

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### A. Background of the Study

It has been noted that the Aboriginal occupation of Australia dates back to approximately 40,000 years ago, during which time Aborigines settled and continuously traversed the continent (Penelope Andrews on <http://www.law-lib.utoronto.ca/Diana/fulltext/andr.htm>). From this fact, people might debate over their legal status of being the Aborigine people of the Australian continent. There are two arguments; first, Aborigines are the 'owner' of Australia since they colonised the land first, before any other settlers. Second, and conversely, the Aborigines are not the real 'owner' since they simply came and occupied the land without legal permit and admission.

This on-going debate may just become a sort of discourse, as it has no acknowledged proof whether the Aborigines are the rightful owners or not. On the other hand, the sense of belonging to the land tightly binds the Aborigines. This can be seen from the way they respect the land and consider the land as their ancestor. Furthermore, history notes that their sense of belonging to the land has produced special traditions in rites and culture. It also has an effect on the current literary pieces of Aborigines.

By providing issues such as gender, multiculturalism, colonialism, etc. it opens new opportunities for analysis. The most interesting part of Aboriginal literary texts is that it illustrates the struggle of the Aboriginal cultural authority

versus the white settlers' national power, and the ways that Eurocentric assumptions have spread and influenced Aboriginal life, especially that of women. Women, culture and power seem to be linked and closely related or interdependent.

The Aboriginals' struggle is reflected in Sonia Borg and Hyllus Maris' "Women of the Sun". This novel was based on a television mini-series, which makes this novel better known. It won several awards: Firstly, it won the United Nations Media Peace Prize in 1982, secondly and thirdly, it was awarded the Australian Writer's Guild Award and the Television Society of Australia's Award for the best series script 'Alinta'. Fourthly, was the main drama award at the Canadian Banff Television Festival (Foreword in "Women of the Sun" by Penguin Books). Yet, the book was published in 1985 – after winning the awards. Consisting of five different chapters, with each chapter focusing on a different woman character, this novel is concerned with the lives and struggles of these five women in Aboriginal society. The characters are Towradgi, Alinta, Maydina, Nerida, and Lo-Arna.

The first chapter's character is Towradgi. She is described as the eldest of the five, who occupies a position of cultural power over the younger generation. She up-holds the traditions and performs the cultural rituals in her daily life. She treats the younger generation in strict compliance with the cultural traditions. The way she protects the younger generation and the tribes, shows the reader that she endeavours to maintain the purity of the tribe from the influence, or 'touch', of outsiders. In this part, the authors relate her to the second character,

Alinta, who is the focus of the second chapter. Therefore, in these two chapters, the authors connect and link the story. During this chapter, the readers are introduced to a new conflict with the coming of two white settlers to their tribal community. Here, Alinta discovers that one of the white settlers seems to be a good, honest man. This is in direct opposition to the beliefs of her tribe. Alinta, inherits Towradgi's teachings but, due to the rest of her tribe eventually being wiped out by the white settlers and her subsequent fight for survival, is unable to up-hold them fully. Thus, the tribal traditions become diluted and she is unable to hand down every single cultural tradition. The third character, in the third chapter is called Maydina. She is portrayed as a powerless mother who is determined to be passive. She experiences a cultural shift, Aborigine to European. She is forced to join a Christian mission in order to seek protection for her daughter and herself from a white settler. By accepting protection, she has to give up her cultural traditions and embrace Christianity. Fourth is Nerida. This chapter was inspired by Hyllus Maris' childhood experiences. Nerida's character conveys life inside the Government Mission where Aborigines lose their rights in land and freedom. She is depicted as a woman whose thought is influenced by modernism that she is aware of her rights as an Aboriginal woman living in Australia. She struggles against the whites, for the sake of her tribal community, to gain land and freedom rights. She is proud of her tribal identity, which leads her to fight against the white's dominance. The last character is Lo Arna, who is describes as a mixed-blooded woman. Her father is white and her mother is Aborigine. In this chapter, Lo Arna was kidnapped by her father from her mother at the age of three. She is

raised and educated by the whites and lives as a white. She considers herself to be white until she discovers she is in fact half Aboriginal, after which, a feeling of inferiority becomes a major part of her personality.

Based on the characterization above, the writer considers that this novel is suitable to qualify for analysis, since it has five main characters, which distinguishes it from other novels. The issues established are also complex, so it opens opportunities to explore any parts of the issues provided.

### **B. Statements of the Problems**

Based on the background of the study, this paper will question:

1. How are Aboriginal women represented in the text?
2. How does the white's power affect the Aborigines and their culture?

### **C. Objectives of the Study**

According to the statement of the problems mentioned above, this study aims:

1. to explain the representation of women, and their roles, in the text
2. to analyse the effects of white power over Aborigine women and their culture

### **D. Significance of the Study**

The significance of this study has two major parts: specific and general. Specifically, the writer wants to bring a deeper understanding of how women, especially Aborigine, are represented in the text and of how white's power affect

the Aborigine women. Generally, this study is purposed to contribute something valuable for the students of Airlangga University English Department, particularly those who take literature as their major.

#### **E. Scope and Limitation**

The writer focuses mainly on the representation of Aborigine women in the social context. Social and gender problems experienced by the five Aboriginal women characters, in the context of the Australian continent where Aborigines live, is also covered. Here, the writer emphasises on the characterization of the five main characters to explain each representation, which eventually can be used to identify the interconnection between the five characters. This is useful for the writer to understand the sequence and the development of the story.

In the larger context, the writer wants to analyse the effect(s) of white's power over the Aborigines and its culture. It aims to see how the white's power operates against the Aborigines. Furthermore, it is used to explain the process of power operation that affects the five women characters over time. In this case, however, the intrinsic elements cannot be ignored. The intrinsic elements of the selected work are included to support the analysis of the five characterizations.

This study does not analyse the authors of the selected work, themselves. Biography of the authors will only be used to support the analysis by explaining how women are represented in the text.

## **F. Theoretical Background**

In analyzing “Women of the Sun”, the writer applies the Stuart Hall’s Theory of Representation. It will be used to analyze how women are represented in the text, either by the authors or by the community within the text. This theory will be applied to convey the context in which women were put and set.

Another supporting theory used in analyzing this novel is Theory of Power Relation by Michel Foucault. Foucault, in his book “Power and Knowledge” (1972 – 1977), says that power relation is as wide as social institution. Power relation plays roles in determining “conditioning” and “conditioned” within the society, which directs to the term of domination. In this case, domination is followed by the phenomena of shift and of resistance.

The above theory is used to explore and analyze the two powers that operate in the same field and area, Aborigine and Australia, and how they affect each other. In addition, this theory is also used to see how power relates other greater parts, as well as smaller parts, and to show its relation.

## **G. Method of the Study**

The writer supports this study by performing library research. The writer also uses electronic libraries through internet browsing. However, research texts still could not afford much to guide the writer in understanding and analysing the selected work. Therefore, discussion with the lecturers and other students is one of the other methods to get meaningful result.

## **H. Definition of Key Terms**

- Nyari** : the name of a tribe in Aboriginal society
- Indigenous** : native people or community of certain race
- Totem** : it is one of ancient beliefs that a certain group of people belong to one animal, and their belief that they can gain protection and power from it. The animal is considered sacred, so that they have to respectfully behave under its control.
- Moieties** : it is a part of Aboriginal traditional belief that women and men have different totem signs. Women's sign is sun; meanwhile, men's is moon.

# **CHAPTER II**

# **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**