

## A postcolonial and cultural reading of three Native American stories

*María Graciela Eliggi & Miriam Germani*

### Abstract

Both Cultural and Postcolonial criticism analyse the cultural production of different peoples given their value as elements of ideological transmission and transformation. Seen from this perspective, oppressed social groups are not considered helpless victims but communities capable of resisting or changing the hegemonic power structure.

Literature is a way of expression that unfolds the intrinsic values constituting the foundations for the cultural identity of a community, on the basis of which it shapes its vision of the world. It also provides elements that allow for an analysis of specific ways of behaviour that post-colonial subjects may resort to as alternatives of resistance and survival.

The aim of this work is to identify some of those elements and behaviours in three short stories by Native American women writers, analysing them from a Cultural and Post-colonial perspective as examples of resistance and cultural assertion.

Key words: postcolonial and cultural criticism, ideology, hegemonic power, literature, resistance.

### La narrativa india estadounidense: una lectura poscolonial y cultural

#### Resumen

La crítica cultural, así como también las teorías poscoloniales, analizan las producciones culturales de los pueblos por considerarlas vehículos de transmisión y transformación de ideologías. Desde esta perspectiva los pueblos oprimidos no son considerados como víctimas impotentes sino como comunidades capaces de resistir o transformar la estructura de poder hegemónico.

La literatura es una de las vías de expresión que permite descubrir los valores que constituyen la base de la identidad cultural de un pueblo y a partir de los cuales se construye su visión del mundo. Asimismo, proporciona elementos que posibilitan el análisis de formas de comportamiento específicas que pueden ofrecerse a los sujetos poscoloniales como alternativas de resistencia y supervivencia.

El objetivo de nuestro trabajo es identificar algunos de los elementos/comportamientos referidos anteriormente en tres cuentos de autoras indias estadounidenses y analizarlos desde una perspectiva cultural y poscolonial como formas de resistencia y preservación de su cultura.

Palabras clave: crítica poscolonial y cultural, ideología, poder hegemónico, literatura, resistencia.

This paper attempts to analyse three Native American short stories following an approach based on Cultural and Postcolonial Criticism. In her *Critical Theory Today*, Lois Tyson distinguishes between cultural criticism in a broad sense and in a narrow sense. In a broad sense, it is any kind of analysis of any aspect of culture. In a narrow sense, it is an analysis of all cultural productions meant to reveal the ‘cultural work’ they perform, that is, the ways in which they shape our experience by transmitting and transforming ideologies (p. 293). It is in this sense that we will analyse the stories. Even though cultural criticism is overtly political in its support of oppressed peoples, it does not view them as helpless victims but rather as victimised by the dominant power structure, and capable of resisting or transforming that structure. An analysis following Cultural criticism will always be partial and subjective in perspective because culture is a process which is constantly growing and changing, and is determined by a combination of factors such as time of production and reception, gender, race and ethnicity, sexual orientation, etc. We think that Postcolonial criticism is an adequate approach to complement this analysis since “it focuses on the experience and literary production of peoples whose history is characterised by extreme political, social and psychological oppression” (p. 364). The stories we have chosen have been produced within a cultural tradition which in this way attempts to respond to colonial domination. Some of the Postcolonial literary themes which are present in those stories are: the attempt of the colonised to imitate the lifestyle of the coloniser (mimicry), the experience of being an ‘outsider’ in one’s own land (exile), the struggle for individual and collective cultural identity, and the related themes of alienation, unhomeliness, double consciousness and hybridity, as well as the need for continuity with a pre-colonial past (p. 374).

Taking into account the questions proposed by Stephen Greenblatt (1) to examine the kinds of cultural work performed by a literary text, we have concentrated our analysis on the following aspects:

- \* kinds of behaviour which the literary work describes and seems to present as a positive alternative for postcolonial subjects;
- \* social understanding upon which the work depends, and
- \* analysis of the values implicit in the text.

These issues help us to establish connections between the literary text, the culture in which it emerged and the culture(s) in which it is interpreted.

In order to fully understand the way in which Native Americans see themselves and the world, it is necessary to describe briefly some of the differences between the Western vision of the world and their own. Western thought has traditionally valued writing over speech, thus considering cultures based on the oral tradition inferior because the lack of a system of writing was associated with lack of intelligence and/or civilisation. Towards the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Western historical tradition became the pattern to value

people: people who could write their own history felt entitled to write the history of those without one. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century the possession of ‘true knowledge’ was considered an achievement of universal value, belonging to the Western world and validated through science. The knowledge of the non-western world was invalidated by their supposed lack of ‘scientific’ foundation. In reaction to the Western vision of the world, border thinkers and writers claim that “aesthetic norms and knowledge are not universally established by a transcendent subject but by historical subjects in diverse cultural centers” (Mignolo 2000: 5), that is to say, there are different ways of knowing generated by different loci of enunciation. Border gnosis or border thinking is beginning to displace the hegemony of Western gnoseology. Following Mignolo, we use the word gnosis as knowledge in general including both doxa (opinion) and episteme (true knowledge) (pp. 3-11).

The stories we have chosen belong to a collection of traditional tales and contemporary writing by Native American women called *Spider Woman’s Granddaughters*. Paula Gunn Allen, editor of the book, explains the meaning of the title, saying that it contains “the light of intelligence and experience that [...]. Grandmother Spider brought to the people” (Gunn Allen 1990: 1-2). Grandmother Spider, an overarching divinity whose other name is Thinking Woman, is “the force or magical or spiritual power that enables whatever happens to happen” (p. 211) an Indian equivalent to the Christian God. The book is divided into three sections called The Warriors, The Casualties and The Resistance, each part containing several stories.

In the section called The Warriors, the editor explains the meaning of the word ‘war’ both in non-Western and Western traditions. For Native Americans ‘war’ means a ritual path, a kind of spiritual discipline that can test honour, selflessness and devotion, and can put the warrior in closer, more powerful harmony with the supernatural and the earth. In the Western tradition, this term means soldiers attacking or defending territory, ideals or resources, and in some cases war destroys not only the bodies but also the minds of those soldiers who were never taught to live in a sacred way (pp. 29-30). In the section called The Casualties, Paula Gunn Allen refers to the Anglo-Europeans who arrived in America with the goal of destroying life forcing the Indians to engage in that kind of war that seeks to destroy rather than build up spiritual power. However, those Indians concerned with living according to the old ways have managed to keep the ability to endure, which is based on their spiritual strength. In the final section, The Resistance, the editor introduces old and new forms of resistance to white oppression which in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries consisted in the Indian wars fought in the American territory. Today, with more Native Americans receiving college education, their affairs are increasingly being administered by Indians and this constitutes a new form of resistance. For the purpose of our analysis we have selected one story from each section of the book.

An important element to bear in mind when analysing Native American literature is the concept of magical realism. In the preface to *El reino de este mundo* Alejo Carpentier defines the new aesthetics of magical realism as follows:

*[...] lo maravilloso comienza a serlo de manera inequívoca cuando surge de una inesperada alteración de la realidad, de una revelación privilegiada de la realidad, de una iluminación inabituual o singularmente favorecedora de las inadvertidas riquezas de la realidad.* (Carpentier 1982: 11)

When Carpentier refers to the concept of magical realism in connection to Latin American peoples and their ways of thinking, the magical component is related to what anthropologists call ‘the primitive or archaic mind’. The ‘magical or mystical’ character of the primitive mind which determines their view of reality, includes the presence of an organic and mimetic nature which does not privilege any of its elements over the others –objects, plants, animals and human beings live in harmony. This vision of the world contrasts with the Western view which relies on a hierarchical system built upon binary oppositions. The Western conception of the natural world sees the relationship between man and nature as an antagonistic one, whereas the primitive mind, in Carpentier’s terms, sees man as closely bound to nature.

One of the stories under analysis belongs to the section The Warriors. The story is “Bluebird’s Offering” by Ella Cara Deloria, linguist, ethnographer and writer. The story is an excerpt from her novel *Waterlily* which was completed in 1944 but printed in 1988. The novel is set in the period before contact with Europe and it is concerned with the effects of war on women’s lives. Blue Bird, a fourteen-year-old girl and her family left their camp circle to look for meat because it was scarce and no buffalo had been sighted in a long time. While she was helping her grandmother to look for beans, her family was attacked by an enemy war party, her brothers killed and her parents apparently made captive. They escaped and, travelling by night, managed to arrive two days later at a large camp circle which was not theirs. The people were their kin and spoke their dialect, so they found refuge there. In time, Blue Bird married, had a baby girl called Waterlily and returned to her own camp circle. In the dialogue in which the grandmother comments on the discovery of a cache of earth beans which had been collected by mice, the reader is confronted with a clear example of how the primitive mind sees the relationship between humans and other beings

-There is a large cache of earth beans over yonder... The field mice, too, have been busy preparing for the winter.

-[...] Now maybe we can take back earth beans as well as meat.

-[...] You can’t do that, silly! Don’t you know that you have to leave a return gift for the mice when you take away their food? They have to have something to live on, too.

-[...] I have some dried corn in that rawhide box. Will it answer?

-[...] They should be too happy with it to think of bewitching me -I hope. She said

this laughingly, but it was plain she half feared the common belief about the powers of resentful mice.

(Gunn Allen 1990: 99-100)

Western scholars consider Native American literary tradition as folklore due to their privileging writing over orality. However, for Native Americans speech is intrinsically powerful and magical. They believe that by means of words, they can bring about physical changes in the universe (Mc Michael 1993: 7). In “Blue Bird’s Offering”, Blue Bird’s prayer restores her daughter’s health and the words themselves operate that change:

Now for the prayer, which was of utmost importance. “Prayer should be audibly released into the infinite” she had heard somewhere. She began speaking to the Great Spirit (Wakan Tanka) in the rock.

[After her prayer] ... she stood motionless waiting -for what, she did not know. Presently someone said in her ear quite clearly, “Hao!” It was the Dakota word of approval and consent.

[...] “I have prayed aright and my prayer is heard! My baby, my baby will live!”

[...] Gradually the infant seemed not to be in such pain as before. She fell asleep and after a while was recovered. Blue Bird was not surprised. She had prayed for that and had her answer already.

(Gunn Allen 1990: 109-110)

Right relationship and kinship are essential to the native aesthetics and it is related to harmony, balance and communality. The sense of community is the bedrock of tribal life. This community, however, is not made up only of members of the tribe but it includes all beings that inhabit the tribe’s universe: that is, the tribal community of relatives does not end with blood relationships or human kin, it also includes spirit and animal people, natural forces, minerals and plants (Gunn Allen 1986: 63).

In her ethnographic works, Deloria stressed the fact that the world of the Dakotas was governed by an intricate system of relatedness, obligation and respect (Gunn Allen 1990: 10). In their own camp circle Blue Bird and her grandmother had had a position which implied certain social obligations. Though their new situation was different and they were ranked in a lower social position in the new camp circle, that did not mean degradation in the social esteem of others. Solidarity is another feature of their system of relationships. When Blue Bird and her grandmother arrived at the new camp circle, they were welcome by the people and integrated to their community

But the people were their kind and spoke their dialect, so they knew they had found refuge [...] The response was quick [...] And thus all in a day Blue Bird and her grandmother were equipped to start life anew. [...] And the members of the camp circle adopted the newcomers as relatives.

It was true enough that here Blue Bird and her grandmother fell into the category of the humbler folk of the community. Without any male relatives to give them backing [...] Nevertheless, their lowly station in no way degraded them in the popular esteem. (Gunn Allen 1990:101-102)

The Indian ethos, in contrast with the Western one, is not individualistic. Thus, in this context, individualism becomes a negative trait. Star Elk, another character in the story, is the young Indian who married Blue Bird. He had eloped with the girl before getting married, so this led Blue Bird to marry in the least honourable way (p. 104). Star Elk's flaw is to be individualistic: "he was lazy, petulant and given to jealous fits". As he is unable to fulfil his role as husband and provider for the family, his relatives have to compensate for his failures and incorrect behaviour by receiving Blue Bird as a member of their community and treating her well. As the story progresses his self-centredness becomes more evident and he finally decides to "throw away his wife publicly" (p. 106) showing his vanity and weakness, which "earned him such public disfavour that he could not remain in the camp circle" (p. 107).

As regards Native American marriage customs, promises between prospective husband and wife had the value of oath. This is part of the logic of a society in which oral tradition plays an essential role. When a person ventures to speak, he/she is dealing with forces that are supernatural and irresistible and to be careless in the presence of words is to violate a fundamental morality (Mc Michael 1993: 7).

-Grandmother, one of the young men at the courting place has been urging me to marry him. His name is Star Elk.  
 -[...] It would be good for you to marry, grandchild. [...] But not that one.  
 -[...] But I have told him I would marry him, Grandmother.  
 -[...] Since you have promised already, there is nothing I can do. Once she gives it, an honorable Dakota woman does not break her word to a man. Those who make false promises are ever after derided. To give your word is to give yourself.  
 [...] Blue Bird's marriage was inevitable now.  
 (Gunn Allen 1990:103)

In the Western world arranged marriages were part of the social practices as a means of securing economic and/or political goals. In the Indian societies, however, marriage by purchase, which might be seen as an arrangement through Western eyes, had a different meaning: it was considered the best way for a girl to get married because it mainly stressed her personal values and not only those economic gains that she might bring to her family:

The most glamorous kind of marriage was by purchase. A woman who married in that way was much respected, for it meant that she had kept herself so unattainable that the man, who wanted her at all costs, thought nothing of giving horses for her, even at the risk of her rejecting him publicly. (Gunn Allen 1990: 104)

Another possibility for women was to become a co-wife:

-[...] I should simply give the girl away in marriage now, to some kind and able householder, to be a co-wife. Then she can be honorably married before any trouble can befall her. [...] Being a co-wife was not necessarily bad, provided the man was kind. She had been a co-wife herself. But then, she was the wife's sister and therefore was well received. [...] A head wife might resent her.  
(Gunn Allen 1990: 102-103)

In our view, one of Deloria's aims in this kind of storytelling is to recover the values which characterised the Native Americans' pre-colonial past as a way of reinforcing their cultural identity. This renewed understanding of their heritage may help present-day Indians to find their place within contemporary American society from where they can build their position without running the risk of complete assimilation.

"Making Do", written by Linda Hogan, is a story of loss and survival set in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, included in the section *The Casualties*. The story consists of two parts. The first one is narrated by an omniscient voice and tells the story of a young unmarried girl whose three children have died in their early childhood and of how she tries to cope with such an appalling loss. The second part is a first person narration by the girl's sister in which she reflects upon and tries to explain her sister's behaviour. This part serves, also, as a sample of what Native Americans do in their attempt to recover their old ways in order to resist destruction within the wider framework of contemporary American society.

In the first part of the story the writer presents a series of events which exemplify how the entire order of the universe has been disrupted. To begin with, Roberta, the protagonist, has gone through three pregnancies resulting from occasional relationships only supported by her grandmother Addie and her mother, Neva. The fact that her first boyfriend was a Korean war veteran determines, in her grandmother's view, her fate and that of her children:

Addie, in fact, had stayed with Roberta during the time of her pregnancy with Harriet, back when the fifteen-year-old girl wore her boyfriend's black satin jacket that had a map of Korea on the back. [...] Addie never told Roberta a word of what she knew about divided countries and people who wear them on their backs, but later Roberta knew that her grandmother had seen way down the road what would be coming and warned her in little ways. (pp. 188-189)

The grandmother seemed to have seen a sign of bad omen in her granddaughter's future because she was wearing clothes of a country in which a civil war led to American intervention and finally the country was divided into two separate nations. This produces a break in the harmony and balance of the universe which is reflected in the life of the protagonist as well as in the life of other characters of her community. After her three

children die, Roberta dreams of her backbone and her house broken in pieces, she feels she is “broken like the country of Korea or the land of the tribe”, and the writer adds:

They were all broken, Roberta’s thin-skinned father broken by the war. He and Neva, the mother, had raised two boys whose parents had “gone off” as they say of those under the control of genie spirits from whiskey bottles and those boys were certainly broken, too. And Neva, herself had once been a keeper of the gates; she was broken. (Gunn Allen 1990: 191)

Being a keeper of the gates meant she could read people by their faces and bodies, opening and closing ways for them to pass through life. But now she had also lost that capacity since she had accepted the American way of life by gradually abandoning their traditional Indian customs and feeling their lives were all hopeless. Her loneliness and hopelessness lead Roberta to leave her place and she ends up in a mountain town called The Tropics where she gets a job at the Grocery. There she has time to whittle little birds, as her ancestors had done, “and thought of them as toys for the spirits of her children and put them in the windows so the kids would be sure and see them” (p. 193). She felt distressed and “every night she prayed to die and join her kids” (p. 193). Native Americans believe that if a person is motionless, his/her soul may run away from the body if it decides to do so. However, although she remained motionless in bed her soul refused to leave. Roberta’s experience can be explained in terms of Homi Bhabha’s theory of ‘unhomeliness’ which results from the ‘cultural displacement’ within which Native Americans live. “Being ‘unhomed’ is not the same as being homeless. To be unhomed is to feel not at home even in your own home because you are not at home in yourself: your cultural identity crisis has made you a psychological refugee” (Tyson 1999: 368).

In the second part of the story, we know through the voice of Roberta’s sister that Roberta’s fate is part of the tribes’ fate because they “have lost so much that they have to hold on to everything” (Gunn Allen 1990: 194), even to grief and pain. Their survival depends upon their ‘making do’, their capacity to make use of the leftovers the American society has to offer them. They try to overcome their suffering in whatever way they can, for example collecting things, getting drunk, going out. However, this survival implies a denial of the truth that as Indians they have been constantly oppressed by the colonisers who have stolen their lands, divided them and prevented from following their traditions. This condition of division and separation from the harmony of the whole leads Native Americans to rely on mystical and philosophical methods and to focus on their own customs and traditions to effectively resist colonisation and its destructive effects. By contrast, Western cultures lean heavily on technology and science to secure the continuity of their ways of life (Gunn Allen 1986: 71). From time to time members of the younger generations attempt to reverse this state of affairs but these



are just isolated outbursts of rebellion which are just another way of ‘making do’. When Roberta’s sister first knows about her suffering she thinks about going back home to comfort her, but she says “I heard my other voices tell me it wasn’t time” (Gunn Allen 1990: 194). Later when she knows about Roberta’s carving wooden birds she understands it all makes sense: she is holding on to her grief and she is ‘making do’, as all Native Americans do, by carving the souls of her children into the birds (p. 196).

The third story we will refer to is called “An American in New York” by LeAnne Howe and belongs to the section called The Resistance. It is a first person narration by a contemporary half-breed Native American traveller on her first trip to New York. In contrast with the other two stories the main character is a successful businesswoman who presents a humorous account of her three-day-trip and experiences around Manhattan. By using an intertextual reference in the title of the story the author ironically shows the role of visitors that Indians have been forced to play in their homeland. At the beginning of the story the protagonist introduces the reason for her trip to New York. She mentions that she is in the ‘bond business’ and she establishes a relation between the word ‘bond’ and its connection with the word ‘servitude’: “There is something hypocritical about an Indian selling and trading US Treasury Bonds. Even the word *bond* connotes servitude. To bond, to bind, to restrain, to obligate, to indebt, to enslave” (p. 246).

We could establish a link between the ideas expressed in the previous quotation and the colonialist ideology based on the colonisers’ assumption of their own superiority, which they contrasted with the alleged inferiority of native peoples. As Native Americans were defined as savage, backward, undeveloped, the colonisers felt entitled to subject them to their control. “Because their technology was more highly advanced, the colonisers believed that their whole culture was more highly advanced, and they ignored or swept aside the religions, customs, and codes of behaviour of the peoples they subjugated” (Tyson 1999: 366).

In this story the protagonist also relates bonds with words when she says “the government’s bonds are its words to its people. This is what we are worth. Our word is our bond” (Gunn Allen 1990: 246). In this way, we see how the American society needs paper to support their word and their promise to pay a debt, in contrast with Native American custom in which their relationships were established by words that had the force to settle an agreement which they would not dare to break.

Also, in relation to the process of colonisation in the U.S., the main character introduces what she calls “a reversal of historic roles”. In the same way in which, in the past, the colonisers had appropriated the indigenous land “[t]his time an Indian was going to buy immigrants” (p. 246). She also comments ironically on the price the colonisers paid for Manhattan: “No wonder we sold the whole place for twenty-six bucks and some beads.

I wouldn't give you twenty-six cents for the entire island right now. It stinks" (p. 247). This quotation is the beginning of a description which points to the contrast between New York as a world centre of commerce and finance and the state of environmental and moral deterioration of the island in spite of the technological development.

On the one hand, in postcolonial cultures, there is a merging of the culture of the colonised and that of the coloniser, which at times makes it difficult to identify and separate them into discrete entities (Tyson 1999: 365). However, at other times there is a clear identification of the colonised as 'other'. Othering is the practice of dividing the world between 'us', 'the civilised', and 'them' – 'the others' – 'the savages'. Sometimes 'the savage' is perceived as possessing a primitive beauty or nobility born of a closeness to nature – the exotic other – (p. 366) as the following excerpt exemplifies:

I was as surprised by what I saw as the New Yorker who landed at Oklahoma City's airport and asked me where all the Indians and tepees were. I was working as a waitress at the airport coffee shop. I stood there proudly pouring him a cup of coffee and said, "Right here, sir. I'm an Indian."

As I stood there in my stiffly starched yellow and white SkyChef's uniform, the New Yorker looked me up and down and asked, "You're it? I've come all this way to see Indians and you're telling me you're it? My God, darling, you mean you live in houses just like the rest of us?"

I said, "Well ... I live in an apartment." (Gunn Allen 1990: 247-248)

During a carriage ride around Manhattan, the narrator has an exchange with the Irish driver. In the story, the reader can perceive the effects of assimilation into the American culture through the eyes of this Irishman who considers himself no longer an immigrant – 'them' – but part of the American society – 'us'. This character shows his prejudice against new immigrants – Middle Easterners, Haitians, Hispanics:

-[...] Now there's a lot of concern around here that the new immigrants. [...] [They] can't be assimilated into our society.

-Our society?

-Yes, our society. I'm going to get my American citizenship one day soon. Most everyone wants the same things. We wanna eat hamburgers, and pizza, buy designer clothes, and Swiss-made watches. Maybe that's materialistic but that is why everyone comes here.

-But there's more to life, and more to America than just things.

-More to life than expensive carriage rides and Broadway theatre, you mean.

I shut up.

(Gunn Allen 1990: 251)

The narrator seems to ask him to explain what he means when he refers to 'our society'. The Irishman equates the American society to a commodified world where things are the ultimate goal and the reason why many newcomers want to become

American citizens. Even though the narrator questions this materialistic behaviour, she finally has to admit that she herself is also behaving as any other foreigner who is willing 'to buy a packaged vision' of New York. The Irishman sees the narrator as a member of the Establishment because he does not recognise her as a Native American. In contrast, another immigrant, a Nigerian taxi-driver, as he learns about her origins, considers her as a member of oppressed minorities and pities her on the American Indians' underprivileged position within the American society

Oh, how much would I like to talk to you. You are the real Americans. This was all your home before we started coming here. I am learning about you in my classes. Right now, you are having a lot of problems with the government discriminating against you. To me, it's so sad. I want to do something. (Gunn Allen 1990: 253)

After her encounters with the two immigrants she reflects upon her "ambivalent position towards newcomers" (Gunn Allen 1990: 253) and expresses her disbelief in the "melting pot theories" which have unsuccessfully tried to turn Indians into Western subjects. Interestingly she deconstructs the opposition 'us/them' by referring to Indians as 'us' and to white colonisers as 'them'.

Postcolonial theorists often describe the colonial subject as having "a double consciousness" or "a double vision", in other words, a consciousness or a way of perceiving the world that is divided between two antagonistic cultures: that of the coloniser and that of the indigenous community (Tyson 1999: 368). This is especially true in the case of half-breeds who as the narrator says "live on the edge of both races and feel like they are, split down the middle" (Gunn Allen 1990: 254). The protagonist refers to this situation explaining the feelings of confusion as follows:

Your right arm wants to unbutton your shirt, while your left arm is trying to keep your shirt on. You're torn between wanting to kill everyone in the room, or buying'em all another round of drinks. Our erratic behaviour is often explained away by friends and family as "trying to be". If you're around Indians you're trying to be white. If you're around white friends, you're trying to be Indian. (Gunn Allen 1990: 254-255)

To conclude we can say that the themes of double consciousness and unhomeliness which persist in decolonised nations today are present in the three stories under analysis. One of the tasks that Native Americans face is the search for a place both physical and spiritual where they can feel that they belong. One of the ways of achieving this is through the recuperation of their pre-colonial past (Tyson 1999: 368) by asserting their native culture and preventing it from erasure. Storytelling is one of the ways in which Native Americans resist the colonialist ideology by describing the misdeeds of the colonisers, the suffering of the colonised, or the detrimental effects that colonialism has had on the colonised.

**Notas**

(1) We adapted the questions suggested by Greenblatt as quoted by Lois Tyson in *Critical Theory Today. A User-Friendly Guide*, p. 295.

**Bibliografía**

- Carpentier, A. (1980). *El Reino de este Mundo*. Buenos Aires: Editorial Quetzal.
- Gunn Allen, P. (1986). *The Sacred Hoop*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (Ed) (1990). *Spider Woman's Granddaughters. Traditional Tales and Contemporary Writing by Native American Women*. New York: Fawcett Columbine.
- Mc Michael, G. (General Editor) (1993). *Anthology of American Literature. Volume I: Colonial through Romantic*. Fifth Edition. New York: Mc Millan Publishing Co.
- Mignolo, W. (2000). *Local Histories, Global Designs. Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges and Border Thinking*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Tyson, L. (1999). *Critical Theory Today. A User-Friendly Guide*. New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc.

Fecha de recepción: 08/08/2005 • Fecha de aceptación: 19/08/2005