

A STUDY OF THEMES IN ABORIGINAL WOMEN'S WRITINGS



*Sonali Rode

Research paper—English

The word Aboriginal was used in Australia to describe its indigenous people as early as 1789. It soon became capitalized and employed as the common name to refer to all Indigenous Australians. At present the term refers only to those people who were traditionally hunters, “First earliest Known, Indigenous” (Latin – Ab- from and Origin- beginning)

It is in the twenty five years up to 1988 the other side of Black & White cultural communication in Australia found expression. As aboriginal writers began to respond to the themes which they considered to be of importance they presented a long delayed reply to the dominant White Australian culture and they began to explore the nature of aboriginality itself. What it means to be black in Australia? As Ribnga Kenneth Green puts it “The concept of the Fourth world is still very much in its early formative stage. Australian Aboriginal still have the important opportunity of determining the paradigm of such movement. The weakness of a minority can be turned into its very source of strength”.(1979) With the publication of Oodgeroo Noonucal's first collection of poetry in 1964, a new phase of cultural communication began in Australia. The book ushered a new era of self reflective literary examination by black Aboriginals.

The Aboriginal literature represents the social world around it; the role which it played in articulating Black past and the contemporary Aboriginal identity. The function of Aboriginal literature is the fact that the present generation of Australian now have the opportunity to obtain a glimpse of Aborigines as they see themselves, rather than as they are seen by other. The onset of the depression provided the impetus for social questioning and many of the questions asked by politicians, missionaries, pastoralists, and

authors concerned the Aboriginal people. During depression Katharine Susannah Prichard and Xavier Herbert rescued the Aboriginals from literary invisibility and boldly addressed the embarrassing issue of miscegenation. It is in the twenty five years up to 1988 that the other side of Black White cultural communication in Australia finally found expression. The self reflective examination of Aboriginality is a major theme in Black creative writings in English. The historical theme- which was developed in Aboriginal literature- is conveyed to the readers in many ways: through usage of the techniques of Aboriginal oral traditions; through the endeavor to foster a sense of contemporary Aboriginal past; and through a interpretation of Australian (and Indigenous Australian) interracial history. Black Australian views of history are not always confrontationalist or polemical.

With the publication of Oodgeroo Noonucal's first collection of poetry in 1964, women's writing and Aboriginal literature in Australia turned a new leaf in the history of Australian literature. Aboriginal women's writings began to express their race's past in the present by drawing on distinctive and sometimes traditional modes of black oral narration in their works. The Aboriginal women's writers have employed the tents, structure and style of the ancient stories, to narrate personal experiences inverting and undermining the dominant Anglo Australian discourse while simultaneously rescuing threatened Aboriginal heritage and constructing a modern definition of Aboriginal culture. In her poem *Stone Age* Noonucal uses the concept of past cons as a symbol of the potential reconciliation of Black and White Australians:

*White superior race, only time is between us
As some are grown up and others yet children.*

* Dept of English, Govt. Vidarbha Institute of Science And Humanities, Amravati.

*We are the last of the Stone Age tribes,
Waiting for time to help us,
As time helped you*

Through her works, Noonuccal tries to focus upon Black Australian history in order to establish Aboriginal pride in Indigenous heroes and heroines of former generations. She tries to express her race's past in the present by drawing on distinctive and sometimes traditional notes of Black oral narration. The proliferation of Aboriginal women's writings has been a publishing phenomenon Margaret Tucker's "*If Everyone Cared*" was published in 1977 quickly followed by Monica Clare's *Karobran: The Story of An Aboriginal Girl* (1978), Ella Simon's *Through My Eyes* (1978) and Ida West's *Pride Against Prejudice* (1987) The most successful author and international best seller *My Place* is a quest narrative telling the story. Morgan's search for and discovery of her Aboriginal heritage and the history of her mother's and grandmother's removal from their families and communication and consequent shame about and denial of her Aboriginality.

Aboriginal women writers also speak of their coercion into various form of unpaid or law paid labour and the experience of working in domestic service for white women and as Moreston Robinson notes, "acts of humiliation and cruelty by white women pervade in Indigenous women's life writings" (2000-28) *Don't Take Your Love to Town* by Ruby Longford Ginibi is a true life story of an Aboriginal women's struggle to raise a family of nine children in a society divided between black and white culture in Australia Like Gibini and Noonuccal, Patricia Torres narrates too her personal experiences in her book *The Red Dress Woman*. She has lived and walked these regions and regions and remembers the play ground stories of the Red dress women by articulating this story, Torres creates an opposing discourse of Aboriginal experience by weaving together past and

present, myth and realism a kind of resistance is formed which says in effect that the ancestors still walk these streets their pain and suffering is still felt and they cannot be erased by modern invention. Avoiding undue embellishment or elaboration Torres also reaffirms the oral tradition language for effect, and in contrast to the western canon of literature.

While writing *Auntie Rita* Biography her mother Rita Huggins, Jackie Hugging has elaborated and talked about the voices of Aboriginal women in a real and tangible way. Rita's story is a typical story of what has happened in this country through years of colonization since the invasion of their lands by white people. Her story serve to name the nameless, to put forward a chapter of history, the chapter of a woman who has lived her life in 20th Century fashion.

Glenyse Ward's autobiographical novel *Wandering Girl* represent the desire of hegemonic culture and those of Indigenous Australians complete for expression, Aboriginal literature and books such as Word's *Wandering Girl* are part of the process by which Indigenous Australia speaks back to the hegemonic culture regarding Aboriginality. Lisa Bellear is another Aboriginal women activity involved in Indigenous affairs throughout the country. She is passionate about social justice for Aboriginal community. Lisa is a poet, writer, artist, academic and social commentator, Juxtaposes her activities to create a unique style of Australian Art. Her first collection of poetry, *Dreaming in Urban Areas* was published by UQP in 1996. She received Human Rights Award for poetry for her poem "*Native Title Now*". The poem provides the title of an exhibition of Aboriginal Art currently touring Australia. These authors utilize the oppressor's language written pre-existing English both to be heard in the dominant discourse and to create an alternative, Aboriginal dialogue writing their way out of the margins these Aboriginal women preserve the past and create the future.

REFERENCES

- 1) Huggins, Jackie : Auntie Rita . Canberra: Aboriginal Studied Press 1994
- 2) Ruby Langford Ginibi : Don't Take our Love to Town: 3) Ruby Langford Ginibi : haunted by the pat, Australia, Allen & Unwin 1999
- 4) Ruby Langford Ginibi: My Bundhalung People, Australia, university of Queensland.
- 5) Torres, patricia Mamajun : Bilyurr Bilyar Jarnu, The Red Dress Women Fremantle Arts centre 2000.
- 6) Ward Glenyse: Wandering Girl, Magabola Books 1987
- 7) Ward Glenyse : Unna YouFellas, 1998.
- 8) Huggins Hackie : Sister Girl U& P, St Licia, 1998
- 9) Lisa Bellear : Dreaming in Urban Area U& P, St Licia, 1996
- 10) Heiss Anita : Not Meeting mr. Rigit
- 11) Morgan Sally : My Place, the Fremantle Arts centre press, 1987.
- 12) Oodegeroo Noonuccal : We are going (1964)