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Cultural Suppression and the Subaltern Voice in Diane Glancy's Pushing The Bear (1996)*

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Abstract

This study examines the cultural oppression and the subaltern voice in Diane Glancy's *Pushing the Bear* (1996). A critical literary examination of the cultural transformation experienced by the Cherokee people during the Trail of Tears in 1838 is conducted. Although the novel never directly discusses resistance, it delves into the challenging, ambiguous, and often frustrating ways in which Cherokee social structures, spiritual practices, and cultural values evolved. The present study employs Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's 1999 postcolonial theory and its concept of subalternity to analyze the marginalization of Native voices, particularly Cherokee women's, due to colonial oppression and internalized patriarchal structures. The analysis focuses on the character of Maritole, whose personal journey embodies the oppression of gendered subalterns through cognitive and emotional dislocation. The study finds that the effects of settler colonialism on Maritole's culture are manifested in her fragmented voice and sense of self. The novel's complex and fragmented narrative structure reveals the erosion of Cherokee cultural identity, community cohesion, and traditional gender roles under the pressures of forced migration.

Keywords: Cultural Suppression, the Subaltern Voice, Diane Glancy, Epistemic Dislocation.

* البحث مستل من رسالة ماجستير.

القمع الثقافي والصوت المهمش في رواية "دفع الدب" (1996) لديان غلانسي

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الملخص:

يُحلل هذا البحث رواية "دفع الدب" (1996) لديان غلانسي، باعتبارها استكشافًا أدبيًا بالغ الأهمية للتحول الثقافي الذي شهدته قبيلة شيروكي خلال "درب الدموع" عام 1838. وتوظف هذه الدراسة نظرية غاياتري تشاكرافورتي سبيفاك حول التبعية لتحليل تهميش أصوات السكان الأصليين، وخاصة أصوات نساء شيروكي، بسبب القمع الاستعماري والهياكل الأبوية الداخلية. ويُظهر الهيكل السردي المُعقد والمُجزأ للرواية تدهور الهوية الثقافية للشيروكي، ووحدة المجتمع، والأدوار الجندرية التقليدية بسبب ضغوط الهجرة القسرية. يُركز التحليل على شخصية ماريتول، (الشخصية الرئيسية في الرواية) التي تُجسد رحلتها الشخصية اضطهاد المُهمّشين جنسيًا من خلال التفكك المعرفي والعاطفي. وتتجلى آثار الاستعمار الاستيطاني على ثقافتها في صوتها المُجزأ وإحساسها بذاتها. ولا يُناقش الكتاب إطلاقًا المقاومة المباشرة. بل إنه يتعمق في الطرق التي يصعب فهمها، والتي غالبًا ما تكون مُحبطة، لتطور البنى الاجتماعية والممارسات الروحية والقيم الثقافية لدى قبيلة شيروكي عبر الزمن. يمكننا أن نتعلم عن آثار الاستعمار وتطور الثقافة الإنسانية من خلال التتبع الدقيق لهذه التحولات في رواية "دفع الدب".

الكلمات المفتاحية: القمع الثقافي، الصوت المهمش، ديان غلانسي، الاضطراب المعرفي.

1. Introduction

Native Americans have been subjected to genocide since the beginning of colonization, resulting in intergenerational trauma. The loss of people, land, and culture has inflicted terrible pain and suffering among those survivors who lived that horrible experience. The most traumatic event in their history is their forced displacement known as the “Trail of Tears”, during which many Native Americans of different tribes were exposed to spiritual and physical violence

throughout the trail, (from 1830 to 1850). The cruelty and pain that Native people experienced during that removal became stories passed down for generations. These narratives investigate their psychological conditions and their concerns towards the survival of their unity and community. Their condition continued to worsen day by day. The turn of events was very difficult as they had to strive in order to preserve their beliefs and traditions as well as their struggle against the harsh weather conditions. Many writers have provided factual accounts of the tragic moments profoundly reflecting the difficulties, pain, and suffering.

Among those writers, is Diane Glancy, who investigates in detail the harsh conditions that led to the annihilation of most of the Cherokee. They were subjected to exhaustion, severe weather, and epidemics as well as violent deaths at the hands of the white soldiers. The soldiers treat them mercilessly and abuse them constantly. They are forced to leave their homes without even the basic necessities of life. The lack of food and supplies for the journey increased their suffering, especially for children and the elderly, who died. This study investigates how the Trail of Tears is fictionalized in Glancy's novel, *Pushing the Bear (1996)*, to reclaim the silenced, particularly indigenous women's experiences through the lens of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's ideas of subalternity.

2. Discussion:

2.1 Subalternity and Silenced Voices

Critical theory has made a lot of progress in its understanding of subalternity. The evolution began with Antonio Gramsci's (1971) basic Marxist ideas and ended with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's smart postcolonial analysis. "Subaltern" comes from Gramsci's Prison Notebooks and refers to social groups that are excluded from recognized political power structures, especially in capitalist societies. Gramsci called subaltern classes "groups without institutional power that can't agree on or say what their political agenda is"[(1)]. These groups include the working class, farmers, and people who live on the edges of society. Gramsci was always hopeful. He explained that "organic intellectuals"[(2)], could help groups that are on the outside become more aware of

themselves and their place in the world, which would help them fight against dominant power. He said that being subaltern was not a permanent state, but one that could change through revolutionary action and ideological struggle.

In the 1980s, Ranajit Guha, an Indian historian and who founded the Subaltern Studies group, told the Subaltern Studies group to look at Gramsci's ideas in light of South Asian history. Guha's group wanted to change the elite-focused stories of colonial and nationalist history by giving power back to peasants, tribal groups, and other non-elite people. Guha stated that these subaltern groups have been politically active, even though they have been pushed to the edges of society and left out of formal political systems. He said that Indian historiography has always left out "the politics of the people," making them seem like passive subjects in both colonial and nationalist stories(3). The Subaltern Studies Group kept Gramsci's focus on giving power back to people who have been left out, but they also made it possible for a more complete critique of history and representation that went beyond class struggle.

Spivak's essay *Can the Subaltern Speak? 1988* is the most famous example of this deep criticism. It looked at how Western theory and subaltern historiography limit what we can know about the past. Spivak criticized the Subaltern Studies Group and French theorists like Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze for thinking that the subaltern subject could be understood or represented without keeping the oppressive structures that have kept it silent. Spivak's study of the colonial idea around the Hindu widow sacrifice, sati, shows how the subaltern woman is pushed to the margins twice: first by the imperial power that says it wants to save her, and then by the patriarchal tradition that says it wants to protect her. In both cases, her voice is silenced. When she says, "the subaltern cannot speak"(4), she doesn't mean that the oppressed are literally silent. Instead, she means that the way things are set up makes it hard for their voices to be heard authentically. The change from Gramsci to Spivak is a move away from a materialist view of subalternity that focuses on economic and political marginalization and toward a poststructuralist and postcolonial view that focuses on epistemic violence and the impossibility of representation. Gramsci thought that the subaltern could have political power through organized struggle and counter-hegemonic discourse.

Spivak, on the other hand, warned against idealizing subaltern resistance and stressed that intellectuals were to blame for keeping quiet.

Glancy's *Pushing the Bear* (1996) highlights the suppression of Indigenous women due to forced relocation and explores their cultural and physical loss. This research tackles the gendered silencing, constrained agency, and complex resistance strategies of Cherokee women within the framework of Spivak's subalternity theory, as articulated in her book *A Critique of Postcolonial Reading: Toward A History of The Vanishing Present. (1999)* This book raises the question of whether those who are structurally marginalized, particularly colonized women, can be heard within dominant discourses. The subaltern, according to Spivak, is oppressed and isolated from the processes of knowledge creation and self-representation. When the subaltern woman does speak, her voice is often overwritten or dismissed. In this framework, Spivak warns, "the subaltern cannot speak" [(5)], not because she is mute, but because her speech is rendered unintelligible by epistemic and political systems. *Pushing the Bear* elucidates this issue with exceptional clarity. The novel illustrates the Cherokee people's suffering as they are forcibly removed from their land during the Trail of Tears 1838. The novel primarily examines historical silencing through the fragmented, multifaceted perspectives of Cherokee women, particularly Maritole. Directly addressing subaltern speech, the text asks, who will listen? and whose voice is lost in the march?[(6)] Living at the junction of colonial and patriarchal oppression, Spivak argues, the subaltern woman is doubly silenced. Maritole's character in *Pushing the Bear* makes this obvious; she is not only uprooted by the white settler government but also muted within her own community.

The novel concentrates on the oppression and repression of Cherokee Indians in general and Cherokee women in particular. Both men and women have been exposed to unbearable circumstances, including harsh weather conditions and physical and verbal abuse at the hands of white soldiers. However, Cherokee women endure a double burden of suffering confirming Spivak's argument that: "If, in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow"[(7)].

Before colonialism, Cherokee society was matrilineal. Women had political, social, and economic power, and they were decision makers. According to Theda Perdue, "the colonizers have been disturbed by the Cherokee women's cultural practices concerning, agricultural labor, sexual autonomy, control of children and other behavior as deviant"(8). The Cherokee exposed to women have been many persecutions and oppression by patriarchal practices and the capitalistic systems. A lot of Cherokee men started to engage with the ideologies of patriarchal systems of the colonizers resulting in an important cultural transition of Cherokee society. The oppression imposed upon Cherokee women leads to their loss of land ownership, loss of voice in the community, familial disintegration, and change in gender roles and power dynamics. leaving them confined to the role of subjugated housewife.

Through this assimilation, Cherokee men try to emulate the white man to show that they also can dominate women, doubling the silencing and oppression of women. In the novel, Tanner, Maritole's brother, asserts this imitation by saying: "We farmed to prove to them we were civilized… We emulated the white man. Established a Capital. Took power from the women. Then they took our farms."(9) Thus, the emulation of civilized communities leads to the loss of property to the settlers and also erodes the Cherokee gender roles and cultural identity, replicating the domination of colonial structures.

The suffering of Cherokee women and their loss of power and voice are portrayed in the novel as a result of assimilation. They are expected to be suppressed, dependent, and obedient. Knobowtee, Maritole's husband and the main male character in the novel, wants his wife, Maritale, to be like his sister who "never says anything"(10). That is why Maritole prefers to remain silent rather than ask Knobowtee to which stockade they were being taken, asserting her subjugation to patriarchal systems. Her husband Knobowtee harshly asserts control and he doesn't like his wife even to speak as she states: "I wanted to ask Knobowtee about what stockade we were going to, but I knew he would not want his wife talking"(11). Though some gender hierarchy existed in Cherokee tradition, colonial imposition severely magnified patriarchal values. European-American ideas of property, religion, and gender dynamics pushed women's traditional roles

in Cherokee society (which had been more egalitarian in certain respects, with women holding major spiritual and social influence) even further. The narrator, Maritole, wants to ask questions because she wants to gain knowledge and assert her, but she knows her husband doesn't want her to talk. This situation goes beyond the dynamics of individual marriages and shows how colonization's trauma and dislocation made gendered power systems worse. The woman can't speak up or ask questions because of social and epistemological reasons. This is what Spivak calls "epistemic violence"(12), the destruction or denial of subaltern knowledge systems and voices by existing structures.

This moment shows Spivak's point in her essay *"Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1988)* that even when the subaltern woman tries to express herself, the power structures that are in place make it very hard for her to do so, making her voice almost meaningless. The narrator in *Pushing the Bear* doesn't talk; her silence is preemptive, internalized, and culturally conditioned, which makes it a strong example of Spivak's point. Maritole's silencing therefore, reflects the colonial reconfiguration of indigenous gender relations rather than only personal. Spivak's approach shows us how this silencing is about more than Knobowtee; it's also about how a Cherokee woman is doubly silenced: through her husband's power (gender), and through colonial systems (race/culture).

Maritole, as a Cherokee woman, has suffered a lot along the Trail, and her husband has engaged in a constant quarrel and controversy. When Knobowtee "raised his hand and hit" her "across the face", she "got up and crawled into the wagon" and "was ashamed"(13), showing no resistance or reaction against this violence and marginalization. Her withdrawal and shyness a classic subaltern behavior where she is unable to protect herself or protest against her oppressors. This aligns with Spivak's view that women are silenced by the community's structure along with the colonial powers. She states in her work *"A Critique of Postcolonial Reason (1999)* that: "between patriarchy and imperialism, subject-constitution and object-formation, the figure of the woman disappears, not into a pristine nothingness, but into a violent shuttling that is the displaced figuration of the third-world woman"(14). The term "disappearance"(15) signifies that women such as Maritole are denied the social or discursive agency to function as

speaking subjects. They are instead subjected to colonial structures that forcibly displace and disempower Native peoples, as well as patriarchal systems within their own communities that deny women voice and autonomy.

Maritole's response, her embarrassment, silence, and physical retreat into the wagon, illustrates this complex marginalization. She refrains from responding, defending herself, or pursuing justice; rather, she internalizes the aggression. She says: "Knobowtee raised his hand and hit me across the face because I had provoked him. I got up and crawled into the wagon with Luthy to get away from everyone's sight"(16). The internalization of subordination is central to Spivak's notion of the subaltern woman: she is not only deprived of voice but also of the essential conditions necessary for her voice to be acknowledged, comprehended, or validated. Glancy's narrative depicts the pain, frustration, and disappointment of Cherokee women, making the readers aware that discrimination and violence against female, begins primarily in the family.

Besides the domination of the patriarchal system, Cherokee women are confined by capitalistic, exploitative society. Glancy utilizes the metaphor of the bear to portray the exploitative and greedy capitalist power in the novel. Maritole, the main Female Character, Constantly Feels the power of the bear, saying "there was something over us. Some dark animal we pushed against. I could almost hear it breathe"(17), this highlights the overwhelming force of colonial domination that actively terrorizes the indigenous. The author, Diane Glancy, acknowledges the destructive power of the bear, colonialism, by narrating:

> A long time ago the Cherokee forgot we were a tribe. We thought only of ourselves apart from the others. Without any connections. Our hair grew long on our bodies. We crawled on our hands and knees. We forgot we had a language. We forgot how to speak. That's how the bear was formed. From a part of ourselves when we were in trouble. All we had was fur and meat to give(18).

Throughout the novel, there are several examples of racial and gender discrimination. They are constantly seen as savages, primitives, and uneducated people who have no access to any kind of civilization. The American soldiers look down upon their traditions and spiritual beliefs. Sergeant Williams mocked

Maritole after she had told him about the magic lake, and he said, “I would like to think so. But I see a lot of Indians suffering without any magic lake to go to”[19]. This undermines people’s confidence in their spiritual beliefs, which is also among the colonialism goals.

In the scene where the soldiers talk about the Cherokee during the march, the author reveals that they are not only denied the chance to express their fears and concerns about the harsh future ahead, but are also depicted in a manner that strips them of their humanity, independence, and self-worth. The soldiers utilize animalistic or pejorative terminology to describe them: The Cherokee are depicted as creatures lacking intelligence, attributed to the notion that “a foolish ox consumed poison ivy.”[20] The expression “He'll be in the meat wagon by tonight”[21] informally denotes the imminent demise of an elderly individual, thereby likening human existence to that of meat. The inquiry “Why don't we simply eliminate them all right here?”[22] illustrates the normalization of violence in colonial ideology through genocidal rhetoric veiled as weary sarcasm. These observations are crucial as they demonstrate how the colonizer characterizes the subaltern: not as individuals with history, voice, or sorrow, but rather as burdens, obstacles, or sources of amusement. Even sympathy, “Those Indians need a rest”[23] is imbued with condescension and skepticism, immediately succeeded by the retort “They ain't started walking yet,” (Glancy,1996, p.70) which exposes how the Cherokee's suffering is either minimized or invalidated. According to Spivak, the subaltern cannot articulate their voice not because of a deficiency in ideas, emotions, or resistance, but because prevailing narratives have already distorted, framed, or obliterated their discourse. The Cherokee are present in this location, yet they are neither addressed nor engaged with in any capacity in the midst of their agony; the soldiers' complaints are reduced to mere background noise. The soldiers regard the elderly Cherokee man, who is “discussing his dogs,” (70) as a ridiculous figure; his anguish is either incomprehensible or unimportant.

Another instance of physical abuse is when Maritole talks about the cruelty of the soldiers:

> The soldiers spoke angrily to the men and women who hesitated to step into the river. …The contorted face of my baby. But the river covered the rasp of its breath. Wagons moved downstream with the current. People held on to ropes to cross. Reverend Bushyhead and his wife walked awkwardly. They stumbled at times trying to help their daughter(24).

Glancy employs meticulous detail and evocative sensory imagery to envelop readers in the visceral, bodily pain of forced river crossings. She says that the "cold water swirling around their legs and waists" and the "grimace on their faces". The dehumanizing treatment of the Cherokee is underscored by the soldiers' anger and the pressure to cross the river "the white men who drove us from our cabins into the dark river in the cold". (Glancy,1996, p.54) This may reflect the general U.S. policy that prioritized expansion over indigenous lives.

The Trail of Tears 1838 experience is defined by the collapse of family and community ties, as evidenced by the mention of children weeping and families struggling to remain united. Maritole describes the gloomy atmosphere of the trailers saying: "I heard the cries of agony from the people. Kee-un-e-ca beat her arms like wings at the water. The children in wagons cried for their parents." Glancy's phrase "river covered the rasp of its breath"(25) employs the river as a metaphor for both obstruction and erasure, indicating the suppression of Cherokee voices and suffering. This underscores both individual and collective suffering, emphasizing personal loss within a broader narrative of cultural trauma and efforts at erasure, which some scholars, like Nicky Michael, Beverly Jean Smith, and Willim Lowe, have compared to genocide or ethnic cleansing(26).

Representative of the brutality and disregard inherent in the Indian Removal Act, the coerced displacement "into the dark river in the cold." The narrator's declaration that their "heart banged at the sky, hating the white men" (Glancy,1996, p.54) illustrates that the anguish is both corporeal and psychological. This statement illustrates the profound psychological trauma resulting from loss and displacement.

The narrator's voice, Maritole, converts historical suffering into an emotionally relevant and urgent experience for the reader, thereby personalizing this social

catastrophe. The novel both honors and critiques the resilience and suffering of individuals who endured one of the most harrowing periods in American history. The indigenous fear that the soldiers might fight them at any moment with no reason as it occurs one night when Maritole and her husband hear a woman shouting and they were aware that one soldier, "had stabbed the woman with his bayonet". Another soldier tells them that his fellow "lost his head trying to keep order"[27], blaming the murdered woman for being noisy and disorganized. The murdered Indigenous woman is not only killed unfairly, but her death is also justified by her own actions, as if her "noise" makes her murder justified. People see her voice, body, and presence as disruptive and therefore not necessary. The soldier's claim that his friend "lost his head trying to keep order" shifts blame from the offender to the victim. This is similar to Spivak's claim that subaltern women are seen as objects of domination rather than as people with agency or worth[28].

This moment shows Spivak's idea of epistemic violence, which is the refusal to recognize or show the subaltern woman in the dominant colonial discourse. The woman who died is still unnamed, ungrieved, and undefended. She is just gone, and her death is explained by a colonial idea of "order." She is quieted in both a physical and a symbolic way. The colonial system can't see her pain, which shows Spivak's point that "the subaltern cannot speak", not because they don't have a voice, but because the power structures ignore or invalidate it.

Glancy investigates how colonial power has affected the indigenous, causing fragmentation and disillusionment:

> we were walking beside the wagon step by step. We traveled slowly across the mountain all day... and falling and getting up to walk again. Children cried and refused to walk. Their legs went limp under them…I tried to take Knobowtee's hand, but he pulled it away from me...The baby is dying, Knobowtee…. We didn't know where we were walking, but we walked silently, following the ones before us[29].

Glancy here shows the great physical and emotional effects of the forced relocation of the Cherokee people and the decline of human connection and

autonomy in relentless suffering. The portrayal of slow, laborious movement "step by step," "slipping and falling and rising to walk again" evokes both physical weariness and the mental burden of displacement. Underscoring the weight of both physical and metaphorical labor, men quietly drag carts uphill while families are fragmented and parents carry dead children.

Spivak's claims that knowledge is linked to power, that's why the colonizer does not allow the colonized to enter into any kind of knowledge, they do not even know anything about their own destiny(30). She says *in A Critique of Postcolonial Reason (1999)*: "the clearest available example of such epistemic violence was the remotely orchestrated, far-flung, and heterogeneous project to constitute the colonial subject as Other." (p.266) The idea of the "other" makes it impossible to understand the experiences of subaltern women in colonial stories. This quote from *Pushing the Bear* shows that the narrator's voice is very important to the story, but it is also a point of view that is often left out of history. Not knowing where we were going, "we didn't know where we were walking"(31) , is a sign of both physical and epistemic dislocation that Native people, especially women, have gone through. Their understanding of the journey is unclear, and they must go on without understanding. This shows how colonial power works by taking away knowledge and freedom from those who are oppressed. Given Spivak's claim that subaltern women experience twofold marginalization, firstly by imperial power structures and secondly by patriarchal systems inside their own communities. This study shows the female narrator's pain from the physical and emotional effects of forced migration, coupled with sensations of emotional alienation and rejection, even from her own family as shown by Knobowtee withdrawing his hand. Both white colonizers and her male counterpart ignore her suffering as well as that of the children and the baby. This emphasizes the marginalization of Indigenous women's voices and autonomy.

Maritole's emotional distance from her husband, Knobowtee, withdrawing his hand shows how grief and hardship can shatter close relationships. His response to his daughter death, "The better for her,"(32) reveals a profound sorrow that implies death could be more merciful than protracted suffering. Restoration of contact turns hand-holding from a loving to a pragmatic one; his hand, devoid of

any soothing traits, becomes a navigation tool through sleet. The cold is both physical and metaphorical, driving people "into ourselves," showing how trauma isolates people from their loved ones.

Spivak also says, "Between patriarchy and imperialism... the figure of the woman disappears" [(33)], and this absence is clearly felt in the narrator's muted pain. She is still invisible, unrecognized, and without rights, not just because of the imperial powers that forced her to leave, but also because the men in her community refuse to give her emotional support and solidarity. Because of this, Glancy's novel shows what Spivak says about the condition of the subaltern woman: she is doubly marginalized and has no power, and her knowledge, experience, and voice are erased by colonial and patriarchal power systems that work together. Maritole's statement "we walked silently…"[(34)] underlines the total lack of agency and narrative power. These women are meant to follow, not to express or to choose. The phrase conveys a deep feeling of despair, identity disintegration, and lack of purpose quite well. Glancy shows how the Cherokee people lose their voice and agency, therefore advancing without clarity or control. This forced migration reflects a deep and painful alienation from their homeland, and identity rather than just physical displacement.

Moreover, the incidence of victimization among women on the trail has doubled, and they have been unable to protect themselves from the soldiers. Their conventional roles as mothers and wives constrained them, and their identity as indigenous women led to discrimination. About one-third of adult Cherokee women were widows, and a considerable number were rendered homeless. Furthermore, they endured severe violence. They were engulfed by rage and resentment towards the White men for their maltreatment and disrespect. Maritole states, "I felt anger at the soldiers. I felt anger at the people in my cabin. They were using my plates and bowls. Sleeping under my quilts! I cursed them. There was something dark and terrible in the white man"[(35)]. Spivak claims that the subaltern, especially subaltern women, suffer a twofold marginalization as their voices are often silenced, suppressed, or expressed by others under knowledge and power structures. Maritole's current rage is a specific and intensive expression of her emotional turmoil of subjectivity and voice that she

is experiencing as a reaction to her extreme powerlessness. It is a reflection of the complex trauma that a Cherokee woman experiences when living in a patriarchal and colonial environment, as well as the sharp dislocation that she experienced during the Trail of Tears 1838. Her reaction to the invasion of her land is very telling. Her awareness and response to the encroachment of domestic items, plates, bowls, quilts, reveal the tremendous invasion of colonial violence into intimate and gendered domains. These things reflect care, history, and identity beyond simple household use; all three are being wiped out from her life. This aligns closely with Spivak's assertion that the expressions of subaltern women are frequently disregarded as valid discourse, despite their emotional experiences. Maritole's curse, "There was something dark and terrible in the white man,"(36) denotes a pivotal moment of agency, as she identifies the oppressor. However, within the overarching colonial narrative, such instances are frequently disregarded or obliterated. Consequently, the quotation illustrates a subaltern woman endeavoring to express suffering, reclaim agency, and oppose obliteration. Her anger transcends mere emotion; it embodies a political stance: a manifestation of resistance aimed at reclaiming dignity and asserting presence in a world determined to dispossess her.

2.2. Polyvocality as resistance: fragmented narrative as a tool to reclaim voice

In *Pushing the Bear*, Glancy contests the prevailing colonial narrative and reasserts Indigenous perspectives through a polyvocal and fragmented narrative technique. This narrative strategy challenges the singular accounts typically imposed by colonial histories, thereby promoting the emergence of multiple perspectives. Jennifer Andrews (2002) notes that Glancy's methodology is predicated on the belief that "it takes many voices to tell a story,"(37) emphasizing the importance of collective memory and communal experience in Indigenous storytelling practices. This polyvocality serves as a mechanism for cultural preservation and resistance, as it challenges the singular narratives that colonial powers impose. This literary strategy is very similar to Spivak's criticism of the Western ways of knowing that leave out the voices of the subaltern. In A Critique of Postcolonial Reason, Spivak looks at how the West creates knowledge by

leaving out and erasing people, especially those who are seen as "Other." She is famous for asking, "can the subaltern speak?", not to say that subalterns don't have a voice, but to make it clear that the way things are talked about now makes it hard for them to express themselves in ways that make sense. Glancy's polyvocal method directly fights this silencing by giving voices that would normally be ignored or erased in mainstream historical narratives a chance to be heard. Glancy's book answers Spivak's question by giving the subaltern a voice and criticizing the epistemic violence that is present in colonial stories at the same time. Glancy's focus on polyvocality and fragmentation is in line with Spivak's call to break down Western logocentrism. Glancy offers a different way of thinking about knowledge that is based on shared experience instead of imperial authority.

Glancy's *Pushing the Bear (1996)* has been divided into eight chapters and each one of them has been named after the borders that the Cherokee people crossed on their way to the Indian Territory. The narrative in *Pushing the Bear* is innovative. Glancy entirely rejects traditional omniscient narrator viewpoints, opting instead to convey the majority of the narrative through individual voices of those involved in the Trail of Tears, each articulating their distinct roles. The book allows both men and women to reveal their voices and sufferings during the removal rendering it a platform to explore their gloominess and hardships. The primary narrator is a young woman named Maritole. Her nearly estranged husband, Knobowtee, is another. Numerous Cherokee individuals from at least two generations and varying levels of acculturation enhance them. This method, while disorienting in certain instances and demanding for readers to navigate the intricate array of characters, fosters a profound connection to the experiences of the displaced Cherokee. The novel shows the terrible experiences of the Cherokee people under the authority of the soldiers during the Trail. The characters express their hatred for the soldiers who forcibly removed them from their homes to take part in the removal.

Every story becomes a subplot of the novel told by several narrators expressing their perspectives. Each part is based on memories driven by nostalgia; the sub-stories are tales of an individual's past life in the area involving family and clan

members. The novel lets the characters indulge in nostalgia to confirm their identity, emphasizes their limitations, and uses it to express the challenges of both men and women on the trail. It lets people voice their personal issues and tell their traumatic stories to a larger audience.

The unified voice of Native Americans challenges imperial authority to confirm their ideological rights and reflects their shared experiences. Glancy claims, "I started *pushing the bear* with one voice; it was inadequate. I had to go back and include all those who had travelled during the Trail of Tears"(38). Personal stories and experiences told by people expose different sides of the terrible journey. People are affected personally as well as socially. Not only during the crisis but for many following years, the whole class suffers the effects of the historical choice causing intergenerational trauma. Glancy's admission shows a deliberate narrative style that directly relates to Spivak's theory of subalternity. Spivak says that the subaltern, especially subaltern women, have been kept out of power and knowledge structures throughout history, which has made them voiceless in most conversations. Spivak criticizes the colonial archive for its tendency to silence or erase voices that are already marginalized. She famously asks, "Can the subaltern speak?", her answer shows that even when the subaltern tries to express her point of view, her voice is often drowned out or distorted by dominant stories, making it harder to represent her accurately in existing systems.

Glancy lessens this suppression by using a collective, polyvocal approach. Her claim shows that one point of view is not enough to cover all of the pain that Indigenous people felt during the Trail of Tears, which caused not only immediate destruction but also trauma that lasted for generations. Glancy uses different points of view, personal, communal, emotional, and historical, to create a fragmented but real picture of subaltern experience. This variety of stories goes against the colonial tendency to speak for Indigenous peoples, allowing them to speak for themselves, even if their stories are painful, contradictory, or incomplete.

There are many poignant scenes along the trail, which portray the plight of the chilly, undernourished people. Maritole realizes this dangerous journey: "Sometimes I didn't know if it was really happening or not. Maybe it was a ghost

dream. But I knew we pushed against the bear that resisted us. It stood before us with each step we took on the trail. We were marching west toward darkness, toward death."(39) Glancy in this quotation captures the main conflicts of the book: the unreality of suffering, the symbolic and literal barriers to survival (the bear, symbolic representation of colonialism), and the shared experience of cultural loss and resistance. She fights silence by polyvocality; by fragmentation she reflects trauma and lets voices that would otherwise be silenced, particularly women's voices, to rise with complete emotional and political complexity. By doing this, Glancy recovers the narrative space historically denied to indigenous women and communities. Every voice in the novel is a step against historical erasure, making it a place of cultural memory and resistance. The intense feelings of the characters show that they are afraid and powerless. Nevertheless, there are still indications of hope in the prayers. Luthy, Tanner's wife, believes that her strength comes from her parents, who are present, "I was asleep that night when I heard my mother's voice. She was praying and beyond her voice, I heard my father making the to-bacco offering. I was glad to hear my parents again."(40) In spite of the overwhelming power. Belief in ancient customs has not entirely vanished despite major hardships and hardships. Healing the sick and redressing injustices are the goals of prayer(41).

Cherokee Indians sense the loss of land, properties, and hope at every stage of the trail and they constantly blame the government and their tribesmen who are responsible for this tragic dislocation. Knobowtee transforms his rage into inner strength rather than allowing it to dominate him or incite vengeance: "My anger at the soldiers gave me strength"(42). In situations that could devastate even the most resilient individuals, characters such as Knobowtee and Maritole endure by maintaining their mental and emotional equilibrium. Cultural narratives, legends, and spiritual beliefs that offer hope and inspiration fuel their resilience. Rather than allowing suffering to dominate them, they harness their suffering as a source of strength.

Defined by fractured and overlapping stories, the novel's form mirrors the historical dislocation and psychological fragmentation felt by a people forcibly removed from their ancestral lands. Glancy challenges dominant colonial history

in this rich story and highlights underrepresented voices, especially those of Cherokee women. Reflecting Spivak's criticism of epistemic violence and her question, "Can the subaltern speak?", fragmented storytelling is a form of resistance and a way for the subaltern to recover subjectivity and agency.

Using several narrative points of view, the novel avoids a single, authoritative voice. From simple men, women, children, soldiers, and missionaries convey messages. These fragments prefer an Indigenous storytelling method based on oral tradition and communal experience over the linear narrative conventions usual of Western historiography. *Pushing the Bear* supports Linda Tuhiwai Smith's claim that "storytelling is a means of transmitting the values and beliefs of a culture, a method of sharing the knowledge of a people"(43). Connecting these stories, especially in a way that challenges resolution and dominance, helps to preserve culture.

Through her story, Maritole, the main narrator of the novel, shows survival. Her voice runs throughout the story, ranging from sorrow to anger to defiance. She asserts that they "had to speak to survive"(44). While Glancy emphasizes her voice inside the polyvocal narrative, Maritole's claim directly challenges the political subjugation of the Cherokee. Glancy's decision to emphasize her voice within the polyvocal narrative restores her as a unified subject. The narrative form challenges the physical displacement of the Cherokee as well as their discursive erasure from American historical memory, therefore serving as a counter-hegemonic discourse. Knowbotee's poignant description of the chaotic and disordered march:

> And so, we would march. A mix of diverse peoples. Agreeing on little. Our seven clans divided between three white peace clans and three red war clans, with the neutral Long Hair clan to break up disagreements. Small farmers, many of us illiterate. Plantation owners. Slaves. Half-breeds. Whites who'd intermarried. Conjurers. Christians. Some had been spokesmen in Washington. Then there were soldiers. Government teamsters. It felt brutal to be marched in a haphazard way(45).

Represents a sense of fragmentation. The Cherokee people are described not as a united nation but as a "mix", diverse in beliefs, roles, and affiliations. This disunity is important, as it challenges common historical portrayals of indigenous groups as monolithic. The Trail of Tears 1838 was not experienced in the same way by all; some resisted removal, while others saw it as inevitable. This conflict weakened the community internally and made it more vulnerable to external pressures. Here, the brutality is not just physical but organizational and spiritual. The removal is not being done with respect to traditional Cherokee governance, clans or townships, but in a chaotic, externally imposed manner. The loss of structure compounds the trauma; people are being ripped not only from their land but also from their systems of meaning and identity. The fragmentation both in the physical and social makeup of the Cherokee people during the Trail of Tears and in voice, agency, and identity, fits very well with Spivak's theory of subalternity. Spivak describes the subaltern as groups of people who live outside of dominant power structures and are unable to represent themselves. The novel shows a Cherokee nation that has broken up into "a mix of diverse peoples."(46) This shows how colonial interference has caused internal disintegration, which makes it harder for people to resist as a group(47).

The forced move changes their culture, politics, and where they live: "it was hard to have to march in a disorganized way."(48) This disorder shows how, according to Spivak, the subaltern is not allowed to speak or act within clear limits. The traditional clan system is avoided, showing that colonial authority has taken over Indigenous governance. This means that the Cherokee have no agency in the power structures that now shape their future. This quote shows that fragmentation is not just diversity; it is a forced disunity that destroys the ability to work together and express oneself. The words "small farmers," "slaves" "half-breeds," "conjurers,' and "Christians" show how identities can overlap and be contradictory. The differences in displacement show that the Cherokee can't work together as a single political group. This reduces resistance and weakens the people. This disarticulation is also what makes them subaltern: colonial powers use their internal differences to stop them from resisting or recognizing each other.

The novel's broken structure reflects the internal collapse suffered by the Cherokee during the forced march. Reverend Bushyhead, a Cherokee man converted to Christianity, who preaches the Cherokee and tries to ease their pain, asserts: “The spirit fractured.”(49) It means that their identities are splitted and shattered. Mirroring both personal and social trauma, Glancy clearly shows this fragmentation by means of abrupt changes in narrators, points of view, and styles. These disturbances force the reader to interact with the chaotic, fragmented core of displacement rather than help them to seek narrative coherence. Therefore, fragmentation reflects the literary depiction of what Cathy Caruth calls “the incomprehensibility of traumatic experience,” a formal counterpart of historical trauma(50).

Glancy's polyvocal approach significantly increases the voices of historically underrepresented groups. Maritole's insights reveal the intersection of colonial and patriarchal oppressions: “I anger at the soldiers.”(51) The troops were not the only ones involved. The offenders were male. They ignored us. We looked like wood as they walked. Her criticism emphasizes the need to recognize women's experiences as particular spheres of pain and fight, therefore highlighting the gendered features of both settler and Indigenous patriarchy. Maritole's words show that her pain is both personal and political, which is a good example of the situation of the subaltern woman, who, as Spivak says, has no power or visibility in most stories. The phrase “we looked like wood as they walked”(52) shows how subalternity dehumanizes and makes people invisible, women are reduced to objects and not even recognized in their pain.

The emblematic representation of the Bear amplifies this chorus. The Bear, delivering messages in mythic and often cryptic pieces, symbolizes ancestral spirit and cultural continuity: “I was the one they pushed.” Advancing of the white man oppressed me as a nation. Through genocidal displacement, the Bear's voice highlights the spiritual side of the Cherokee experience and the ongoing presence of cultural memory.

Furthermore, Glancy contrasts personal narratives with archival records by integrating historical documents, including Reverend Bushyhead's supply lists and the Cherokee Phoenix newspaper. This intertextual method underscores the

importance of narrative in regaining agency. Reverend Bushyhead, states: "we are in this predicament now… our hope is in words… in the end, it wasn't the powers of the four directions, or the winds, but the strength of our utterances(53). This emphasizes the transformative power of speech and expression over traditional spiritual or mythical powers, highlighting how storytelling and articulation become the primary means of survival and resistance during the Trail of Tears. Rather than presenting fragmentation as defeat, Glancy uses it to reconstruct agency. The "strength of our utterances"(54) becomes a metaphor for the reassembly of identity through language. This structure allows silenced histories, especially those of women, to surface in layered, often contradictory ways. Knobowtee declares: "There was a voice somewhere. With all the voices on the trail. Ancestors. Conjurers. People. Even the voices of the animals and the land. I was almost sure I heard a voice"(55) As the journey reaches the final stage, Indian Territory, knobowtee confirms: "We'd make a way into it with our voices."(56) This way of telling a story is very similar to what Spivak says about how knowledge is linked to power and how colonial systems stay in power through what she calls "sanctioned ignorance"(57) which is the refusal to recognize or validate subaltern knowledge systems. According to Spivak, epistemic violence silences the colonized, especially women. They are not just ignored; they are systematically left out of the dominant ways of talking about things58. Glancy responds by putting Indigenous perspectives at the top of a broken, multivocal structure that goes against the linear, monologic stories of colonial history. With this formal resistance, Glancy reclaims narrative authority and shows that the "strength of our utterances"(59) goes beyond mere symbols, showing that they are a strong act of epistemic survival against the sanctioned ignorance that tried to silence them before. Ultimately, Glancy's *Pushing the Bear* uses narrative fragmentation and polyvocality as deliberate acts of resistance rather than just as stylistic tools.

4. Conclusion:

The present study has found that Glancy's *Pushing the Bear* explores the cultural transformation of Native Americans during the Trail of Tears 1838, emphasizing subaltern perspectives, especially those of Native American women Glancy

breaks down linear colonial historiography by using a fragmented and polyvocal narrative structure that lets hidden experiences come to light. Maritole is an important part of this change. She is a gendered subaltern who is doubly marginalized: first by the settler-colonial system that moves her people, and second by patriarchal norms that limit her freedom of action in her community. When Maritole states: "I wanted to ask Knobowtee about what stockade we were going to, but I knew he would not want his wife talking"(60). she expresses not only individual exasperation but also a wider, systemic silencing of female voices and knowledge. Her silence is not a void but a consequence of the colonial-patriarchal framework that renders her discourse incomprehensible. Furthermore, the physical abuse endured by Maritole—when "Knobowtee raised his hand and hit me across the face because I had provoked him"(61) —further illustrates the internalized colonial violence present within the Cherokee community.

The bear is a symbol in the novel, and the story is told in a non-linear way with more than one narrator to show how moving people can make them feel lost and confused. The polyphonic narrative, featuring men, women, children, soldiers, and missionaries, challenges the singular, authoritative voice typical of Western historiography. The polyvocal strategy also exposes the internal fragmentation within the Cherokee community. Knobowtee notes, "we would march" a combination of varied populations, including small-scale agriculturists, individuals of mixed heritage, practitioners of magic, and Christians, exemplifies how coerced relocation disrupted communal identity and diminished political unity. The novel also shows how Cherokee social, spiritual, and gender roles are changing. Glancy doesn't just show loss; she shows how colonial oppression and historical disruption change Native identity in a painful way. The end of family ties, community unity, and gender roles is not just a story of loss; it is also a new way to define Cherokee identity in a world where old ways of doing things have failed.

Footnotes

(1) Gramsci, Antonio. Selections from the Prison Notebooks. Edited by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith, International Publishers, 1971, 210.
(2) (Gramsci, 1971, 210).
(3) Guha, Ranajit. "On Some Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India." Subaltern Studies I: Writings on South Asian History and Society, edited by Ranajit Guha, Oxford UP, 1982, 7).
(4) Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture, edited by Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, U of Illinois P, 1988, 104).
(5) Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present. Harvard University Press, 1999, 308).
(6) Patra, Mousumi. "The Role of Voices in Diane Glancy's Pushing the Bear." Meher Journal of English Studies, vol. 5, no. 1, School of English, Gangadhar Meher University, 2023, 41- 48).
(7) (Spivak, 1999, 274).
(8) Perdue, Theda. Cherokee Women: Gender and Culture Change, 1700-1835. University of Nebraska Press, 1998, 62)
(9) Glancy, Diane. Pushing the Bear: A Novel of the Trail of Tears. New York: Harcourt Inc., 1996, 75)
(10) (Glancy, 1996,141)
(11) (Glancy, 1996, p.7)
(12) (Spivak, 19999, p.127)
(13) (Glancy,1996, p.94)
(14) (Spivak, 1999, p.304)
(15) (Spivak, 1999, p.304)
(16) (Glancy,1996, p.94)
(17) (Glancy,1996, p.27)
(18) (Glancy,1996, p.176)
(19) (Glancy,1996, p.126)
(20) (Glancy,1996, p.70)
(21) (Glancy,1996, p.70)
(22) (Glancy,1996, p.70)
(23) (Glancy,1996, p.70)
(24) (Glancy,1996, p.54)
(25) (Glancy,1996, p.54)

(26) Michael, Nicky, et al. "Reclaiming Social Justice and Human Rights: The 1830 Indian Removal Act and the Ethnic Cleansing of Native American Tribes." Journal of Health and Human Experience, vol. 7, no. 1, 2021, p.8-12.
(27) (Glancy, 1996, p.12)
(28) (Spivak, 1999, p.235)
(29) (Glancy, 1996, p.68)
(30) (Spivak, 1999, p.360)
(31) (Glancy, 1996, p.68)
(32) (Glancy, 1996, p.68)
(33) (Spivak, 1999, p.304)
(34) (Glancy, 1996, p.68)
(35) (Glancy, 1996, p.58)
(36) (Glancy, 1996, p.58)
(37) Andrews, Jennifer. "A Conversation with Diane Glancy." American Indian Quarterly, vol. 26, no.4, 2002, p.641.
(38) (Andrews, 2002, p.558-645)
(39) (Glancy, 1996, p.58).
(40) (Glancy, 1996, p.62)
(41) Hobson, Geary. Introduction. The Remembered Earth: An Anthology of Contemporary Native American Literature. Ed. Geary Hobson. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1980, p.137-144.
(42) (Glancy, 1996, p.143)
(43)Smith, L. T. Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples. Zed Books. 1999, 144.
(44) (Glancy, 1996, p.18).
(45) (Glancy, 1996, p.47)
(46) (Glancy, 1996, p.47).
(47) Ruppert, James. "Fictional Representations of Historical Trauma: Diane Glancy's Stone Heart." Studies in American Indian Literatures, vol. 13, no. 3, 2001, p.223-234).
(48) (Glancy, 1996, p.47).
(49) (Glancy, 1996, p.158)
(50) Caruth, Cathy. Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History. Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996. P.27.
(51) (Glancy, 1996, p.58).
(52) (Glancy, 1996, p.58)
(53) (Glancy, 1996, p.159) .
(54) (Glancy, 1996, p.159) .
(55) (Glancy, 1996, p.186)

(56) (Glancy, 1996, p.227).
(57) (Spivak, 1999, p.86).
(58) (Spivak, 1999, p.266).
(59) (Glancy, 1996, p.159) .
(60) (Glancy, 1996, p.7)
(61) (Glancy, 1996, p.94)

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