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DIPLOMAMUNKA
MA THESIS

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Anglisztika MA

Angol tanulmányok – posztkoloniális szakirány

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DIPLOMAMUNKA

MA THESIS

*The Representation of Australian Aboriginal Women
in Selected Works by Non-Aboriginal Authors*

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Abstract

The following thesis explores how Australian Aboriginal women are represented by non-Aboriginal authors in four pieces of literature; *Coonardoo*, “The Cooboo”, “Heart is Where the Home is”, and “Knowledge”. This study investigates whether or not Aboriginal women are represented negatively, exploited, and silenced in these 20th century literary works within the frame of postcolonial and feminist theories. The paper investigates Aboriginal women’s representations through the close-reading of the selected pieces of literature. It analyzes what the lines are ought to convey about Aboriginal women and culture. The study concludes how these representations reflect colonial traits by highlighting how Aboriginal women are perceived by their men and white settlers, and how they are completely dismissed in the process of making decisions regarding their own lives. It also concludes how the main female Aboriginal characters in the literary forms are attributed with positive characteristics such as being strong and brave, and how they show stamina, resilience, resistance, and determination.

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1. Introduction

Australian history and literature are important in revealing the struggles that the natives faced and had to go through during the settler colonization and after it. Some Australian literary works expose Aboriginal matters and culture by representing the viewpoints of Aborigines within the framework of colonialism. This makes the representation and the non-representation of indigenous people an important aspect that needs to be discussed when reading Australian literature. The representation of Aborigines in literary forms is of great significance, especially when it comes to Aboriginal women who were very often sexually, physically, and even psychologically abused by white settlers. This quest of finding Aboriginal women's identities in Australian literature is the main goal of this thesis.

My paper will demonstrate how Aboriginal women are represented in a number of works by non-Aboriginal authors, chiefly by relating the analyses of such representations to their gender, race, and postcolonial existence. I also aim to investigate from a postcolonial feminist perspective how these women are stereotyped, the factors that played a role in such stereotypes, and in what sense they are portrayed. It will explore how postcolonial literatures present tactics and techniques to keep Aboriginal women in check compared to Aboriginal men and white people, and to keep Aborigines under the indirect implicit control and power of white people. Thereby the research will also address the obstacles and the challenges that the Aboriginal female faces to prove her worth and status in correspondence to colored men and white people.

The significance of this research lies in the fact that this area is significantly underresearched and thus it will contribute to the research archive regarding Aboriginal women. The research will be based on the thorough analysis of the following works: *Coonardoo* by

Katharine Susannah Prichard, “The Cooboo” by Katharine Susannah Prichard, “Heart is Where the Home is” by Thea Astley, and “Knowledge” by Gail Jones.

My research will include: first, a chapter about the literary Aboriginal scene. Second, a brief history of the authors of the short stories; Prichard, Astley, and Jones. The third section will be devoted to a historical overview of *Coonardoo*'s publication and its importance. The fourth chapter will be dedicated to *Coonardoo*'s critical reception. Then, my paper will introduce the method of analysis. After that, a chapter will indicate how the selected pieces of literature are correlated to the postcolonial theory. The detailed analyses of the selected literary works will be presented as the final chapter of my paper.

2. A Brief Overview of the Literary Scene in Relation to the Portrayal of Aboriginal Characters

The main focus of my research is concerned with Aboriginal women, but before digging deeper into the historical and the literary representations of Aboriginal women, this chapter will include general information about Aboriginal men and women respectively in the Australian literary scene. This section will review several literary works written in different periods of the twentieth and twenty-first century to determine how authors represented or discarded Aborigines.

Many major Australian literary works decreased or completely demolished the presence of the Australian natives. In the 19th century, Australian literature presented Aborigines from the perspective of the colonial settler “as one of a diversity of hazards in a hostile land” (Daniel 48). Daniel traced a noticeable shift in the literary works of late 19th century and early 20th century concerning the image of Aborigines, “the tendency for Aborigines to be regarded as victims rather than aggressors, and at the same time Aborigines tended to become central characters rather than one of the hazards of colonization to be eliminated as quickly as possible” (48).

Significant Australian authors like Henry Lawson and Barbara Baynton who are famous for their detailed descriptions of the bush and its life portrayed mainly white characters and white struggles in their works of fiction, with almost zero emphasis on the representation of Aboriginal people. Miles Franklin's *My Brilliant Career* published in 1901 depicts the struggles and the obstacles that white women faced in the late 19th century, but it fails to shed light on Aboriginal characters or matters. Miles Franklin's devotion is centered on how Sybylla, the female protagonist, does not give up on her dream of being a writer. Aborigines are completely discarded in Franklin's novel. Eleanor Dark's *The Timeless Land* published in 1941 is more concerned with the first fleet, the early years of the European colonization, than the Aborigines and their struggles. *Riders in the Chariot* by Patrick White published in 1961 presents four distinct characters who share the vision of the chariot. Hill states in her review of the novel that "White's portraits of these four outsiders who are invested with instinctive, religious, humanistic and creative manifestations of faith, share a common humanity". One of the four characters is a male half-Aboriginal painter. However, the novel depicts neither his Aboriginal identity nor culture. White's 1976 *A Fringe of Leaves* revolves around a female protagonist who is captured by an Aboriginal tribe to escape later with the help of an escaped convict. She testifies that the tribe has kidnapped and tortured her which results in the murder of the tribe. Randolph Stow's *To the Islands* published in 1985 introduces a missionary as its protagonist who ends up being violent to an Aboriginal man. "Set in a remote Anglican mission at the far north-west of Western Australia, contemporary readers are confronted with the fruits of Australia's racist policies concerning Aboriginal peoples" (Gibson). Jeannie Gunn's *The Little Black Princess* published in 1905 and Thomas Keneally's *The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith* published in 1972 are relevant to the status of Aborigines in Australia. They tried to show the racist settler mind through the

projection of an implicit correlation between Aborigines and violence, criminality, backwardness, and primitiveness.

A few novels like *Coonardoo* and *Capricornia* expose the identity of Aborigines. At the time of *Coonardoo*'s publication in 1929, Australians were outraged with Prichard's audacity to introduce racial relationships as the main core of her novel. The novel concentrates on the relationship between the Aboriginal servant, Coonardoo, and her white master, Hugh Watt. It was like a literary experiment on the Australian public since Australians would rather enforce a kind of segregation between the Aborigines and the settlers than accept a romantic relationship or even intimate involvement between them. Prichard managed to give the unwanted marginalized silenced Australian indigenous a point of view which other authors denied them. Moreover, *Capricornia* by Xavier Herbert, published in 1938, includes accounts of Aboriginal women and men. Herbert shows the racist Australian scene towards Aborigines. His novel introduces Aboriginal matters and racial relations. According to Hill's review of *Capricornia*, Herbert presents "unexplained murders, gruesome deaths, a shocking railway accident, countless fistfights and vociferous arguments, women being 'lent out', abducted and molested and above all Norman's confused quest for identity because he cannot reconcile his parentage".

Prichard does not elaborate or vividly illustrate the depressing and devastating Australian history regarding the massacres and the sufferings of indigenous people in her fiction, in her novel *Coonardoo* or her short story "The Cooboo". Gail Jones's story "Knowledge" does not give a deeper insight into those matters either, it explores the life of two missionaries and their daughter with Aborigines on a remote island in Northern Australia. However, Thea Astley in her short story "Heart is Where the Home is" exploits a tragic period in Australian history which is the Stolen Generations.

Kate Grenville's *The Secret River*, which was the product of the early 21st century, mainly revolves around the decision of a white settler to poison Aborigines, how Aborigines destroy the main character's cornfields, and the battle between Aborigines and the white colonizers. *The Secret River* highlights the goodness and the peacefulness of the main character who despised killing Aborigines as opposed to the Aborigines who are depicted as savages who would fight the protagonist and steal his crops. This piece of literature communicates the struggles between the British convicts and the Aborigines in which the convicts feel out of place and thus fight to make this land familiar to them.

As it can be seen from the above, from the vast body of Australian literature only a handful of works concern themselves with giving a proper profile of Aborigines and their culture. It is also worth mentioning that most of the books have male Aboriginal characters and not female ones, and they are written by white authors since this study excluded all Aboriginal subject matters introduced by Aboriginal authors.

Wright affirms that Australian works of fiction did not pay much attention to the life of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders, instead they mainly focused on how the white settlers have faced many horrific nature-related obstacles, with indigenous Australians being part of them. She further points out fiction that ridiculed them and narratives that underestimated the importance of their history "as a bygone era, nostalgic recollections". Wright asserts "Sometimes, Aboriginal characters were used in a tokenistic sense, depicted as a homogenous group of 'blacks' or 'natives'. The 'black velvet' sexual metaphor of Aboriginal women – designed to assert their exoticism to white men – was also part of this literature". Wright explains that there was not much literature investigating the validity of the stereotypes towards Aborigines, and it was seldom to find works that presented them as well-defined characters.

However, *Coonardoo* was the exception, for it introduced Aboriginal distinct characters with positive characteristics (Wright).

3. A General Overview of the authors of “The Cooboo”, “Heart is Where the Home is”, and “Knowledge”

Prichard’s short story, “The Cooboo” is part of *Happiness; Selected Short Stories* that was published in the mid-20th century, 1967. Prichard in her Foreword explained that “I have gleaned fragments from the lives of our people” (v). She also included that “I had sought to use the living speech of our people” (v). Nettie Palmer wrote her a letter, saying “with your humanity you made us remember that there was nothing so well worth writing about as the loves, conflicts, and sufferings of our own people” (qtd. in Prichard vi). Prichard claimed that before writing this short story, she actually “travelled to an isolated cattle station, four hundred miles beyond the railway in Western Australia, to be sure of authentic details for “The Cooboo”” (vii). What is interesting about this short story is its introduction of the exotic theme of an Aboriginal female’s abandonment of her child to prove her worth and mastery in mustering cattle to the Gray family.

“Heart is Where the Home is” is part of Thea Astley’s collection *It’s Raining in Mango* that was published in the late twentieth century, 1987. Thea Astley was highly praised by many writers and critics; she published fourteen novels and two collections of short stories in the mid and late twentieth century. According to the article, *Honouring Australian Writers / Honouring Series: Thea Astley, brilliant to the last*, Professor Susan Sheridan felt connected to Thea Astley through reading and writing about her writings. She claims that Astley had one world of fiction in the chambers of her heart which was North Queensland. Moreover, Felicity Castagna points out that through her reading of Astley's writings which exposed the violent history of Australia, she learned a lot about the dark periods of Australian history (Honouring). Astley's literary works

were criticized because of their complicated use of language. Astley proudly declared that “Trying to carve out a good sentence. There’s little else to do. I might as well give myself up to that” (Honouring). Astley felt that she was not taken seriously for three main reasons; first because of her satirical humor style, her presented themes, and the fact that she is a woman (Honouring). Astley’s story “Heart is Where the Home is” opens the reader’s eyes to the horrors of an Aboriginal woman whose child was about to be forcibly taken according to the Australian governmental laws of that time.

Gail Jones’s “Knowledge” is part of her collection *The House of Breathing* which was published in 1992. Gail Jones’s published works include seven novels published between 2002-2018, two critical works published in 2006-2007, and two collections of short stories published in 1992 and 1997. Jones claimed in *In Conversation With Gail Jones* that whenever she writes, she seems less concerned with how the story goes and more concerned with “the texture of language because it is a more complicated kind of aesthetic compulsion” (Grasa 1). She also stressed that “I am attracted to narrative and the idea of the stories that we do not hear, the ones that come from the margins, or from the oppressed, or the overlooked, the suffering” (Grasa 4). This is what she presented in “Knowledge”. She portrays Mary Magdalene, an old Aboriginal woman who according to the narrator does not deserve the gloves that she took from the AIM bags. Jones introduces the dismissed, unheard, and discarded woman Mary Magdalene through her focus on the narrator’s psychological view of Mary and her gloves.

4. Katharine Susannah Prichard, *Coonardoo* and its Publication

4.1 *Coonardoo*'s Publication History

Prichard's life was full of literary publications, for she did not only write thirteen novels, but she also wrote one play, four story collections, two books of poetry, one autobiography, one reportage, and one selection from collected works. Eight of her novels were published before 1940. The 1930s was a universal period in the sense that there was a transition in the literary works from poetry and short stories to novels (Scheidt 91). This period witnessed the rise of the novel as a literary form in Australia. Modjeska examined the novels written between 1928 and 1939, claiming that the period was exceptional in the history of Australian literature, for the fact that half of the novelists were women whose novels were of high quality (qtd. in Scheidt 91). Prichard was one of the outstanding novelists of that period along with many others as Miles Franklin, Marjorie Barnard, and Flora Eldershaw (Scheidt 91).

The first publication of *Coonardoo* was in the *Bulletin*, under a male's name, Jim Ashburton. "It was the first book of this period to capture the deep-seated prejudice of white Australia through an exposé of interracial sexuality" (Wright). The novel was controversial to the point that *The Bulletin Magazine* received "hundreds of letters in protest at the serialization of *Coonardoo*" (Leane 4). Ric Throssell stated that "In 1928 Mary Gilmore wrote in a letter to Nettie Palmer that the novel was not a depiction of station life: it was 'vulgar and dirty'" (qtd. in Leane 4). What was rather astonishing that the controversy came about because of the possibility of love; it was neither mainly concerned with the loss of dignity in which Aboriginal women were projected, nor with their dispossession (Leane 4-5).

Prichard's *Coonardoo* won *The Bulletin Magazine*'s contest in 1928. Whilst it was in a tie with M. Barnard Eldershaw, it was a remarkable and significant achievement for two main reasons: the first one is that there were 542 contestants, and the second one is because it was the first novel to introduce an Aboriginal female protagonist in a time when *The Bulletin Magazine* mainly portrayed the "Australia for the White Man" slogan (Throssell 53).

Prichard visited the North-West of Australia in 1926 with her son Ric, and she explained that while she was watching him playing with Aboriginal children, it crossed her mind to write "the tragedy of an Aboriginal girl falling in love with a non-Aboriginal man" (Leane 4).

4.2 *Coonardoo*'s Significance

Prichard's works of art included various themes relevant to the remote areas in Australia, landscapes, bush life, tight relationship with the land, abuse of Aboriginal women by white men, and traditions, celebrations, customs, and lifestyle of Aborigines. All of her works present issues that the Australians have experienced, many challenges like the droughts, the goldfields of Western Australia, the life of convicts, and the impact of the Great Depression on Australians. However, her novel *Coonardoo* was different. It was a revolutionary novel that defied the accepted stereotypes of Aborigines, and that presented an Aboriginal female character as a heroine in a time when non-aboriginal authors cared less about breaking the followed stereotypes and going against the currents. It forced the white Australian reader to acknowledge that through their coexistence with Aborigines, an intimate romantic peaceful relationship is bound to occur. *Coonardoo* hit a nerve with the white Australian public because rather than wiping out the Aborigines and trying to show of them as little as possible, Prichard composed a whole novel stressing the fact that without the existence of *Coonardoo*, the main hero deteriorated completely and lost all his property, the station and the house. Prichard emphasized that this will be the fate

of white Australians if they do not fully accept such kind of relationships between themselves and Aborigines. Leane claimed that “From an Aboriginal standpoint, *Coonardoo* is a white man’s tragedy” (4). *Coonardoo* is an indication of how cursed and damned white people would become if they treated Aboriginal women the same way Hugh acted in relation to *Coonardoo*.

Prichard indicates that any Aboriginal experience she included in her novel is derived from her observation. In an interview conducted by Tony Thomas, she stated that it was questionable for many to believe that a white settler like Hugh who is surrounded by female Aborigines for this long period and yet did not become sexually involved with any of them. Her response was not relevant to Thomas’s question for his main concern was whether it would make any difference if she made a mistake regarding the conclusions she made about Aboriginal life and traditions (qtd. in Austin-Crowe 90). This shows how Prichard avoided the question asked and responded in a different direction. Austin-Crowe compares Prichard’s response to the behavior and conduct of Mollie, one of *Coonardoo*’s characters (90). Mollie spoke out of context in *Coonardoo*, and it was hard to find any correlation in her statements. Similarly, Prichard’s statements seem to be devoid of relevancy.

Austin-Crowe states that what makes *Coonardoo* different from Prichard’s other literary works is the fact that it presented the perspective of both an Aboriginal woman and a white man. In her short story *Happiness* where the narrator is an elderly Aboriginal woman, Prichard presents the Aboriginal’s experience of the white settlers. Her story “The Cooboo” handles the perspective of a young working Aboriginal woman. Her play *Brumby Innes* deals with how Aboriginal women were abused by white settlers. Although this subject matter is prominent in *Coonardoo*, “Prichard attempts to explore the situation as it is experienced by the Aboriginal woman as well as by the white man” (Austin-Crowe 9-10).

Prichard's *Coonardoo* is set in 1929 at Wyaliba, a station in the North-West of Western Australia. Wright expresses that "The plots and subplots are like trails of breadcrumbs leading the reader into a social, historical and psychological exploration of white Australia's association with Indigenous Australia". *Coonardoo* is exceptional because it challenged the Australian reader into tolerating the thought of Aboriginal- White relationships. It emphasized the exploitation of Aboriginal women by white men. It defied the mental and physical Australian restrictions. *Coonardoo* showed the possibility of what the Australians believed to be impossible.

5. The Critical Reception of *Coonardoo*

Coonardoo was mostly appreciated and respected by many critics and authors as Modjeska, Leane and Shoemaker, for Prichard dared to discuss matters that other authors of that time tended to avoid. Many people praised her novel in the sense that she brought about a new theme regarding interracial relationships. Her novel was featured for its detailed description of the mesmerizing landscapes, the easily followed plot, and the simple language she used. All in all, it was a profoundly deep insight of life in the stations of the North-West of Western Australia.

Modjeska in her essay, *Introduction to Katharine Susannah Prichard's Coonardoo*, (1929) expressed how brave Prichard is to compose a whole novel that talks about a sexually active Aboriginal heroine and name the novel after her name in the 1920s. She also claimed that: "The unspoken challenge this novel makes to readers of the 1990s might be that there is no accommodation to be made between black and white in this country while the repressed fears and longings of the whites have to be borne by the black; for then there is everything for each of us to fear" (6). According to Leane, the main concern of Drusilla Modjeska and Margaret

Williams's criticism of *Coonardoo* was the "sexual violence and exploitation but it was the attraction and the desire and the rawness with which it was written". (Leane 5) Leane's appreciation of *Coonardoo* is derived from her belief that Prichard "was the first author to represent a mature Aboriginal character with an emotional domain, however limited" (3).

Shoemaker praised *Coonardoo* when he considered that it was surpassing everything that had been written at that time, and Australian society was not willing to comprehend such a sudden acceptance of sexual and racial relationships between Aborigines and white people (40). He further explained how it was criticized; *Coonardoo* was not only criticized regarding its moral implications, but also "for its romantic idealisation of traditional Aboriginal life". A week after the contest results, *Coonardoo* was ironically praised in the Red Page of the *Bulletin*: "Miss Prichard (Mrs. Throssell) paints a vivid picture of a woman's life and work on a remote run. There are fine incidental glimpses of the life of the aborigines of those parts – easily the finest type of blacks in Australia" (Shoemaker 39-40).

Shoemaker emphasized how the audience in England appreciated Prichard's novel. However, it received one main criticism which complained of the use of "too many native words" which would confuse the English reader (Shoemaker 40). The reviewer for *The Times Literary Supplement* highly praised the novel: "The story is a vivid and moving study of the blacks in relation to the whites, and in particular of the lovely and faithful Coonardoo . . . Mrs. Prichard has the trick of making her characters come alive . . . The north-western life is pictured vividly in all its aspects and seasons with what seems to be an unexaggerated emphasis" (qtd. in Shoemaker 40).

Although the novel was not perceived positively by the Australian public as Shoemaker stressed: “the vast majority were outraged by the moral issues addressed in the novel – specifically the author’s sanction of a love affair between a white man and an Aboriginal woman” (Shoemaker 39), Prichard’s novel gained a lot of praise by critics like Modjeska, Shoemaker, and Leane.

6. Method of Analysis

The analysis of the literary works in focus as the products of colonialism will be based on feminist and postcolonial studies. Issues faced by the colonized such as authority, politics, and culture including religion and society will be analyzed as presented in the literary works of the settlers. Thus, the research will depend on the line by line reading and analysis of the chosen literary works to demonstrate whether these works are influenced by colonial powers or not in portraying Aboriginal women.

The analyses of this paper will rely on a number of scholarly works and articles such as *Orientalism*, *Black Skin White Masks*, *Skin Deep: Settlers Impressions of Aboriginal Women*, and *Can the Subaltern Speak?* These works will be the backbone of this research. First, Said’s *Orientalism* which discusses how the West views the East, specifically the Middle East, as an oriental inferior that has to be dominated by a greater civilized and developed whiter power. This can be related to my research by deriving how Europeans perceive Aborigines’ primitiveness, and how they feel obliged to indulge their sense of civilization into the Aboriginal culture. Second, Frantz Fanon’s book will be used to present how black identity had come about and how racism affects the human psyche. This means that even if the black person is a smart educated intellectual, s/he will feel inferior to the white, thus, trying to act and behave according to what is acceptable in the white culture. Consequently, embracing the colonizer’s culture by excluding

their original culture. These views will be looked into in the course of the analysis of the selected works. *Conor's Skin Deep: Settlers Impressions of Aboriginal Women* is vital since it digs into how the Europeans perceived Aboriginal women as odd and strange, and how the whites saw that the Aboriginal treatment of women is dehumanizing; she represents the double standards that the white man has by emphasizing how the white man who rapes and kills Aboriginal women is the same man who condemns how Aboriginal men treat their women; further, she highlights the misogyny and the racism of the white European man towards Aborigines. Finally, Spivak's *Can the Subaltern Speak?* will be used to determine how the subaltern cannot speak without the dominant power of the intellectual. Spivak questions how even women as the subaltern of men cannot speak without the man's interference. These theoretical works will be complemented by others during the research as Leane's *Tracking Our Country in Settler Literature*, Veracini's *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview*, and Wolfe's *Settler Colonialism and the Transformation of Anthropology*.

7. Postcolonial Theory and the Selected Pieces of Literature

Coonardoo, "Heart is Where the Home is", "The Cooboo", and "Knowledge" are all postcolonial works, for the main reason that all of them discuss a marginalized group of people that went under settler colonialism and for the fact that they are black. These works focus on the impacts and the consequences of imperialism in Australia on Aborigines. They explore the oppressive and abusive regimes through which the Aborigines had to go, and they investigate the racial superiority and privileges of the European settlers. Most remarkably, these works portray the colonial experience from the standpoint of the colonized, the Aborigines, and they recognize and acknowledge the atrocities displayed upon them.

Spivak in her essay *Can the Subaltern Speak?* studied a text called *Intellectuals and Power: A Conversation between Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze* where both authors are more concerned with the advantages and benefits of French poststructuralism than the ideology (272). Spivak introduces two kinds of representations that work together: “representation as “speaking for,” as in politics, and representation as “re-presentation,” as in art or philosophy” (275). She further explains that “the theoretician does not represent (speak for) the oppressed group” (275), for theory is only action as Deleuze argued. Thus, ““the person who speaks and acts ... is always a multiplicity,” no “theorizing intellectual ... [or] party or ... union” can represent “those who act and struggle”” (qtd. in Spivak 275). This means the person who struggles and acts is silenced in comparison to the person who acts and speaks. In other words, although Aborigines are struggling, they are muted and have no opportunity to demonstrate their views whereas the white settlers who are not struggling give themselves the freedom of acting and speaking. Consequently, they are heard and their views are widely spread as opposed to Aborigines whose views are disguised by a reality imposed upon them through the colonizer’s eyes.

Moreover, Spivak claims that:

Let us now move to consider the margins (one can just as well say the silent, silenced center) of the circuit marked out by this epistemic violence, men and women among the illiterate peasantry, the tribals, the lowest strata of the urban subproletariat. According to Foucault and Deleuze ... the oppressed, if given the chance (the problem of representation cannot be bypassed here), and on the way to solidarity through alliance politics (a Marxist thematic is at work here) can speak and know their conditions. (283)

This illustrates that the oppressed nations, in this case, the Australian indigenous if given the opportunity can speak and represent themselves and their problems with the help of the intellectual, the colonizer. Gail Jones, Katharine Susannah Prichard, and Thea Astley are the subjects that have produced the subject of the Others, Aborigines. Thus, the identities and, therefore, the ideologies of the Others are mainly constructed and structured by the Subjects since they have the intellectual power and authority to do so.

Spivak stresses the concept of the subaltern in the case of women:

The question is not of female participation in insurgency, or the ground rules of the sexual division of labour, for both of which there is 'evidence.' It is rather that both as object of colonialist historiography and as subject of insurgency, the construction of gender keeps the male dominant. If, in the context of colonial production the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern female is even more deeply in shadow. (287)

This resembles what is represented in the selected works. They portray the layers of oppression that dominate the black woman; which include the first layer of the white male, the second one is shown by the white female, and the third one is shown by the black male. A fourth layer may be placed to this hierarchy which includes the half-caste layer, where even the half-caste feels, acts, and behaves as more powerful and more privileged than the full blood Aboriginal. This layer is clearly illustrated in Thomas Keneally's *The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith* when Jimmie, a half-caste whose foster family makes him believe that his white part makes him a better person, goes back to the camp one day and treats an Aboriginal woman as if she is a beast, insulting her "Sometimes too he would ask a girl, "Wot's yer animal-spirit, eh, yer black bitch? I bin killin' a lot of animals lately. What animal's got yer soul, eh?" (Keneally 25).

He felt entitled to feel and act in such a way towards an Aboriginal woman whom he perceived to be existing beneath him.

In *Coonardoo*, the heroine is a subaltern black female who is described by the Watt family. In “Knowledge”, the story revolves around Mary Magdalene, the distributor of the AIM bags, who is described by a young girl, the daughter of two missionaries. *Coonardoo* is shown through the eyes of adults, but Mary Magdalene’s story is narrated by a young girl which shows that the intellectual does not necessarily have to be an adult, a young white girl would suffice to give that subaltern a voice. In “Heart Where the Home is”, the subaltern is an Aboriginal who is helped by a white family when the police come by to forcibly remove her kid. In this story, the white family saves the Aboriginal kid, and in that case, they are presented as the true heroes of the story. In “The Cooboo”, Rose, a black Aboriginal, who works for the Gray family decides to abandon her kid one day because she is always criticized and complained about for her slowness in mustering in comparison to Minni. By trying to represent those Aboriginal women, Prichard, Jones, and Astley linked themselves to their pains, sufferings, and experiences. All of that indicates one truth that is the existence of the Other empowers the existence of the Subject. The Subject would not be called Subject if it was not for the Other.

Spivak concludes that the subaltern does not stand a chance to speak without the interference of the intellectual. “There is no virtue in global laundry lists with “woman” as a pious item. Representation has not withered away. The female intellectual as intellectual has a circumscribed task which she must not disown with a flourish” (308). Scheidt claims that the main idea relies on the notion that a non-Indigenous woman, Prichard, is exposing the Indigenous point of view to the world, and “her entitlement to do so is also a matter of contention” (94). This means that if it had not been for the white intellectual privileged women,

Prichard, Jones, and Astley, and their dominant discourse, the oppressed black women in their stories would have never been given the chance to have a voice, to speak, and present the hidden disguised truths about themselves as Aboriginal women and their society.

Said's *Orientalism* revolves around the idea that the formation of the European culture is derived from the Orient, the powerful Other. To him, *Orientalism* is how the West portrays the Orient. Said in his *Orientalism* claims that:

The Orient was Orientalized not only because it was discovered to be "Oriental" in all those ways considered common-place by an average nineteenth-century European, but also because it *could be*—that is, submitted to being—*made* Oriental. There is very little consent to be found, for example, in the fact that Flaubert's encounter with an Egyptian courtesan produced a widely influential model of the Oriental woman; she never spoke of herself, she never represented her emotions, presence, or history. *He* spoke for and represented her. He was foreign, comparatively wealthy, male, and these were historical facts of domination that allowed him not only to possess Kuchuk Hanem physically but to speak for her and tell his readers in what way she was "typically Oriental." My argument is that Flaubert's situation of strength in relation to Kuchuk Hanem was not an isolated instance. It fairly stands for the pattern of relative strength between East and West, and the discourse about the Orient that it enabled. (5-6)

This can also be related to Coonardoo, Nelly, Rose, and Mary Magdalene as the females who do not speak freely, their discourse is hidden and shadowed by the other white characters. They are silenced and completely explained, described, and directed by the white authors and their white characters. We know and learn about them through the colonizer's lens. For

example, in *Coonardoo*, we do not get what happened to Coonardoo after she is kicked out of Wyaliba, which in a way or another shows who is in charge and who is in control in Wyaliba. Hugh owns the Aborigines although it is not shown explicitly, but they are his servants, and he is permitted to do whatever he wants with them. Similarly, in “The Cooboo”, the Gray family is in charge and responsible for how the Aborigines work, Mrs. Gray deliberately demanded them to do plenty of work, just like Mollie in *Coonardoo* who did her best to enslave them.

Professor Jeanine Leane in her essay *Tracking our Country in Settler Literature* asserts that she read several Australian novels written by non-Indigenous authors, including *Coonardoo*. She states:

because along with their representations of Aboriginal people, these works are more significantly journeys into the interior of the settler mind and consciousness and its understanding of the phenomena of ‘the Aborigine’ and are deeply involved with questions of authority and power. ‘The Aborigine’ is the first renaming and therefore representation of us.

This is a journey into settler texts written at the interface or the intersection of Black and White, Aboriginal and Settler relations at particular times and places; all are set in emerging contact zones—new frontiers for settlers—and they are metaphors for new frontiers in settler consciousness. Martin Heidegger has written of ‘boundaries’ (152) as spaces not where something ends but where something else begins its presencing. These texts are examples of settlers’ changing consciousnesses of Aboriginal presence, of their own presence here and of their quest to belong. Quests and journeys are recurring themes. (Leane 1-2)

This applies to the rest of the selected works since they portray how the settlers view the Aborigines as inferiors and thus they try to liberate them from the chains they have put on them in the first place.

Veracini in his book *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview* differentiates between migrants and settlers and between colonialism and settler colonialism. He states that migrants and settlers “move across space and often end up permanently residing in a new locale” (3). While migrants may become migrants because they face terrible political conditions, settlers are mainly the ones who bring about severe political conditions. He claims that “Migrants can be individually co-opted within settler colonial political regimes, and indeed they often are. They do not, however, enjoy inherent rights and are characterised by a defining lack of sovereign entitlement” (3). Furthermore, Veracini claims that colonialism and settler colonialism are different in the sense that there are “colonies of settlement and colonies of exploitation” (6).

Wolfe states that “The colonizers come to stay - invasion is a structure not an event” (2). He claims that:

Phillips' instructions (and, for that matter, the Mabo judgement) notwithstanding, Australian settler-colonization was phrased in terms of the doctrine of terra nullius rather than of any acknowledgement of native title... terra nullius was, of course, a rationalization rather than a motive for colonial invasion. The motive was greed - specifically, greed for land. The specification is necessary because it expresses the particular nature of settler-colonialism. (26-27)

Wolfe illustrates that “the pattern of violence established by the First Fleet was neither gratuitous nor random but systemic to settler-colonization” (27). The settler colonization of Australia was a definite organized invasion plan.

To sum up how Wolfe and Veracini defined the two concepts of colonialism and settler colonialism, colonialism means that invaders go there, raid the country, take its fortunes, enslave its people and return to their homeland, but settler colonialism means that the invaders will do everything the definition of colonialism includes, but they will not return to their homelands, they will settle in their new proclaimed land. They will establish a life and eliminate all dangers that go against this goal, including the natives of that country. While every settler colonialism is considered colonialism, not every colonialism is settler colonialism. Therefore, what happened in Australia is settler colonialism since the colonizers settled there, and they are now the residents and locals of the land. The main motive of the settlers when they settled in Australia was to create a home.

Leane affirms that Prichard’s *Coonardoo* “represents some important boundaries in the settler psyche which form a literary continuum: a story of a quest to belong to country”, and in a rather a complex way: “claiming in a foreign language and therefore containing those who already belong” (2). Leane advocates that Prichard’s literary work focuses on “spaces— ‘frontiers, unknowns, borders, boundaries, fringes’— [that] are cultural constructs of country and more importantly the beginning of a renaming process where Ngarla ... become ‘settler spaces’ and the people become ‘the Aborigines/the Blacks’” (2). *Coonardoo* is set in Ngarla, a place that already has a name given by the indigenous who long lived there, but Prichard, the settler, renamed it Wyaliba Station. This is considered an “act of dispossession” that was profoundly

implied in the renaming of the place (Leane 3). This shows that Prichard acted and behaved like the colonial settler that she was trying so hard not to be.

8. Analysis

8.1 Analysis of the Short Stories

8.1.1 “The Cooboo”

“The Cooboo” depicts the psychological and the mental journey of Rose’s abandonment of her baby; it is an exploration of how Rose’s state of mind decays as she reflects on white society’s expectations of Aboriginal women. Prichard introduces Aboriginal mothers’ infanticide. The story starts with a mesmerizing scenery description. Two female Aborigines are introduced at the very beginning of the story, Rose and Minni, the wives of Wongana.

Rose is struggling when she is mustering with the rest of the group because she is carrying her baby the entire time. Rose is upset that she cannot ride the steer that broke from the mob back. She is held back from the rest because of her baby. The baby is an obstacle that stands between her and her accomplishments as an Aboriginal woman whose main use for the colonial society is serving the Gray family. “And all the time that small, whimpering bundle against her breast had hampered Rose’s movements” (23). Mustering is her talent, but with the weight of the wailing child that she carries around, she does not muster as well as before.

After Rose is insulted by John Gray who calls her “damn fool” (21) because she did not manage to tame the steer, she drifts away from the rest and is followed by Minni. Rose seems to be the only one responsible for the child, Wongana’s presence as a partner who is supposed to share the responsibility of caring and raising the child is missing. Eden declares that “As with most savages, the black looks upon a woman merely as child-bearer and slave...” (qtd. in Conor

91). Rose is illustrated as a bush wife deserted by her (drover) husband (Lawson's image of bush women), a resourceful woman who has to do everything on her own, "masterful" (22). Wongana insults her, saying "a hen who did not know where she laid her eggs" (24). Men in the story are in the habit of insulting Rose. She is represented as the weakest link among them all.

The third-person narrator explains that Rose and Minni are not afraid of "...the evil spirits who wander over the plains and stony ridges when the light of day is withdrawn..." (22). They do not follow a specific route to the homestead; there are no tracks, and it is very dark, so they depend on their instincts. This suggests how strongly they are connected to the land, a mystery that puzzled the settler's mind. The European settlers cannot understand how their instincts lead them to different places or back home. Aborigines are represented as very intuitive about their land, Rose and Minni's natural skills guide them and pave the path for their return to the homestead. According to Broome, "All Aborigines groups had an intimate knowledge of their surroundings..." (12). Their connection to the land gives them this distinct power of being able to navigate routes around them. "This love reflected a spiritual and an economic relationship to the land: the land not only gave life, it was life" (Broome 14).

Both Minni and Rose are called gins throughout the story, and they are described as "thin, dark figures". They have opposite traits of one another. While Rose is old, "tall, gaunt, and masterful" (22), Minni is young "fat and jolly" (22). Minni is not as good a rider and tracker as Rose. "Rose had been a good stockman in her day: one of the best" (22). This representation shows that Rose in all aspects outperforms the other in the comparison. However, both of them are still not as good as men. This is portrayed when they are on their way back, Minni is proud of what she has accomplished that day and what Mr. Gray said to her "Good man, Minni!" (23). Mr. Gray's opinion of her is significant. It shows how the inferior other awaits the appreciation

of the superior subject. The superior subject creates a complex in the inferior other who strives for recognition from the superior. Another aspect can be investigated which is the use of the word “man”. Minni is good at mustering, therefore, she has gained a masculine trait which makes her better than other female Aborigines. To be represented as a man refers to how insignificant women are and how they are worth nothing in comparison to men. Aboriginal women’s value is less than Aboriginal men, and both are of lesser value in comparison to white people. This scene depicts Fanon’s illustrations in *Black Skin White Mask*, gender and racial discrimination makes the black person see him/herself as less than a white person, and thus doing their best to prove themselves and make the white person recognize them, and after this recognition s/he will be put on the map, yet not as good as the white intellectual. This means that if the same phrase is to be said by an Aboriginal man, it will not be as vital in its implications as that of the white man, Gray.

Minni will be rewarded with “...nammery for her and a new gina-gina...” (23). All the praising of Minni affects Rose’s psychological state of mind. Minni is going to be glorified by everyone in the homestead and in front of everyone. A mixed feeling of rage, jealousy, and envy conquers Rose’s mind. She is no longer able to live up to the standards that her camp or white people ascribed to her. Rose feels as if her reputation as the best stockman is ghosting her, and Minni will be credited with this name from now on. Rose feels suffocated, as far as she can see, she is losing every single credibility she has among her people. She is stripped of any other value than being a servant to the Gray family. On the other hand, Minni becomes self-conscious of her worth, she becomes confident in her skills in mustering cattle. This is featured in Prichard’s beautiful description of Minni, “She pulled a pipe from her belt, shook the ashes out, and with reins looped over one arm stuffed the bowl with tobacco from a tin tied to her belt” (23).

Prichard compares Aboriginal women at mustering and other men which implies that “[Women] were quicker in their movements, more alert than the men, sharper at picking up tracks...” (23-24). The representation of Aboriginal women is indulged with characteristics of strength, stamina, and determination. They are considered better than men in mustering although mustering cattle is usually associated with men in Australian society. Prichard empowers her Aboriginal women in the story, but at the same time she degrades Rose’s profile in the reader’s mind. The figure of the black mother seems ruthless in “The Cooboo”, Rose is illustrated as a mother who cares only about her feelings and image, thus ends up abandoning her child. Prichard insinuates that mustering is for women who are free of any child bringing responsibilities; they cannot be good at both equally.

John Gray expels Rose from mustering one day “like a naughty child” (24). This expresses the ownership of Aborigines in general, and Rose in specific. Gray decides to punish Rose because he believes he has the right to do so. Aborigines are living by his rules, and he can override them the way he wants to. He treats Rose like a child who should be grounded because she does not behave well and is not good enough.

Minni gaining the position Rose once had, Wongana insulting and shaming her, John Gray sending her away are all factors that contribute to Rose throwing away her baby. Miserable feelings influence her act of giving up her child. Nonetheless, a woman who does not care will not be “wailing for him in the dawn, cutting herself with stones until her body bled, and screaming in the fury of her grief” (25). This self-flagellation is enough evidence to demonstrate the kind of guilt and shame that defeated her. It is a proof that she did not abandon her child out of her own will, she gave up on him when she felt that everyone gave up on her. Consequently, feeling useless as a stockman and a mother.

The last scene in “The Cooboo” shows that Aborigines are paid with rations of food, those rations give Mrs. Gray the right to ask Rose about her kid. She feeds Rose and Minni based on the assumption that they will tell her what happened later. She expects news in compensation for food. Mrs. Gray thinks that Aborigines will show gratitude by telling her what happened. However, Minni and Rose leave without giving her the satisfaction of learning anything about the child. Mrs. Gray realizes later that night that the baby has died.

It is significant to point out how Prichard does not create a female character who is happy for the success of another woman, and how she links Minni’s success and happiness with Rose’s misery and misfortune. She does not put them on the same level, and thus she enforces a kind of segregation between them, implicitly conveying that Aboriginal women are never content with what they have. Rose has a baby, but she is portrayed as not fully satisfied with only the baby. Prichard shows that Aboriginal women cannot be satisfied with one thing, they always strive for more, implying that they are greedy. Therefore, a white woman can have many things to brag about, but it is never the same case for an Aboriginal woman. For instance, Rose wants to have both a baby and still be a good stockman, but she cannot maintain both privileges without being portrayed as having excessive undesired desires. However, Mrs. Gray who has everything, a faithful man who is only married to her, a house, and a bunch of servants working for her, is still portrayed as more content, with all of her privileges. Thus, Rose can only be a stockman at the expense of her poor baby, and Prichard has the privilege to say who gets what and who can have what, for she is the intellectual white woman who gives the subaltern the possibility to speak but within many restrictions and limitations that she, and only she, can display.

8.1.2 “Knowledge”

“Knowledge” is set on an island in Northern Australia. It is narrated from a first-person point of view. The narrator is a young white girl, a daughter of two missionaries. The story explores the subconscious emotions that white people have towards Aborigines, and how the narrator’s family perceives Aborigines as the narrator traces her unpleasant racist feelings towards Mary Magdalene’s possession of a pair of gloves that she desired.

The story starts with a piece of advice given by the father to the narrator regarding the cleansing beach of Aborigines. The use of the word “cleansing” is rather significant, implying that Aborigines need to clean themselves thoroughly, they need to purify themselves from any sin that they have committed. Cleansing is more associated with cleaning the skin, which is a clue to how the father sees Aborigines as dirty by nature. After detecting three degrading words regarding Aboriginal life on the first page of the story, such as “cleansing”, “disgust”, and “primitive”, the readers can tell which standpoint the story will emphasize and elaborate.

Jones does not cease to surprise her readers, for she proves in the second paragraph that the assumption made at the beginning of the story is true. The narrator’s father, whose views later in the story appear as they were subconsciously inherited and learned by his daughter, holds no appreciation or respect to the Aboriginal culture: “he had no peculiar respect for Aboriginal culture; indeed he was doing his utmost to dissuade the people from their tribal ways” (121). He is possessed by the settler’s thoughts. The settler’s mind is depicted in his disgust of their ways of living and his belief that their culture is primitive and thus it needs to be civilized.

On the second page, the narrator introduces the Aboriginal woman who is the center of the story, Mary Magdalene. Mary is tender and firm at the same time. She is portrayed as a decisive, influential, powerful woman, to whom everyone listens and pays attention. She

distributes the items from the AIM bags donated by white people. This positive representation of Mary is astonishing, for Aborigines in Australian literature are rarely attributed with favorable characteristics. Another Aboriginal woman is portrayed in “Knowledge”, Rebekah, who is rather young and naïve. The two Aboriginal women depicted in the story display two ends of the spectrum. Whilst Mary Magdalene is married, experienced, mighty, and assertive, Rebekah seems fragile, inexperienced, innocent, and shy. Rebekah’s representation seems to follow what the Australian public would expect from an Aboriginal woman whereas Mary’s image seems to defy the stereotype displayed against Aboriginal women.

Nonetheless, Mary is overruled by an Aboriginal man. When she comes across a piece of clothing the function of which she is unaware, she summons an old man, Francis Xavier, and asks for his opinion. Although Mary seems to be as wise as the old man, she does not decide to throw the fur away by herself, she has to take a second opinion. This can be easily regarded as a call of wisdom, but it is also related to the thought expressed by Spivak’s article; whilst both Mary and Francis are the subalterns of the white narrator and her parents, Mary is the subaltern of the old man, thus, she cannot make that decision on her own. The Aboriginal female is portrayed as of lesser wisdom and value in comparison to the Aboriginal male.

The narrator is bothered when she sees Mary taking the unwanted delicate pair of gloves although she “...was not permitted to participate in the sharing...” (122). It seems that from that moment the tone of the story changes; at the beginning it displays the father’s narcissistic view, then the narrator’s positive reception of Aborigines, and then it shifts to the father’s embedded views in the narrator’s subconscious.

This moment marks a journey into the narrator’s mind. This shows that the narrator is the product of her father’s views. When raised in an environment that reinforces discrimination of

any kind, the outcome will be a conflicted personality like the narrator's that cannot but associate every unpleasant personal feeling to a thought full of despise that is successfully planted by the father. The daughter is not consciously aware of her loathing towards Aborigines. The harmless young girl harbors a dangerous aspect of her character which is "the childish beginnings of the sin of covetousness" (124).

The narrator does not confront Mary about the gloves, yet she behaves in a passive-aggressive way towards her. She does not give Mary the chance to explain her possession of the gloves. Her entitlement to play the victim in this story is the dilemma. The narrator explains her attachment to the pair of gloves by connecting it to a special visit she once had with her mother to the cinema. This is such an interesting way of justifying how and what she will say next.

Jones deliberately uses sentiments and emotions to clarify what the narrator is about to say. The narrator forms a link between the ladies that she saw in the movie and those pair of gloves. To her mother, the ladies in that movie are the civilization. The pair of gloves does not belong to Mary, because she is simply not part of the white European civilization that the mother and daughter believe in.

The representation of Mary with the gloves of civilization disturbs the narrator's mind. It is inconceivable for her to believe that an Aboriginal woman can also be part of the civilization, or even be the source or an image of civilization in their community. The narrator has been raised on the stereotype that the Aborigines are dirty and unwise whereas her father is wise and clean. When her heart is filled with anger, she cannot distinguish between the stereotype learned by her father and the reality of Aborigines. Consequently, her judgment is clouded, she starts to demonstrate how the gloves look ugly and unsuited on the hands of an Aboriginal woman but

look beautiful and glamorous on the hands of the white lady that her imagination has created. Her attitude is the product of racial discrimination she has been raised on.

The gloves open the gates of her psyche. They bring to light the true self that she is unaware of. Instead of facing this inner conflict, she suppresses it till Rebekah's wedding. "Mary Magdalene attended the wedding wearing my pair of white gloves" (125). She declares that the gloves belong to her by using the possessive adjective "my". She never asks for them, and she is not even allowed to have any of the items distributed, yet she claims that they are hers which is an important indication to the settler's perspective. She pretends that they are hers just like the settlers when they first came to Australia and claimed it theirs. However, in order to claim that something is hers, she will have to claim first that the one who owns it now is not worthy of it which is exactly what she does throughout the story. When the colonial settlers arrived in Australia, they claimed that its inhabitants were doomed to die, and they enlisted laws to eliminate their existence, therefore, they were unworthy of living on that land, and the European settlers were. While Mary claims the gloves in front of everyone since they seem to interest no one, the narrator claims them hers in her mind. By stating that they are hers, she insinuated that they are stolen or forcibly taken when the narrative does not advocate that thought.

In the church, the father stands behind the altar, "...he was robed and authoritative, and spoke in an unusual extremely loud voice..." (126). As she is annoyed by Mary's pair of gloves, her father is annoyed by Aborigines. Her father seems to her "unholy, improper" (126). She then describes Rebekah's wedding dress that she saw several times and that it does not even fit Rebekah. What her mind dismissed is the fact that out of poverty Rebekah had nothing else to wear, and it is not traditional for Aborigines to get married in a church. It is not one of their religious rituals, it is a ritual that is imposed upon them "by the mission authorities" (125).

It is noteworthy that all the people in the church including the mother bend their heads submissively, which made the father in a higher position than all of them as if he controls the lives of all of them. Consequently, giving himself a position of power as both a religious and a white man. The daughter then realizes that her mom always behaves like that when she is with her father, an indication of male dominance. It is illustrated in the story how old-fashioned the father is, and he would have never allowed his daughter or his wife to go to the cinema if he had known about it. Everything in the house and even out of it goes by his rule.

This is a moment of epiphany for the narrator, for she realizes her detestation of her father. At the same moment, she realizes “how beautiful her [Mary’s] skin was” (127). Her father’s beliefs dominated her mind when she was unhappy with Mary, but after she admits her loathing to him, his poisonous beliefs disappear, and she starts to see the beauty of Mary.

The father seems very violent, and it seems that the mother fears him. The mother lies low all the time in his presence. The father even hits his daughter who dares to tell him that Mary cheated on her husband. They live in a patriarchal society. The mother seems not to have any significant presence in the story, but only to demonstrate how controlling and ruling the father is. Finally, towards the end of the story, the narrator rebels against her father’s authority, “...I insulted finally and irreparably the paternal order of things” (128).

After the narrator sees Mary’s gloves on the beach, she reevaluates the ownership of the gloves. She makes her peace with the fact that they are part of Mary’s legacy, and that they should be worn only by her. “...the gloves were incorporated into another realm. They were no longer recoverable, no longer desirable, no longer in fact white” (129). They are “remade Aboriginal” (129). It took a suicidal mission to let her realize that the gloves were never actually hers. They have always belonged to the Aboriginal Mary.

In short, the representation of Mary battled the stereotypes about Aboriginal women in most of the story, except when it is illustrated that she cheated on her husband which depicts the stereotype of the sexual promiscuity of Aboriginal women. Moreover, the color of the gloves is significant to the storyline because it points out the paradox of colors since the skin color of Mary is black and the gloves are white, yet they make a perfect combination that even the white narrator accepts by the end of the story. Finally, the fact that the story is narrated from a white young female's perspective where the readers only get to know her views of the surroundings elaborates on the white superiority, and how they give themselves the right to explain the actions and the behaviors of others. This claim is investigated by Said's *Orientalism* where he is concerned with how the "Subjects", white people in this case, see, portray, present, and represent the "Others" to meet their own needs, claims, and desires.

8.1.3 "Heart is Where the Home is"

Astley's "Heart is Where the Home is" discusses the traumatic effects of the stolen generations. It talks about how an Aboriginal woman tries with every piece of courage that she has to save her child by getting help from the masters that she works for.

The story starts with a scene of complete horror; the Aborigines are helpless regarding this "new white law" (147). This terror is conquering everyone, Aboriginal men, women, and children. In the very first paragraph Astley refers to Aborigines as "boongs" and "gins", and the police as "buggers". It seems that the cops are not content with the fact that they are going to remove these kids from their parents "They'd have liked the boongs to show a bit of fight, really, then they could have laid about feeling justified" (147).

Two Aboriginal women are introduced in the story, Ruthie and Nelly. They represent two types of resistance. When the police come to take away Ruthie's child, claiming to make her "...proper and know about Jesus" (147), Ruthie starts crying and clinging to her daughter. She is speechless and cannot comprehend what is happening. She runs after the carriage to reclaim her child, is hit by the officer, and keeps trying, but it is a futile effort. Ruthie is not fast enough, and this moment marks the last time that she sees her child. However, Nelly seems more persistent in her quest for saving her son, she holds her child and runs as far as she can until she reaches the Laffey family. Both Nelly and Ruthie resist in their own ways. Ruthie is less prepared, and does not have any help from outside the camp. While both used running as a form of resistance, Nelly manages to escape from this ruthless removal, but Ruthie does not.

This shows the sacrifices and sufferings of the black mother figure. This representation distinguishes between the white and the black mother figure, for the white mother figure does not have to go through this painful problem of giving up a child unwillingly. Nelly and Ruthie are both stronger, more powerful, and tolerant to pains and sufferings in comparison to Mrs. Laffey who although is portrayed as tough and courageous, is simply not used to such miseries. She is still part of the colonial society who caused and brought about those misfortunes on the natives.

This art of resistance is more developed in oppressed nations since they do not have an easy way out. They would have to fight for their rights. Nelly and Ruthie are both courageous enough to try to go against this governmental law although Nelly is aware that they will eventually get her son. If it is not this time, it is probably the coming time, but it does not matter for her, she will never give up. This mastery of resistance and bravery is associated with Nelly's character. Those traits are rarely attributed to Aboriginal women. It is very common to attribute such characteristics to white people like Mrs. Laffey. It is true that if it is not for the help of the

Laffey family, the kid will be taken. However, the case is different here since both Nelly and Ruthie are powerless women who resist against this oppressive racial patriarchal regime.

In her short story, Astley creates women who are more powerful and decisive in comparison to their husbands. Mrs. Laffey seems more in charge than Mr. Laffey, she even gets on the nerves of the officers. Similarly, Nelly seems more powerful than her husband who shows up way later and is not given a voice at all. This story is empowering for those who are perceived to be weak; Aborigines in comparison to the white officials, an Aboriginal woman in comparison to her husband, an Aboriginal woman in comparison to a white woman, and a white woman in comparison to her husband. Nelly's resistance in comparison to other women in the camp is astonishing, she does not stand still, lie low, or sit fixed. She is afraid, but she will not let go of her child without a fight. Many factors played a role in the behaviors of other women who could not fight as fiercely as Nelly such as age, being alone without their men, fear of getting shot and killed in the process, and finally the fact that they will get to their kids sooner or later. They did not give up; they just cannot fight by fleeing away like Nelly.

Astley's captivating description of Nelly's escape makes the audience relive her frightful experience. To Nelly, what is life without her son? Her fears are thus described in the story: "She wormed her way into the thickest part of the rainforest, following the river, well away from the track up near the packers' road. Her baby held tightly against her chest, she stumbled through wine and over root, slashed by leaves and thorns, her eyes wide with fright, the baby crying in little gulps, nuzzling in at her straining body" (148).

Astley's representation of Nelly is forceful. Her determination, willingness, and persistence to escape the officer's eyesight is spectacularly described. A mother will not give up

a child easily, especially an Aboriginal mother who lost everything else as the land, culture, and language, will never give up her most significant treasure.

Astley presents two types of white people; the likes of AO Neville, and the likes of the Laffey family. The officials and the officers are brutal and cruel in their treatment of Aborigines, as mentioned in the story, they hit Ruthie who tried to cling to her child whereas the Laffey family are kind and generous with Nelly. Mag Laffey tries to comfort Nelly, she makes her a cup of tea and listens to what happened in the camp. The officers describe Mag as "...a woman who never knew her place, always airing an idea of some sort" (151). They see her as a manipulative woman, and they feel sorry for her husband. Mag dares to say to them when they ask for any "Abo kids", "You're wasting your time here, let me tell you. You're wasting mine as well. But that's what government's for, isn't it?" (151).

When the officers are at their house, Mag cannot handle their bullying of Nelly. When Nelly is asked if the cat got her ears because she is not responding, Mag tells them "...Perhaps the cat has your ears as well..." (152). However, George Laffey's role is completely silent. Mag is the one taking care of everything, a woman of authority. George is still the man of the house; he makes the decision that Nelly should come and live in their old store. They offer Nelly, her son, and her husband protection and shelter.

George Laffey shows his true colors towards the end of the story, he yells at Nelly when she tells him that she cannot stay away from her tribe. He takes the offer as leverage, he knows what is ought to happen to the child, and he convinces her that this is her only way out. It appears that George's settler beliefs come to surface. He cannot just act calmly, but he bursts out and drops Nelly's son. Mag, on the other hand, seems to understand Nelly's concerns that she cannot give up the home where she is brought up and raised.

Nelly is a woman who stands against the storms of the oppressive white governmental laws. The settlers deprived them of everything; their land, language, children, home, and even dignity. However, Nelly refuses to give up her home, even for a safer and more secure environment. She refuses to abandon her rituals, life, customs, and relatives.

Astley uses a deformed form of language when she presents the scenes with Aborigines probably to show that being forced to speak a settler's language to communicate and survive is also part of settler colonialism. In order for Aborigines to be heard by the settlers, they should speak in English even if it was not similar to the official language of the settler. They will not and cannot be heard unless they speak the language of their colonizers. They are not ignorant, but they are forced to speak a language that is not even theirs, out of the 500 languages they have, they had to use English to communicate with the colonizer. This supports Veracini's settler colonialism's definition. For example, "She bin chase that buggy two miles till on of the police he ride back on his horse as shout at her and when she wouldn take no notice she bin run run run an he gallop after her ..." (148).

All in all, the story explores the fears, struggles, and impacts of the stolen generations from an unbiased Aboriginal's point of view. Astley creates an audience who feel and hate what happened in that dark period of Australian history. Astley's courage to present such a view and case can be related to the fact that her story was the product of the late twentieth century, however, her eagerness to show everything as it was by detaching the views of the whites from the story is something to praise and appreciate.

8.2 *Coonardoo*

8.2.1 Characters and their Connection to the White Settler's Perspective

This section portrays how the viewpoints of Prichard and her white characters dominate the novel. Mrs. Bessie, Mollie, Hugh, and Sam Geary form certain interpretations of Aboriginal women and culture that will be detected and analyzed thoroughly.

Mrs. Bessie, Hugh's mother, is a civilized image of a colonizer; she allows Aborigines to speak their language and follow their traditional ceremonies. She dominates everything and everyone in the station. She has some ground rules that must be followed by the house girls; they are not permitted to enter the house unless they shower properly and wear their clean uniforms. This indicates how Mrs. Bessie believes that they are dirty, and they have to clean themselves before entering her territory. Prichard sets up an opposition between the civilized colonizer and the Aborigines. The Watt's veranda symbolizes the line that separates the white settlers and the Aborigines. As stated by Noble *Coonardoo* "sleeps on the margins of the imperial world", where she is close enough, she sleeps on the veranda, but not too close to the imperialist (78). This line, the veranda, spotlights how the Watt family are associated with cleanliness whereas the Aborigines are associated with dirtiness, "Every morning, after that, *Coonardoo* came up from the uloo at dawn with Meenie and Bandogera; scrubbed her head with the crude soap of fat and wood-ashes Mrs Bessie made; showered in the shed beside the big windmill, put on a fresh blue gina-gina, and went into the kitchen" (10).

Coonardoo's significance in the novel is highlighted a bit later. Every detail before chapter ten seems to be relevant to Mrs. Bessie's views and beliefs. By the death of the white powerful woman, Mrs. Bessie, *Coonardoo*'s character emerges. Since there is no white female

around after her death to block Coonardoo's presence, the rise of Coonardoo flourishes and the novel takes on a different angle of representation. Mrs. Bessie seems to be the obstacle that stood between Prichard and her representation of Coonardoo. Nevertheless, Coonardoo's opinions remain invisible in the whole novel, even after Mrs. Bessie's death. In most of the dialogues that involved Coonardoo, she says nothing at all or just a few words, which shows how she is elided by the parties involved in the dialogue especially if they were white and initially silenced by Prichard. A vibrant example can be the dialogue when Sam, Saul, and Bob come to see how sick Hugh is, Coonardoo says nothing at all even when the conversation is directed to her:

"Now then, what's all this about?" he roared, looking from Coonardoo in the doorway to Hugh. "Oh, I see!" His eyes hung on Coonardoo.

Hugh half raised himself, angry colour flaming, his eyes flashing.

"You see a damned sight more than there is to see," he gasped.

"Seein' double, am I?" Geary jeered. "Well, I don't blame you, Hughie."

Hugh fell back weakly. Coonardoo's eyes flared their rage and loathing of Geary.

"By God!" Sam exclaimed, "he is bad, isn't he? What is it, Coonardoo?"

Hugh had closed his eyes, lost consciousness for a moment. "Here, get me some whisky!" Sam said. Coonardoo went out of the room. (66)

Aboriginal women in *Coonardoo* do not have a voice. For example, Coonardoo, Bardi, Meenie, and Sheba are denied the opportunity to speak in the novel. No dialogue in the novel reveals their views or aspirations. It is worth mentioning that Prichard does not only block Aboriginal women's opinions in the novel but also their thoughts. For example, Coonardoo's

feelings and thoughts about her late mother, Maria, are not illustrated. Prichard uses the fact that Aborigines never talk about their dead people to justify Coonardoo's behavior of never questioning what happened to her mother. Maria's death could have been introduced as part of a dream that Coonardoo has, but instead Prichard keeps Coonardoo's life, behaviors, thoughts, and feelings revolved around Hugh. Although Ted Watt, Hugh's father, is behind the death of Maria, Coonardoo's devotion remains intact to the Watt family.

The novel demonstrates the foolishness of Aborigines, especially, Aboriginal women. For instance, "There was a good deal Mrs. Bessie talked of that Coonardoo did not understand; but she liked to pretend she understood very well; and Mrs. Bessie liked to pretend that Coonardoo understood" (13). However, Coonardoo displays certain intelligence that exceeds Mrs. Bessie's expectations of her. Coonardoo's perceptiveness is seen through how she learns that Hugh is fine or not by investigating Mrs. Bessie's facial expressions when reading his letters. Degerando states that the growth of the native's intellectual capacities is finite... (qtd. in *Conor* 79-80). Moreover, "Meenie put out her hand to see if the apples on the chintz of Mollie's kimono would come off, giggling and cuddling herself shyly when she found they were only coloured drawings" (84). As humorous as this scene may appear, it hides beneath it many speculations about how foolish and devoid of any common sense Aboriginal women are. Consequently, stressing how they need guidance and orientation from white people. Prichard explores this belief through her exhibition of Aborigines' belief in evil spirits. Most remarkable is the incident when Mrs. Bessie threatens Meenie and Coonardoo that she will haunt them if they misbehave with Hugh, "I'll come back, like that ... a white cockie ... and give you bad dreams ... guts-ache, and a pain, eating your inside out, like I've got..." (31). This scene shows how settlers manipulate the colonized nations' minds by using their beliefs against them through

spreading horrors to control them. It also manifests how white settlers perceive the mentality of Aborigines; Aboriginal women are shown to be stupid to believe in such superstitions.

Prichard portrays how men fight over Coonardoo, "... a young man from the hills twisted a slit stick in her hair and tried to run away with her, and there had been a fight in the uloo about it" (25). This communicates how objectifying Aboriginal culture is of women. Conor claims that this is "the gendered, misaligned notion that women are the cause of conflict between men" (97). Moreover, Sam Geary's offer to Coonardoo's father to have her in exchange for "a rifle, blankets and tobacco" (26) is supportive of the claim that she is no more than an item exchanged from one man to another, emphasizing how patriarchal the white and Aboriginal society are. In other words, Aboriginal women do not decide their fates; Aboriginal men and white people decide everything for them. Coonardoo is portrayed as property just like Wytaliba. Fox affirms that women are inferiors because they are perceived "only as articles of personal property, to be bartered or sold at their owner's pleasure" (qtd. in Conor 133). This is evident through Mrs. Bessie's indirect ownership of Coonardoo. She does not approve of Coonardoo's engagement to Sam Geary, but she approves of her engagement to Warieda. Coonardoo's sexual decisions are based on the approval of Mrs. Bessie, her father, Warieda, and later in the novel Hugh. They are in charge of the Aboriginal woman's body. This sheds light on the 'black velvet' term since it gives white settlers a "sense of proprietorial ownership of Aboriginal women's bodies" (Conor 284). All of these incidents convey how Aboriginal women are treated as possessions, oppressed, denied of thinking and making decisions, and traded as commodities.

Sheba is presented as a counter-character to Coonardoo. Although Geary treats Sheba generously by buying her silk dresses and a wristwatch and letting her drive his car and keep the storage room's keys, he refuses to let her into the Watt's house. When Mollie asks him if he will

invite Sheba, he says no. Because of their race, Sheba and Coonardoo are both not qualified to be treated or considered as partners neither by Hugh nor by Geary. Sheba's position differs when she is alone with Geary and when she is with him as a sublet of a group of white people. Her value decreases when she is at Wytaliba, and she is not treated as proper as a partner of a white man should be treated. In one way or another, Prichard declares that such relationships do not last for long, are not accepted by the society, and no matter how much the expensive clothes Sheba wears are worth, she will still be an Aboriginal woman who will not get the same respect, appreciation, or recognition as a white female. Unlike Coonardoo's relationship with Hugh, Sheba's relationship with Geary is public. Sheba is presented as an outcast in both societies, the white and the Aboriginal while Coonardoo is presented as an insider who is appreciated and respected by everyone. It is only when Mollie learns about Coonardoo's relationship with Hugh that Coonardoo loses her grounds in the white society and becomes more or less equal to Sheba.

It is identified in the novel that white women are stubborn and authoritative in comparison to Aboriginal women who are sexually available and voiceless. Geary claims in the novel "...Gins work out better in this country. They don't rouse, and you know where you are with 'em. They know where you are when you've got a bit in..." (97). This means that they can be controlled and tamed unlike white women who will object and have an opinion of their own. Geary sees Aboriginal women as both a source of entertainment and security, so he will not feel lonely. Noble argues that "the black mother-figure is represented as a symbol, as an object of fetishism, and as a white male fantasy of available sexual pleasure" (71). It is insinuated in the novel that Sheba's sexuality is available to Geary, and that Hugh has full access to Coonardoo's sexuality. This image is also illustrated through Bardi who is presented as a woman who everyone is allowed to have a piece of: Don Drew and his crew, Crossley, and even Geary if he

wants to. Prichard indicates that “She [Sheba] was a remarkable woman, everybody agreed, intelligent and useful; drove Sam’s car for him” (98). “Of course, at most places where there were white women, Sheba did not come into the house. She had to go to the wood-heap with the other blacks.” (98-99). Sheba realizes that she will never be treated as an equal partner as white women are, so she saves her face by going right away to the camps of Aborigines. This realization is also held by Coonardoo when she mentions that Hugh will bring a white woman back home. Aboriginal women are seen as easy to please and as good supporters of their husbands/ partners, and although they work twice as hard as white women, they do not get half of the attention white women get. Furthermore, Mollie hates the fact that Sheba is an Aboriginal who is in a relationship with a white man. At first, she thinks she is a half-caste, she may have pretended to be okay with it then, but when she learns that she is a full blood Aboriginal, she despises the whole relation. Mollie depicts Australian society’s view of relationships between Aborigines and whites; it is a definite no. This reveals how white people prefer the company of half-caste women over full-blood Aboriginal women, which brings to surface the notion that Aboriginal women are even oppressed by half-castes.

Prichard stresses Coonardoo’s importance as she grows by portraying her in a sexual manner, “Her slight brown body, straight backed, long legged with pointed breasts, was a nymph’s, cast in bronze, against the twilight sky. Coonardoo had walked, swaying, jerking her small rounded buttocks and casting sidelong glances with back-flung words at the men as she passed” (25). Her value is not related to her wisdom or knowledge, but rather her body’s maturity. During the pink-eye, Coonardoo goes with Warieda, and Warieda is followed by a bunch of men, and then “Warieda had put his hand on her breast, and smoothed the round tinted bulbs with gentle fingers” (19). While this scene is presented as one of their rituals, the focus is

on the event's sexuality. Prichard portrays it as physical sexual abuse and assault or even rape. The whole fair is coerced in which Prichard implies the power of the male Aboriginal over the female Aboriginal. Prichard intentionally describes it in an erotic way to emphasize the importance of the white settler's culture to civilize and educate the sexual drive presented by the Aboriginal culture. Prichard fails to detach her views of the Aboriginal world in her description of the scene. The men who stand around Coonardoo and Warieda in a semi-circle are portrayed as dogs drooling to have her body, this piece of meat that Warieda can playfully touch and sing for. Mrs. Bessie's view of the ceremony is not objective either, she thinks of it as pedophilic since she considers Coonardoo a child, and she is unaware that Coonardoo is a grown woman in the Aboriginal culture. This represents how whites and aborigines perceive sex differently.

Furthermore, Collingwood-Whittick claims that the discourse that introduces the scene and the sexual encounter between Hugh and Coonardoo stresses Coonardoo's "inherent sexuality rather than the white male's legendary voracity for 'black velvet'" (par. 14). It blames Coonardoo and victimizes Hugh. Prichard is asserting that Hugh is not to be held accountable or responsible; he sees Coonardoo, and he cannot dodge that bullet. This scene insinuates that Coonardoo initiated the intercourse by stalking him from one place to another in the first place. This means that it is not as the usual story goes where the white man exploits the black woman (Collingwood-Whittick par.17). This is also connected to what Dampier, the English explorer, thought about native women: "...they overreacted to the benign presence of Englishmen" (Conor 56). Prichard illustrates that Coonardoo's sexual desire led to her unfortunate ending, and this representation is tied to the thought that settlers have of Aboriginal women: "sexually loose and a danger to the morality of the white society" (qtd. in Collingwood-Whittick par.15). Noble states that

“Coonardoo is condemned for her race, and punished for her bodily desires and sexual relationships, even when these have been violently forced upon her” (64).

In conclusion, in *Coonardoo*, Aborigines are spoken for by white characters, they do not participate in making decisions or giving opinions, they are rarely portrayed positively, and they are frequently silenced. Prichard does not represent an Aboriginal character, e.g. Coonardoo, who is fully aware of the surroundings, a mature rational Aboriginal woman who knows how to speak and act appropriately. Although Coonardoo seems to be a woman of importance in the camp, because she is Warieda’s wife and because of her significant job at the Watt family’s house, in comparison to the white settlers, Mrs. Bessie, Hugh, Mollie, or even Phyliss, Hugh and Mollie’s eldest daughter, she is portrayed as less intelligent. Throughout the novel, Prichard communicates that if it has not been for the whites and their colonization, Aborigines would have perished sooner or later because of their primitive ways of living. Prichard shows that Aborigines have to be ruled by a white person, and this person does not necessarily need to be a male, a woman like Mrs. Bessie or even a young woman like Mollie would suffice. It is a matter of race and not gender, at least in that prospect. All of that emphasizes how the white settler’s perspective dominates the novel, for most of the incidents are interpreted through the eyes of Prichard first and then her white characters.

8.3 A Comparison between the Representation of Aboriginal Women in the Selected Literary Works

This chapter will discuss how different or similar the representations of Aboriginal women in the selected works are. These four literary forms showcase four different themes, *Coonardoo* is concerned with interracial relationships, “The Cooboo” focuses on infanticide, “Heart is Where the Home is” discusses the stolen generations, and “Knowledge” pinpoints the

psychological impacts of an Aboriginal woman's possession of a pair of gloves on the young white narrator. Despite their different themes, they share similar views of Aboriginal women.

The first pattern that is attributed to Aboriginal women is their unfaithfulness. In *Coonardoo*, many cheating incidents are presented, starting with Coonardoo's mother who sleeps with Ted Watt. Second, Coonardoo's relationship with Hugh while she is married to Warieda. Coonardoo's cheating episode does not end with that, but she also sleeps with Sam Geary when "...she was Hugh's woman" (135). Bardi cheats on Chitali with Crossley, and she willingly goes to Don Drew's camp and ends up abused. Mary in "Knowledge" cheats on her husband with Peter who eventually kills her husband in a fight. This leads to the stereotype that Aboriginal women are emotional and driven by their sexuality. Sex dominates their lives.

A change in the representation of Aboriginal women is noticed in the above literatures, instead of being portrayed as marginal, weak, and followers, they are portrayed with opposite traits. For instance, bravery, courage, mastery, and powerfulness are characteristics that are commonly attributed to white people like Mrs. Bessie in *Coonardoo* and Mrs. Laffey in "Heart is Where the Home is", however, these traits are also used to demonstrate the image of Aboriginal female characters. Mary in "Knowledge" has a position of power, she is responsible for distributing the clothes to the Aborigines. Nelly in "Heart is Where the Home is" shows great stamina, resilience, and power in trying to save her baby boy from the government. Rose in "The Cooboo" is presented as the best stockman. Finally, Coonardoo's power in *Coonardoo* is elaborated as:

For so long Coonardoo had been the person in favour there. She had done everything for Mollie for years, growing gaunt and docile in her service. And from her power at the homestead Coonardoo had attained a position quite unusual for a gin, in the uloo. Of

course, she was Warieda's woman, and Warieda was the most powerful man in the camp. But he, too, respected the way Hugh, Mollie and the children referred to, and depended on, Coonardoo. (130)

Coonardoo seems to be respected and praised, not only because she is married to Warieda, but because white people depend on and trust her work. This recognition from white people gives her a sense of belonging and power that no other Aboriginal woman has. Coonardoo is shown as brave and courageous in comparison to Jessica, Hugh's first fiancé, and Mollie. Jessica is portrayed as a materialistic woman who is not used to the station's hardships, and she does not know how to ride horses. Moreover, "Mollie was terrified of snakes. She did not know whether she would go into the store after all. But Coonardoo walked into the hut on her bare feet..." (89). Both of them are not as nearly brave or experienced as Coonardoo, and the fact that both of them depended on Hugh and his money outshines that Coonardoo is economically independent which puts her on the same level as Warieda since both of them are responsible for the family. Coonardoo is trustworthy, Hugh gives her the keys to the food bins, "She rationed her own people, and slept on the veranda to watch over and look after Hugh" (65). She gives orders and commands, "she declared that someone must go into Nuniewarra and tell Saul Hardy that Hugh was ill" (65). She is a practical woman, "Coonardoo looked after the stores, kept the house in order; managed the washing and cooking for him" (135). Billy says "She's a remarkable woman..." (171). Moreover, Phyliss sees her as a partner, a mate "Coonardoo ... was the most fascinating companion" (166). This shows that the three authors presented Aboriginal women who defy the stereotype displayed upon them by white society.

It is worth mentioning how Aboriginal women are treated and perceived by white women from town. For example, in "Heart is Where the Home is", Mag treats Nelly with kindness and

respect, she sees her as a human being unlike Mollie in *Coonardoo* who perceives Aboriginal women as her slaves. White women who live in a station among Aborigines seem to have different perceptions of Aboriginal women. Mrs. Gray in “The Cooboo”, behaves like Mollie; she purposely leaves tons of celestial works for Aboriginal women; she “found plenty of washing, scrubbing, and sweeping for the gins to do: would not spare them often to go after cattle” (24). On the other hand, Mrs. Bessie in *Coonardoo* is portrayed as a kind mistress who is loved by the Aborigines. However, “Knowledge” is the only story that does not represent Aboriginal women as servants. They are more or less represented as equal independent parts of the society although the narrator’s father sees them as inferiors to his authority as a wise white man of God.

The aspect of giving Aborigines names and insulting them is common in all works, words like gins, abos, abo kids, pidgin, blacks, blackfellow...etc. For example, in *Coonardoo*, the word “gin” is used 63 times, “blacks” is used 93 times, “abos” is used 6 times, “blackfellow” is used 9 times, and “black children” is used twice. Wright argues that Pichard’s works are indulged with illustrations of Aborigines as “‘ape-like,’ ‘naive’, ‘wicked’ and ‘lazy’”. According to Conor, Aboriginal women have been called many names throughout the history, these names vary in accordance to the time or place, they have been “typecast as ‘lubra’, ‘native belle’, ‘sable siren’, ‘spinifex fairy’, ‘stud’, or ‘gin’” (1). Conor claims that all these names have contributed to the erasure of Aboriginal women’s identities (4).

Another pattern that is observed in the selected literary forms is the representation of two Aboriginal women who are the opposites of one another. For example, in “Knowledge”, there are two Aboriginal women presented and described in the same paragraph, Rebekah and Mary Magdalene. In “The Cooboo”, there are also two Aboriginal women compared and contrasted,

Rose and Minni. In “Heart is Where the Home is”, Nelly and Ruthie’s different reactions towards the stolen generations are portrayed. Finally, in *Coonardoo*, Prichard introduces the antithesis of Coonardoo, Sheba. For instance, while Sheba wears silky dresses, Coonardoo wears her gina-gina. Unlike Sheba’s relationship with Sam, Coonardoo’s relationship with Hugh is secretive.

It seems that *Coonardoo*, “The Cooboo”, and “Knowledge” agree in associating dirt with Aborigines. For instance, in *Coonardoo*, Aboriginal women wash themselves and wear clean clothes before entering the Watt’s house. Broome stresses that this association of white people are clean and black people are dirty came about in the 16th century when English colonizers thought of “hunter-gatherers as ‘savages’”. It was “Influenced by their existing definitions of ‘black’ as dirty and evil and ‘white’ as clean and pure, the English saw the Africans as unchristian ‘savages’ who were violent, lecherous, treacherous, and akin to the apes of Africa” (25). This view is also held by the narrator’s father in “Knowledge” who warns his daughter of the Aboriginal “cleansing beach”; this phrase is part of the dirty Aborigines profile. Finally, in “The Cooboo”, this association is not as direct as it is in the other works. The representation of Minni and Rose as they ride back home is skeptical “Minni's bare heels struck her horse's bell” (22). Aborigines are seen as savages and uncivilized because they do not wear boots, thus, they are not clean. This barefoot image is also expressed in *Coonardoo*, “Coonardoo in her faded dungaree trousers and an old shirt, naked feet in the stirrups...” (166). This is related to the civilization-primitiveness agenda. According to Conor, “The significance of bare feet, as an emblem of the primitive, perfectly describes the anxieties attendant on the footfall of Aboriginal women over thresholds” (244). She also states that “The bareness and ‘unshodability’ of Aboriginal women’s feet situated them as remote from the fast pace of modernity” (276).

Finally, the names that are assigned to Aboriginal women in the three short stories seem to be associated with English or Latin names, but in *Coonardoo*, Prichard managed to display some authenticity or originality to Aboriginal names, her female Aboriginal characters have names that are neither of English nor of Latin background, as in *Coonardoo*, Sheba, Bardi, *Coonardoo*'s daughters; Charmi and Beilaba, Meenie, and Bandogera.

All in all, it seems that the authors of the selected works tried in some scenes to detach the stereotypes associated with Aboriginal women from the context of their works by displaying a great emphasis on their strength and courage, however, it still seems that Aboriginal women are called degrading names and mostly introduced as dirty, unfaithful, sex addicts, and slaves.

9. Conclusion

Based on the current analyses of the selected works, this paper showcases the patterns of representation of Australian Aboriginal women. It analyzes the four literary works within a postcolonial feminist scope. This paper investigates the stereotypes and the portrayals associated with Aboriginal women by connecting them to themes like gendered violence, settler's perspective, cultural intolerance, racial profiling, and racism. Many similarities are identified in the representation of Aboriginal women, for instance, Aboriginal female characters are portrayed as sex addicts, dirty, fool, and primitive. Therefore, emphasizing the importance of white people's interference and guidance. In addition to that, Aboriginal women's worth and status seem to hold the lowest rank in the Australian society, following a certain hierarchy that puts the white man first, then the white woman, after that the half-caste man and then the half-caste woman, and then the Aboriginal man, and finally the Aboriginal woman. In all works, they are physically present, but they are silenced. Their presence is passive, they are explained and perceived by everyone including the authors and their characters. They are not permitted to share

their views or make decisions. They are the prisoners of their Aboriginal patriarchal society and the white racial patriarchal society. Aboriginal women are robbed of their freedom and deprived of speaking. They are portrayed as commodities, sexual targets, and deserving of men's punishment and violence.

It is important to point out that the authors of the selected works are females who managed to explore the life of the marginal Aboriginal female. "The Cooboo" introduces the infanticide phenomenon. "Knowledge" presents the inner thoughts that whites have of Aboriginals. "Heart is Where the Home is" focuses on the stolen generations. Finally, *Coonardoo* exposes the consequences of interracial relations. Moreover, the above literary forms identify two Aboriginal female figures who are the opposite of one another. These two different characters represent the type that aligns with the white Australian society's expectations of Aboriginal women and the type that defies that image. Aboriginal female characters who defy the image that the settlers have of them are the main characters, as in Mary, *Coonardoo*, Nelly, and Rose. They are attributed with traits like power, resilience, stamina, and financial independence.

The limitations of my research are: the very small percentage of articles and books that introduced this subject-matter, many papers have discussed Prichard's novel from various perspectives, but there was little found on the rest of the chosen literary works, and few number of literary works that displayed Aboriginal women as main characters.

In short, the paper provided a thorough analysis of Australian Aboriginal women's position in four literary works by Prichard, Jones, and Astley.

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