

## PSYCHOLOGICAL INFERIORISATION OF THE ABORIGINES

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### **Abstract:**

*In the colonial context, the colonisers project themselves as superior and the natives as powerless and inferior. The psychological inferiorisation of Aborigines by the white is intentional on various levels. In this paper Julie Janson, an aboriginal playwright articulates the inferiority of the Black races through the play *Black Mary* (1996). The play attempts to study in detail and evaluate critically the treatment of the imperative colonial and post-colonial issues. She shows enormous concern and boundless enthusiasm in depicting the different aspects of indigenous Australian life. The present study aims at discussing the different aspects of Aboriginality like the preoccupation of the Aboriginal history, culture and spirituality of the indigenous people and the issues like poverty, sexual harassment, racial discrimination, stolen generation and bush-ranging.*

**Keywords:** *Inferiorisation, Aborigines, Bush-ranging, Discrimination, Marginality.*

The Imperial authority, during the process of colonization, has othered and marginalized the Native people. The Natives all over the world have been politically and socially subjugated. At present, marginality becomes a source of creative energy that urges many writers to articulate the silenced voices of the marginalised. Aborigines in Australia are marginalised by the European settlers. Black Australians and Indigenous Australians are synonymous terms denoting Aborigines. The Aboriginal women suffer a lot and they are doubly marginalized. They become victims and their children are removed from their families. This state leads them to commit crime. Beresford points out: "Life at the margins of society shapes both involvement in criminal activity and the way much of the crime is committed" (139). The indigenous women in the margin have little comfort or support from non-Indigenous people. They are deprived of their human, civil, political, legal and sexual rights. Subsequently, some Aboriginal women, who are marginalised and silenced, raise their voice for the rights and such women are positioned as angry or aggressive. The Whites who plunder the rights of the Aborigines and their possessions become dominant and take control over Aborigines. The Aborigines, who do not express their positions or their opinions remain silent.

Julie Janson through her plays, attempts to articulate the agony of the silenced Indigenous people. In *Black Mary* (1996) she reveals the painful experiences of an Australian Aboriginal woman. It is a semi-historical documentary about Mary Ann, an Aboriginal bushranger with her partner Fred Ward (Captain Thunderbolt). Her dreams to live with her people remains unfulfilled and she has been a victim of racial discrimination, police harassment, misunderstanding of cultures and sexual exploitation.

The play revolves around the story of three bushrangers, Mary Ann, Fred Ward [Fred] and Britten. Fred, an English bushranger, wants his own land and thoroughbred horses, because the company where he works does not pay him any. He has no means of sustaining himself and hence with the company of Mary Ann, an Aboriginal woman, he indulges in unlawful activities. These bushrangers have the survival skills necessary to be used in the Australian bush and hide themselves from the authorities. Their crimes often include robbing small towns, banks or coach services. The bushrangers take up robbing as a way of life,

using bush as their base.

Of the three bushrangers, Mary, Fred and Britten in the play *Black Mary*, Mary is more skillful than the others as she has inculcated the survival techniques to be exercised in the bush. This Aboriginal bushranger has already developed a love relationship with Fred. The play vividly picturises the relationship between Mary Ann and Fred. This relationship explicates the dichotomy between the colonizer and the colonized. Mary has been colonised/marginalised by the White bushranger Fred who often dominates her. On the contrary, Mary is devoted and loyal to Fred. They both involve in many bush ranging activities. As a result, Fred is arrested for “the theft of ten horses, all valuable stock” (BM 23).

The European colonizers deliberately assume the role of dominance over the colonised. There is a deliberate opposition of the settlers and the suppression of the Aborigines, leading to a racial, cultural and religious divide. Racial discrimination, nevertheless remains a stumbling block to the full realization of human rights. The privileged settlers are not at all concerned about denial of rights and social justice to the Aborigines. Meadow, an expert in indigenous affairs comments:

The indigenous people have been debilitated and inferiorised by the most privileged sections of Australian society - politicians, pastoralists, mining companies. It is these elements, with almost unparalleled access to privilege, that have led the attack on the most socially deprived and disadvantaged without any real sense of community outrage. (147)

In spite of progress in some areas, distinctions, exclusions, restrictions and preference based on race, colour, descent, national or ethnic origin, continue to create and embitter conflict and cause untold suffering and loss of life. Racial discrimination violates fundamental human rights, endanger friendly relations among people, and threaten international peace and security. It harms not only those who are its victims but also those who practise it.

Janson has highly succeeded in portraying how political liberty is denied to the Aborigines by the colonisers. Lucy Frost, an Academician in the University of Tasmania, in her article, “Fear of Passing” reflects:

There is a conspicuous presence of a social model of racial identity in which power and space are deployed along a clearly demarcated divide. Everyone is on one side of the divide or the other. Either a person is Aboriginal and restricted or non-Aboriginal and free. (130).

The dubious attitude of the settlers in understanding the races and the colonizers' inherent hatred towards the Aborigines find expression in the play *Black Mary*.

The European colonizers relate themselves to civilization and the Black to barbarianism. They think that they have a mission to christianise, civilize and humanize the indigenous people. The scorn the indigenous experience or the humiliation they undergo is inexpressible. The Aborigines are forced to live on the margin. Chris Barker, a cultural critic asserts that “Race formation or racialization has been inherently racist for it involves forms of social, economic and political subordination which are lived through the categories and ideology of race” (194). The discrimination of the Blacks is portrayed in Act One Scene Seven of *Black Mary*, through the conversation between Fred and Mary. Fred whenever he wants to mention 'Aborigines' immediately he uses the term 'wild blacks', Mary Ann appeals to him to join the Aborigines and be one with her community:

MARY ANN. [*wanting to enthuse FRED*] We can join my people.

FRED. Oh save me, wild blacks will spear anything that moves.

MARY ANN. Narr, they're family, they'll like you. (BM 34)

The White prejudice is obvious in Fred's conversation with Mary:

FRED. We'll go north and get some free selection land. The bolters won't care who we are.

You watch me, I'll going to die rich.

MARY ANN. I want to see the Company finished up (*She is excited*). We're gunna help

them, I promised.

FRED. Help who? The Blacks? They're starving begging they're finished. I pity them, they'll die out, it's the law of nature. (BM 34)

The contradiction between the White and the Aboriginal people is evident in the play *Black Mary*. The colonizers continuously and aggressively nurture within themselves the spirit of racism through religion. She has been degenerated, demoralized and placed in a desperate situation yet she provokes admiration for her pride, courage, skills and loyalty. The play ends with a hopeful note as she stands all alone very triumphantly because she says that she is going to live. She warns Captain King (white) not to follow her, because he is naked, ironically, she says that his powers have gone away because she has robbed everything that belongs to him. Her indomitable spirit has demolished the idea that indigenous women are subservient and inferior to men.

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