



## A Hermeneutical Reading of Fourth World Literature

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### Abstract

The Contemporary discourse on Fourth World Literature offers deeper insights into the field of anthropology, literature, memory studies and social sciences. Within the broad spectrum of hermeneutics, Fourth world Literature/Native Literature draws on multiple philosophical and theoretical interpretations to a text. The current research paper seeks to explore how hermeneutics offers a multidisciplinary framework to interpret cultural artifacts such as, texts, films, music, and visual arts. With an abundance of texts embodied as Fourth World Literature today it is both interesting and challenging to bring them within a single unification and to adopt a stipulated methodology and theology due to its heterogeneous nature. Interestingly, there lies a huge corpus of literature known as Fourth World Literature from across the globe. Due to its inter-racial allegiance under the only historical and unifying backdrop of colonialism its existence before the invent of print literature is assumed as liminal and insignificant within the dynamics of European literary canon. Its emergence as a prominent voice in literature today and the surmounting theories embodying the same, it attempts to historicize the notion of what could be termed as literature. With the emergence of ALT Literature today, literature itself is constantly evolving into something new everyday. Fourth World Literature grapples with the socio-economic, literary and cultural conditions which impaired the lives of the natives. Reading these cultural artifacts enriches our understanding and knowledge of European colonial formation, post colonialism and the socio-cultural background of the colonial nation. Drawing upon E. D. Hirsch's *cultural literacy* wherein he talks about the three important dimensions of hermeneutics namely, the linguistic dimension, the historical dimension and the cultural dimension the paper tries to explicate the dynamics of the hermeneutical theory in studying native literature. Understanding the linguistic facet of fourth world literature throws light on how literature was evaluated only on the metrics of script and all literature which was in oral form or in heliolithic forms predating print culture was considered to be out of the contours of the literary canon. French philosopher like Jacques Derrida in his *of grammatology* has challenged this linguistic privileging of script over other forms of literature even till date. Cultural activist and linguist like G.N. Devy



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has also highlighted such a linguistic discrimination eclipsing the rich cultural legacy of these nations and the acute suffering under the reigns of colonialism.

Cultural literacy talks about knowledge passed down through traditions like language, literature, arts and culture common to a socio-cultural group. Individuals who are adept to this and have mastered this knowledge engage in a meaningful society through 'lived experience'. This shared body of knowledge is vital for effective communication and interpretation.

We can use the three dimensions of hermeneutic analysis to interpret any native text. Linguistic dimension engages with the language and literary devices used in the text like the mnemonics of remembering and forgetting, repetition, rhymes, native idioms and jokes.

Historical dimension involves understanding the historical context in which a book was written. To any native literature across the globe the only underlying and common backdrop is European colonization. The cultural dimension of these texts can be examined through their artistic forms such as folklores, music, art, dance, mythology, flora, fauna, agriculture, ecology and sustainability. The paper explicates some of the powerful Fourth World literary texts from India, Africa and Australia applying the methodology of hermeneutics of Schleiermacher, Gadamer, Dilthey and Heidegger

**Keywords:** Erlebnis (lived experience); Lebenswelt; Hermeneutic Circle; Historical Consciousness ; Verstehen (empathetic understanding)