laurens van der Post, *A story like the wind*)

Membe speaks from inside Africa today, whilst Achebe speaks from Europe and America. He is an Igbo whose tribal life is best described in the first of his famous trilogy: ‘Things Fall Apart’, and his boyhood best shown as ‘othered’ in his reminiscences of his British controlled education and positioning. For Achebe, Conrad’s novella ‘Heart of Darkness’ presents stereotypical views of Africa that have become entrenched in the European literature and hence culture, although Conrad is a ‘bloody racist’ (2010). Conrad’s work emphasises that the purpose of Africa is for Europe to civilize the people and places. Achebe is a product of this, and as such he writes, lectures and lives in an English cultural space.

*In some inland post feel the savagery, the utter savagery, had closed round him--all that mysterious life of the wilderness that stirs in the forest, in the jungles, in the hearts of wild men. There's no initiation either into such mysteries. He has to live in the midst of the incomprehensible, which is detestable. And it has a fascination, too, which goes to work upon him. The fascination of the abomination--you know.* (Conrad: Heart of Darkness)

The stories of the glory of the British Empire meant an education of the black ‘other’ in the ‘white’ British literary classics that had embedded in them as sub-text social received notions of white predominance. That this completely ignored and de-valued the colonized social structures, cultures and languages was ignored because such a procedure was civilizing. Nigerian born Igbo writer Achebe says of this: ‘...it was only these foreign aspects of my upbringing

that we dignified with the title of education. For us that word was not about Igbo things; it was about faraway places and peoples; and its acquisition was generally painful. Igbo things did not vanish from our lives; they were present but taken for granted, unacknowledged' (2000:19-20).

Throughout the fictional and non-fictional descriptions of the life of the English in the colonies, there runs a singular theme of the un-named 'native companion'. Tribal African children's education was to read about Peter Pan or to meet the very British characters in Jane Austen, or even Heathcliff on a moor they would never see and could not envisualise. This was the civilizing British voice:

My professors in English were all Europeans from various British and European Universities. With one or two exceptions the authors they taught us would have been the same ones they would teach at home: Shakespeare, Milton, Defoe, Swift, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats, Tennyson, Housman, Eliot, Frost, Joyce, Hemingway, Conrad. (Achebe 2000:22)

So it was that children in India, Africa, Asia, America and Australia and other colonies far flung from the British motherland learnt in the English language. They were made literate through a curriculum that included stories about elves and fairies and how the nightingale sang and the role that the beauty of England's countryside played in keeping alive the light of civilization through the dark heart of the far-flung empire. The language itself silenced their own cultures, the stories reinforced that silencing.

Postcolonialism identifies the unspoken native, the subaltern, the 'other' of Europe. For example, Achebe was one of the first native Nigerian writers to explore the way of life of an African from the perspective of 'the native' rather than from that of the coloniser. His first book was bestseller *'Things Fall Apart'* published in 1958. It's a paradox that his Nigerian 'voice' is in the English language and published, produced and sold through the coloniser's capitalist networks.

How does a native of a colonised country, in his case an African, find a legitimate voice as a post-colonial person? It would seem that the construction of the culture would be so dominated by the mores, laws, spoken and unspoken 'rules' of the British that any 'native voice' would be totally sublimated and overwhelmed. Is any postcolonial work in English (or any other colonising language, particularly from Europe) inevitably implicated in a repression of the local languages while claiming to be an expression of them? In Achebe's case, how can you write in African for an international market? Moreover, what are the '...ethnic and political risks of opting for one African language in a country where as many as four or five different ones may be spoken' (Sturrock, 1996:13)?

*'Things Fall Apart'* brought the 'native informant'...the un-named and un-knowable from/as Conrad's 'black heart of Africa' into the world. It's an evocative, passionate and poetic exploration of Africa's troubled encounters with Europe and an exploration of a black life heavily overshadowed by white greed and need as Imperialists. Achebe's works highlight the Europeanisation not only of African culture but also of global culture. In sharing his African experiences, Achebe enables us to see the dominant English language and forms of writing as enculturised and enculturising. This gives us a firmer hold on critical discourse and a greater capacity to deconstruct dominant textual modes.

Of *'Home and Exile'* (2000) the cover blurb says:

Here is an extended exploration of the European impact on African culture, viewed through the most vivid experience available to the author – his own life. It is an evocative snap-shot of a major writer's childhood, illuminating his roots as an artist.

*Home and Exile* is based on the three 1998 lectures Achebe gave at Harvard University. They explore: *My home under Imperial fire; The Empire fights back;* and *Today, the balance of stories*. Further information on the cover blurb: 'Achebe contends that to redress the inequities of global oppression, writers must focus on where they come from, insisting that their value systems are as legitimate as any other. Stories are a real source of power in the world, he concludes, and to imitate the literature of any other culture is to give that power away.'

In a world that we might 'read' as a global text dominated by the English language and the forms, mores, ideas (etc.) this entails, Achebe enables us to read against the given text. He takes us into his Igbo people's nation which:

...in precolonial times was not quite like any nation most people are familiar with. It did not have the apparatus of centralised government but a conglomeration of hundreds of independent towns and villages each of which shared the running of its affairs among its menfolk according to title, age, occupation, etc.; and its womenfolk who had domestic responsibilities, as well as the management of four-day and eight-day markets that bound the entire region and its neighbours in a network of daily exchange of goods and news, from far and near. (6)

Achebe came back into his home nation with his Christian missionary father. He shows us a nation of autonomous Igbo villages which were '...deeply suspicious of political amalgamation...' (17). These very individualistic Igbo people were called 'argumentative' by the British colonisers. *'Things fall apart'*, explores this anarchical culture. To do so, Achebe had to allow a kind of personal 'native' education for himself alongside his formal British education. The

'native' education was silent and hidden, but it was also reliable and ever present. Nevertheless, he read English books at school and was influenced by *'Treasure Island'*, *'Mutiny on the Bounty'*; *'Ivanhoe'* and *'School for scandal'*.

When Achebe started Arts in 1948 it was at The University College, Ibadan. Here he was silenced as a 'native' and brought forward as colonised by the English. As Achebe discusses these influences, he explores the ways in which the colonisers had: '...absolute power over narrative...' (24). This enables them to arrange stories as they see fit and to characterise and demonise those over whom they have power in their stories.

Where does this place the Nigerian, the 'native informant'? Achebe looks to the past, to 1561, as he quotes from a written statement that made English ship captain John Lok about black Africans: '...a people of beastly living, without a God, law, religion... They have no speech, but rather are a grinning and chattering' (27). He shows how this view of the 'native' caught and held...and continues to catch and hold...the European imagination. Furthermore, he connects this disinheritance of the 'native' with the ability of Europeans to salve their consciences about living well off the slave trade. If the blacks, in their native state, are non-Christian, non-human, then enslaving them is really a blessing for them!

When the slave trade slowed, it never really finished. It only changed from individual enslavement to the diminution of African cultures and the colonisation of the land and the peoples. The land was the heart of darkness; the peoples were savages. Africa was appropriated by Europe. Achebe's paradoxical task was to re-appropriate Africa within a European publishing tradition and in the English language.

Conrad <https://www.goodreads.com/work/quotes/2877220-heart-of-darkness>

*Going up that river was like travelling back to the earliest beginnings of the world, when vegetation rioted on the earth and the big trees were kings. An empty stream, a great silence, an impenetrable forest. The air was warm, thick, heavy, sluggish. There was no joy in the brilliance of sunshine. The long stretches of the waterway ran on, deserted, into the gloom of overshadowed distances. On silvery sandbanks hippos and alligators sunned themselves side by side. The broadening waters flowed through a mob of wooded islands; you lost your way on that river as you would in a desert, and butted all day long against shoals, trying to find the channel, till you thought yourself bewitched and cut off forever from everything you had known once - somewhere- far away in another existence perhaps. There were moments when one's past came back to one, as it will sometimes when you have not a moment to spare to yourself; but it came in the shape of an unrestful and noisy dream, remembered with wonder amongst the overwhelming realities of this strange world of plants, and water, and silence. And this stillness of life did not in the least resemble a peace. It was the stillness of an implacable force brooding over an inscrutable intention. It looked at you with a vengeful aspect."*  
— Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*

Thus, stories are not innocent: there's no disinterested position. As a recognition of this, Achebe asserts that literature, stories, can be read cautiously...and should be if we are to understand ourselves and our world. This is what Achebe says are the three reasons to be a writer:

The first is that you have an overpowering urge to tell a story. The second that you have intimations of a unique story waiting to come out. And the third, which you learn in the process of becoming, is that you consider the whole project worth the considerable trouble – I have sometimes called it terms of imprisonment – you will have to endure to bring it to fruition. (39)

How do peoples retain their own narratives? Is it possible to take back your own stories from a dominant enculturation? Achebe sees the 1950's as a decade in which came '...the signal at long last to end Europe's imposition of a derogatory narrative upon Africa, a narrative designed to call African humanity into question' (46). He sees the explosion of post-colonial publications since the 1960's as reclaiming African voice and the African as human. In an interesting exploration of the power of publishing houses over the acceptance of cultural stories, Achebe nominates the publisher Alan Hill of Heinemann as having allowed the authentic African native experience to be given names and voices...is this another form of colonisation?.

If one culture dispossesses another of its stories, how does the dispossessed feel? Is it possible for them to repossess cultural stories once the thread has been snapped by the denigration of the powerful enculturiser? How might the Kenyans, dispossessed of 100,000 acres by Lord Delamere, feel about their stories which are '...founded on a mystical, immemorial relationship between them and the red earth of their homeland.' (63). Compare this with the British-African 'expert', the writer Elizabeth Huxley, who refers to '...the grotesque imagery of the African mind' (68). Achebe describes enculturation as giving all artists 'a narrowness of vision'. Of course, as writers, we can take this on board in whatever form of writing we wish to practise and excel in. It's only by reading the text of the 'given' critically that we can expand our 'narrowness of vision' and begin to understand and accept various and complex stories out of Africa as elsewhere. A challenge in this time of globalisation?

One of the most imperial narratives of African colonisation is 'King Solomon's Mines'. Here the African and African culture is 'other', without legitimacy in civilized terms:

*The king took it very gingerly, and laid it down at his feet. I observed the wizened, monkey-like figure creeping from the shadow of the hut. It crept on all fours, but when it reached the place where the king sat it rose upon its feet, and throwing the furry covering from its face revealed a most extraordinary and weird countenance. Apparently it was that of a woman of great age, so shrunken that in size it seemed no larger than the face of a year-old child, although made up of a number of deep and yellow wrinkles. Set in these wrinkles was a sunken slit, that represented the mouth, beneath which the chin curved outwards, to a point. There was no nose to speak of; indeed, the visage might have been taken for that of a sun-dried corpse had it not been for a pair of large black eyes, still full of fire and intelligence, which gleamed and played under the snow-white eyebrows, and the projecting parchment-coloured skull, like jewels in a charnel house. As for the head itself, it was perfectly bare, and yellow in hue, while its wrinkled scalp moved and contracted like the hood of a cobra.*

*Gagool the witch finder King Solomon's mines*

#### 4. Indigenous Australia

Those preferring to rest an argument on relative morality should examine the religion and morality of Indigenous Australians and then compare it to those who murdered them in the 1800s and those who try to excuse or deny it today. (Pascoe, 2007:1).

Although Indigenous Australians number over 3% of the population today, they are under-represented in all positive areas of the culture and over-represented in all negative areas. They make up less than .8% of tenured academics and have few post-primary students engaged in learning within schools and universities. Their infant mortality rate is among the highest in the world as is their rate of curable illness. They make up over 22% of the jail population and in some jails make up almost 100%. Their culture has been all but silenced through loss of land and language, yet they persist as one of the longest surviving cultures in this world. In 2016 the first Indigenous politician was elected to the Lower House of national parliament.

In many situations, Indigenous Australians are breaking their silenced position as imposed by Eurowestern colonization, and claiming their rights in areas such as language, art, land rights and knowledge production. Indigenous scholars are establishing the decolonization of knowledge within the academy as a matter not merely of desire but of necessity. They are establishing Indigenous axiology, epistemology and ontology. One element of this is Indigenous Standpoint Theory (IST) described by Dennis Foley (2003) as acting to acknowledge 'the racial oppression of Indigenous Australian pedagogy and research methodologies within Higher Education institutions' (44). Martin Nakata (2007) concurs in his discussion of representations of Indigenous knowledge that are:

circumscribed by the English language and the discursive positioning of various disciplinary practices, including scientific paradigms, historical understandings, particular sets of interests, various theoretical positions, technologies of textual production and so on. (8)

Such an a priori position too often means that Indigenous people are researched ON and that Indigenous knowledge is ABOUT rather than practised: it is translated, filtered and hence altered rather than respected, realised and enacted. Nakata describes Indigenous knowledge as 'embedded' and this occurs: '...in ways of story-telling, of memory-making, in narrative, art and performance; in cultural and social practices, of relating to, of socialising children; in ways of thinking, of transmitting knowledge...' (10). However, he supplies a caveat about how even quite recent Eurowestern colonisation has also grounded Indigenous Australians in Eurowestern ways of knowing, being and doing. He shows that Australian Indigenous peoples are still being silenced within the academy as their ways of knowing, doing and being are still darkened by the black shadows of racist colonialism. This patriarchal narrative is well evidenced in *Little Black Princess*:

*The King...was called by the tribe Ebimal Woolloomool. The white people had nicknamed him "Goggle Eye"; and he was very proud of his "whitefellow name", as he called it. You see, he didn't know what it meant.*

*He didn't have a golden sceptre. Australian kings never do; but he had what was quite as deadly-a "magic deathbone". If you had been up to any mischief, breaking the laws, or doing anything wrong, it was wise to keep out of the way; for every blackfellow knew that if he "sang" this bone and pointed it at you, you would quickly die.*

(Gunn, 1986:163).

Can there be another narrative when the subaltern speaks? There is a growing sense of urgency that Indigenous decolonization of knowledge expresses today. It has led to the development of Indigenous Standpoint Theory (IST) as a way of bringing alternative voices to the academy and redressing othering, silencing and cultural exhaustion (Asmar &

Page, 2009:389). Moreover, this need for IST is exacerbated by the lack of understanding and recognition of Indigenous scholarship itself as it exists through the Elders, community; narratives; and ways of being, knowing and saying.

Scholarly knowledge thrives upon theoretical discourse and analytical prisms and Indigenous Standpoint Theory (IST) highlights the importance and relevance of Indigenous epistemology in decolonizing knowledge:

The forceful application of western approaches to postgraduate study has resulted in numerous Indigenous Australians abandoning their dreams of a higher degree. The racial oppression of Indigenous pedagogy and research methodologies within Higher Education needs to be acknowledged, then and only then can Indigenous students be given alternatives. (Foley, 2003:44)

IST addresses the dominance of enlightenment ways of knowing, being and doing in scholarship dominated by the western science model that has, since the colonization of Australia, 'resulted in the elimination and extermination of Indigenous social systems, knowledge, traditions and cultural sciences' (Foley, 2003:44). By taking a standpoint that comes from a realisation of Indigenous axiology, epistemology and ontology, IST has 'brought about "undisciplining"...traditional disciplines are now being de-stabilised to allow space for emerging theories of social discourse' (Rigney, 2001:7).

For Dennis Foley, IST has a rather prescriptive set of guidelines that may act to lock out 'jarwons' or non-Indigenous but friendly scholars as 'the practitioner must be Indigenous'. More generally, non-Indigenous scholars may participate as 'well-versed in social theory', aware that the research itself benefits and is wanted by Indigenous community, and, more contentiously given their loss 'wherever possible the traditional language should be the first form of recording' (2003:50). Foley records that these propositions have come about through:

discussions with Indigenous peoples of several lands, from Indigenous academics, the 'educated', the non-educated in western formal schooling (but well versed in Indigenous knowledge) and seniors including 'Elder' Indigenous advisers. Above all, comment was sought from the Grandfathers and Grandmothers who have lived colonial subjugation and who have a desire to teach the young of their culture. (2003:50)

However sad it may be, traditional or even bilingual language as the expression of data is not reasonably widely accessible in studying with Indigenous Australians. Most of the 250 traditional languages have been repressed not only by force and stealing children away, but also most strongly by the dominance of the English language and embedded Eurowestern cultural mores since colonization that was and is invasion. Indeed:

'Indigenous Australian systems of knowledge, governance, economy and education were replaced by non-Indigenous Australian systems on the assumption that the 'race' of Indigenous peoples were sub-humans, and thus had no such systems in place prior to the invasion (Rigney, 2001:4).

The loss of language to English and the Eurowesternization of education means there is an inbuilt inequality for Indigenous Australians. To address this inequality 'is not possible without cognitive justice, and without recognizing the presence of different forms of knowing and explaining the world' (Chan-Tiberghien, 2004:191).

Rigney sees Indigenist research methodology as offering 'three core, inter-related principles: Resistance (as the emancipatory imperative); political integrity; and privileging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices' (2001:8). Moreover: 'at the heart of Indigenous intellectual sovereignty is a theory that works toward the possibility of intellectual emancipation' and that rejects the concept of 'Intellectual Nullius' about Australian Indigenous peoples in much the same way as 'Terra Nullius' has been revealed as unsustainable (Rigney, 2001:10).

The settlement that is also an invasion of Australia English colonisation of the Indigenous Nations has meant that 'the Indigenous Australian world has been permanently altered post-European interaction. Genetically, politically, environmentally, ecologically, and topographically, our land has changed forever' (Foley, 2003:50).

## 5. Conclusion

Achebe calls upon us to consider Salman Rushdie's words about postcolonial story-telling in *'The Empire Writes Back'*. This refers to '...the powerful 're-storying' of peoples who had been knocked silent by the trauma of all kinds of dispossession' (79). This 're-storying' is not an easy process whether in literature, government, business or even everyday life. It denotes a struggle both personal and racial to overcome 'a badly damaged sense of self caused by the West's ...imperial mission: its old domineering monologue of the world' (83) Achebe believes that the old wounds caused by colonisation and dispossession still fester. In a globalised world dominated by a monoculture emanating immediately from America but behind that from England and Europe, these wounds will be hard to heal.

Just as colonised people are rejecting the position of the 'un-named native informant, Indigenous Australian scholars are attacking and rejecting the idea that their culture presents an 'intellectual nullius' (Rigney, 1997:636). This paper aims to contribute to the decolonization of knowledge inherent in such intellectual imperialism. The intellectual wealth of non-traditional epistemologies (ways of knowing), axiologies (ways of doing) and ontologies (ways of being) are a contribution to scholarship, not a rejection of it. Rather, '...Indigenous methodologies turn what the west would



interpret as subjective and conflict of interest into a dynamic instrument of rigour and a central plank in knowledge transfer' (Porsanger, 2004:111).

We are reminded by Spivak's work as a cultural theorist, that multiple signs of our culture can be contradictory as they both come from and form social and personal stories. Narratives and cultural stories are embedded in language and education reinforces their power. As educators we can see that Spivak's work challenges us to develop a deeper understanding of how our teaching and curriculum arises from our identities. She shows how we are constructed through metanarratives arising from significant social practices that have been established as the norm. She confronts us with insights into how cultural metanarratives shape our lives, our formative social ideologies and our 'norms'. Once we understand how these establish our cultural formation and hence personal selves, we may be alert to the challenges of grappling with '...the elaborate signifying systems of advanced capitalist society – the immense network of significations, from advertising hoarding to magazine, to television – the circulation of signs in which the subject is constantly figured and refigured' (2012:xi). Spivak comes from a position where she has learnt to speak out as both discusses the difficulties in being both a 'difficult female' and a 'difficult native'. We learn from her to be alert in educational matters to the potentially racist nature of gesture, tone, and style as they promulgate a subtext. By combining other genres with academic areas, she notes and exemplifies the provisionality of categorisation and the underpinning of discourse as transitory and even contradictory elements of understanding. It is essential that we consider this in our teaching and learning; our curriculum formation and literacy guidance.

If the academy refuses to listen to the 'other', 'the subaltern', 'the un-named native', then both parties are diminished. For Spivak, there must arise lines of movement from one class of being to another, of two way bridges within the academy: 'Subalternity is where social lines of mobility, being elsewhere, do not permit the formation of a recognisable basis of action' (Spivak, 2005:475). When the subaltern speaks, the world of knowing is moved, and there is no 'satanic litany'.

*"In front of the first rank, along the river, three men, plastered with bright red earth from head to foot, strutted to and fro restlessly. When we came abreast again, they faced the river, stamped their feet, nodded their horned heads, swayed their scarlet bodies;[...] they shouted periodically together strings of amazing words that resembled no sounds of human language; and the deep murmurs of the crowd, interrupted suddenly, were like the responses of some satanic litany"*

Conrad, Heart of Darkness Chapter 3: 18

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