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Storytelling as a Counter-narrative Technique Against Colonial Project in David Milroy's Windmill Baby

A B S T R A C T

This paper examines the narrative strategies utilized in David Milroy's Windmill Baby (2015), with a specific focus on the non-linear narrative style employed by the female protagonist. The objective is to investigate the process of colonial disintegration from two perspectives. Firstly, it explores the use of storytelling as a method to unveil the veracity of the phenomenon of colonization. In addition, it conveys the significance and influence of Aboriginal women as disseminators of Aboriginal narrative, history, and culture. Rather than depending on the viewpoint of white settlers or colonizers, the Aboriginal woman adopts the role of a storyteller, while performing the roles of all characters and effectively communicating the story of her people. In contrast to the imperial norm, where history is mostly presented through the colonizer's perspective, the play is presented through a feminist lens, where an Aboriginal woman recounts the narratives of the characters. The play also opens up spaces where a collaboration can be achieved between white and Aboriginal women, which is another counter-narrative to the colonial project, which inhibits such a relation. As such, by employing the narrative technique, Milroy effectively presents a counter-narrative that opposes the colonial narrative and conveys the traumatic consequences of colonization.

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سرد القصص كتقنية للسرد المضاد للمشروع الاستعماري في مسرحية *"طفل الطاحونة"* للكاتب المسرحي ديفيد ميلروي

الباحثة: آيه خير الله عبد أ.م.د. ثامر راشد شيال الزبيدي
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المقدمة:

يتناول هذا البحث استراتيجيات السرد المستخدمة في مسرحية *"طفل الطاحونة"*(٢٠١٥) للكاتب المسرحي دافيد ميلروي، مع التركيز على اسلوب السرد الغير خطي الذي تعتمده الشخصية الرئيسية في هذه المسرحية. يهدف البحث الى تقصي عملية تفكيك الاستعمار من منظورين اساسيين. حيث يتتبع الأول استخدام السرد كوسيلة للكشف عن حقيقة ظاهرة الاستعمار. أما الثاني فأنه يُسلط الضوء على أهمية الدور الذي تلعبه النساء الأبوريجناليات في استراليا كمروجات للرواية، والتاريخ، والثقافة . وبدلا من تبني وجهة نظر المستوطنين أو المستعمرين البيض، تأخذ المرأة الأبوريجناليه على عاتقها دور الراوي، فتقوم و بصورة مؤثرة بتُقديم جميع شخصيات المسرحية من خلال لعب أدوارها، فتروي من خلال ذلك قصة شعبها على خشبة المسرح . و بخلاف النمط الإمبريالي، والذي يُعرض فيه التاريخ وبشكل رئيسي من خلال منظور المستعمر، تلجأ المسرحية الى المنظور النسوي، حيث تروي المرأة الأبوريجنالية قصص الشخصيات. و تفتح المسرحية افاقا للتعاون بين النساء البيض والأبوريجناليات، مما يخلق رواية مضادة للمشروع الاستعماري الذي يمنع هكذا مشاركة. وبذلك، يقدم ميلروي ومن خلال الاستخدام الفعال للسرد رواية معارضة تتمرد على رواية المستعمر للتاريخ وتعرض العواقب الصادمة للتاريخ لاستعماري.

الكلمات المفتاحية: السكان الأصليون ، الاستعمار، النسوية ، اللاخطية ، السرد القصصي.

1. Introduction

For centuries, colonial empires have expanded their dominion, subjugating indigenous cultures, and imposing their narratives upon the conquered lands. Yet, amidst the shadows of oppression and cultural erasure, a powerful tool has emerged, a tool that has the potential to challenge and question the dominant discourse and resist the process of distorting indigenous identity and culture. This paper delves into the adoption of storytelling as an empowering technique against colonial history. The practice of storytelling has historically played a crucial role in the dissemination of information, the preservation of shared experiences, and the formation of cultural identities. Within the framework of colonial history, it assumes a formidable role as a powerful instrument, facilitating the elevation of suppressed voices, expressing alternative viewpoints, and the provision of consolation to marginalized populations (Keller, 2018). Using Aboriginal narratives bears testimony to the immense influence that storytelling can have on people and communities. The utilization of narrative storytelling, as suggested in this paper, proves to be an efficacious strategy for deconstructing colonial enterprise.

Aboriginal plays have served as valuable catalysts, shedding light on a certain era in the early 20th century, whereby Aboriginal playwrights in Australia endeavor to negotiate their history, culture, and societal position (Glow, 2007). Aboriginal plays have a dual

purpose, namely to chronicle the endurance of Aboriginal communities in Australia following two centuries of white colonization. Furthermore, they serve as a means to transmit information and perpetuate the oral traditions of the Aboriginal community (Az-Zubaidy, 2018, pp. 44-45). An ample instance of this is David Milroy's *Windmill Baby.* The play is a moving testament to the suffering caused by discriminatory practices and brutality that marked a turning point in the history of Aboriginal peoples and, in particular, the station employees in Kimberley, Western Australia. The setting of the play in this rural place adds to its significance because rural Aboriginal populations and remote Aboriginal cultures are perceived to be more authentic (Carleton, 2008).

1.1 An Overview of the Play

David Milroy's *Windmill Baby* is widely recognized as a seminal work in Australian theatre, known for its captivating and mesmerizing qualities. It has achieved the status of a classic within the Australian cultural canon. In this play, an Aboriginal Australian woman re-enacts her history while visiting the pastoral ranch where she formerly worked after 50 years. The visual design is particularly striking, with a prominent focus on a single windmill at the center, accompanied by a desolate clothesline where the Aboriginal woman, Old May, hangs the Missus' clothes. The play is a monologue delivered by a single female performer, Old May, who skilfully and convincingly breathes life into several characters, including the white Boss, the Missus, Malvern, Old May's husband, Wunman the crippled gardener, and even Skitchem, the dog. The play, which made its debut in Perth in 2005, delves into several motifs such as cultural legacy, affirming personal identity, and the traumatic experiences of Aboriginal peoples in Australia.

The interplay between past and present is highlighted through the employment of techniques, such as the alienation effect, as demonstrated by the sound of a helicopter flying overhead and the mobile call. The alienation effect is a fundamental term in the theatrical philosophy of German writer and director Bertolt Brecht. It involves using tactics to detach the audience from the emotional impact of the play by deliberately reminding them of the artificial nature of the theatrical performance. Hence, it is feasible to regulate the audience's degree of emotional attachment to characters and occurrences, enabling them to have a more lucid perception of how the authentic world is portrayed in the theatrical performance (Augustyn, 2020). Considering the scenery, the stage presents a rusty galvanized washtub and a disassembled push-pole clothesline set up on the stage. The play begins with a musician who strolls in, takes a seat, and begins to play. Old May, an elderly Aboriginal woman, walks in with her suitcase.

Windmill Baby exposes the psychological damage done to Aboriginal people by colonialism, marginalization, abuse, and loss. In addition to this, it depicts the tragedy of two black children who died due to the harsh working conditions imposed on the mother or the forbidden romances between black and white Australians. The play examines the experiences of Aboriginal women who worked as housekeepers on isolated cattle ranches in West Australia and casts light on the oppression experienced by them at the hands of a white male station owner. However, the play responds to this by presenting the protagonist, an Aboriginal

woman, who challenges the project of colonialism by narrating her history in a way that counters the colonial narrative and dismantles its authority. Milroy's play, as stated above, is a monodrama, that is, a theatrical or operatic piece performed by a single actor or singer (Britannica, 1999). Jeremy Ridgman notes that monodramas were prevalent in early nineteenth-century Australian theatre (1981). Ridgman adds that the rebirth of monodramas in the twentieth century was started by Jack Hibberd, who authored four of them. Hibberd suggests that the popularity of this genre is due to the absence of a distinct Australian national culture noting that it is attributed to his and other playwrights' status as newcomers in a foreign land (Hibberd, 1970, p. 130). In *Windmill Baby*, the use of monodrama is essential for undermining the colonial enterprise by presenting an Aboriginal woman whose presence in this deserted station after the departure of the coloniser entitles her to relate her story, which counters that of the coloniser.

1.2. Narrating History through Storytelling

To deconstruct colonial history, it takes more than just filling in the blanks with previously unreported events or replacing Eurocentric narratives with Aboriginal ones. When several narratives coexist, even in an unhappy union, history inevitably serves as a fertile ground for hybridity in postcolonial drama (Gilbert & Joanne, 1996,p.106). Establishing a setting for articulating counter-discursive representations of the past is one of the first ways post-colonial cultures challenge the ideological biases of imperial history. Many plays use elements of the pre-contact period to re-establish traditions, lay claim to a legacy or territory, and reclaim different kinds of cultural expression to counter the false notion that colonized people do/did not have a history of their own. Postcolonial literary works strive to reaffirm cultural traditions, assert ownership over heritage and land, and revive diverse forms of cultural expression (Gilbert & Joanne, 1996, p,110). The prevailing narrative of colonial history often implies a lack of significant opposition or resistance to imperial conquest. However, post-colonial literature challenges this notion. Through the establishment of counter-narratives and counter-contexts, disadvantaged cultures assert the need for a fairer and more inclusive foundation from which to navigate their post-colonial identities (Gilbert & Joanne, 1996, p,112).

Consequently, the process of re-evaluating history inherently assumes a political nature. Stephen Slemon argues that post-colonial writings play a pivotal role in cultural discourse and the propagation of anti-colonial opposition (1988, p. 159). In addition to the fundamental practice of re-evaluating a segment of history upon the emergence of new information, post-colonial histories strive to present alternative perspectives and incorporate not only the significant occurrences witnessed by a particular community or individual but also the cultural framework within which these events are comprehended and documented. The act of reconstructing historical events in such a manner often signifies the advent of novel perspectives and methodologies that facilitate a deeper comprehension of the historical context.

In line with the influential scholarship of Hayden White and Dening, along with other historians of our time, traditional historiography assumes a linear progression from a

constructed past to the present. Instead, Greg Dening (1993) advocates for a praxis that acknowledges the political dynamics involved in the deliberate choices made regarding the selection, arrangement, and portrayal of historical events. This relatively recent advancement in historical technique does not align with the manipulations of colonial history, which frequently substituted local, indigenous histories with a Eurocentric narrative, all while claiming to be ideologically neutral. In essence, the historical accounts of colonies often started with the arrival of European settlers. Any occurrences before the interaction with Europeans were deemed inconsequential to the established record, so constructing a history that was limited in scope and aimed at eradicating any indications of alternative narratives. The displacement of indigenous histories was accompanied by the replacement of local, culturally distinct forms of administration with imperial ones (Gilbert,1998).

According to Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (2013), the concept of historical objectivity is intertwined with a certain perspective on the linear structure of storytelling and its ability to accurately depict the sequence of events it portrays. The primary objective of the post-colonial endeavor is not only to challenge the prevailing narrative of history, which frequently marginalizes post-colonial societies as insignificant in the grand trajectory of advancement but also to actively participate in the process of storytelling itself (White, 1973, p. 356). It may be argued that post-colonial revisions of the European master historical narrative do not just focus on the creation of historical accounts, but rather on the formation of one's identity within the context of history. The theatrical medium, with its many forms of representation, offers a range of possibilities for the reclamation of a postcolonial sense of self that goes beyond textual communication and is instead expressed via live performances (Gilbert & Joanne, 1996, p. 109).

The portrayal of historical events via dramatic means is sometimes subject to further alterations influenced by factors such as the location, occasion, style of performance, and metatheatrical structures used in a specific production. This aligns with the post-colonial notion that a history is a form of communication that is influenced by cultural and ideological factors in the contemporary context (Slemon, 1988). According to Greg Dening (1993), the convergence of history and drama is not a simple happenstance. The theatre is a performative art form that strategically determines the positioning of objects to be viewed. Performative genres allow plays to transcend the constraints of time, unlike textual modes of representation, by also including a spatial component. In contrast to the linear interpretation required for written material, theatre provides the opportunity for a simultaneous examination of the many visual and auditory elements present in the performance, allowing for a multifaceted understanding of the text. Moreover, it enables the presentation of contrasting interpretations of historical events, which not only propose alternative defining moments but also offer distinct approaches to the construction of the past in the present. The traditional understanding of history has not only established the boundaries of the past but also defined the role and status of the colonized individual within that historical framework (Dening, 1993). An ample example of a performance that presents a contrary narrative of colonial enterprise is David Milroy's *Windmill Baby,* which is the focus of this chapter.

Milroy's play effectively communicates the notion that the act of storytelling serves as a significant means of communicating historical narratives, particularly when used within

the medium of theatre. Informed by Walter J. Ong's seminal work, Orality and Literacy (1982) which emphasizes, the study aims to convey how Aboriginal plays, such as Milroy's, recuperate the oral tradition prevalent among communities with a rich oral heritage (Az-Zubaidy, 2018, p. 59). McDowell (2015) examines the concept of counter-narratives and posits that they affirm the capacity of some tales to resist, contest, or perhaps counteract the detrimental effects caused by other narratives. According to Hyvärinen, the use of counter-narrative terminology serves to challenge the prevailing hegemonic story of the master narrative while emphasizing alternative narratives that oppose any kind of narrative essentialism. As such, the concept of counter-narrative pertains to narratives that emerge from the perspective of individuals or groups that have experienced historical marginalization (Hyvärinen, 2007).

1.3. Storytelling as a Counter-Narrative in Milroy's *Windmill Baby*

In most non-literate communities, history was preserved by the storyteller, who held a privileged place central to the maintenance and sustenance of the group's culture (Az-Zubaidy, 2018, p. 60). In *Windmill Baby*, Milroy introduces Old May as a narrator and augments her narrative with dramatic action, audience interaction, and music. The play incorporates two distinct temporal frameworks, namely the past and the present, to establish connections between events occurring in both periods. Further, the storyteller's age in this play entitles her to perform this role as being the eldest person who knows the details of events. The storyteller, conscious of the audience and of his or her role as a performer, rewrites history with each performance by allowing the past to speak to the present (Gilbert & Joanne, 1996, p. 114). As such, this technique enables Old May to proficiently communicate her past experiences before moving back to the present. Moreover, the use of designated names, namely Old May and MayMay, evidences the process of mediating the past through the present. As presented in *Windmill Baby* narratives are recounted backward and forward in time in a non-linear narrative.

The act of sharing tales involves the tangible act of verbal expression whereby the spoken word, Ong argues, brings out the presence of human people to the listeners. The primary factor that guarantees the occurrence of this phenomenon is the use of spoken language rather than written communication. Ong asserts that the use of a script as a means of communication necessitates the involvement of a conscious human and that the script alone exists solely as markings on a surface without such human agency (2012, p. 73). The employment of a conscious human is done successfully in Milroy's *Windmill Baby* when the act of engaging an Aboriginal woman to recount her tale via the use of counter-narrative and non-linear storytelling which subverts the authority of may be seen as a manifestation of the deconstruction of the colonial project.

Old May refers to her role as a storyteller and the stories she will relate. Old May addresses the audience, Old May, the protagonist, returns to the pastoral station she left half a century before to share and vividly portray historical events and personal experiences. As soon as the play begins, it becomes clear that the light and shadow, along with the carefully crafted musical composition, help in conveying and presenting the story honestly and

engagingly. The storyteller uses a variety of techniques to increase the audience's engagement. Because the storyteller is the story's protagonist, members of the audience will be affected by the story's visual, aural, and kinaesthetic elements. Old May successfully conveys her intended message to the audience by using a non-linear narrative structure and a variety of expressive gestures. As previously said, Milroy employs the alienation effect, which is used to present a story in a realistic manner that encourages the audience to connect with her, makes them aware that they are seeing a performance, and demonstrates how the reality of their life is mirrored in the play.

To engage members of the audience, Old May sits in front of them and exhibits various factors, such as vocal tone, fluctuating emotions, body language, and the fusion of emotions and speech, which bring her closer to them. As such, the study aligns with Az-Zubaidy's viewpoint that a monodrama portrays. To indicate the reason why she returns to the station after almost fifty years, This conveys how Old may narrate her story as if recalling it from memory. When she begins her narration, she tries to take her audience on a journey to the past, where even the usage of her other name, MayMay is meant to suit this journey. This can metaphorically be explored through the reference to the shadow of the windmill, which this Aboriginal woman intends to remove to narrate her stories. While referring to the shadow of the windmill, Old May begins her story by talking about the arrival of the white woman to the station, whom she calls Missus, and the crippled Aboriginal young man, Wunman, and their love story. The result of this love is a baby called Windmill Baby. Old May employs this opportunity to comment on the white coloniser's severe treatment of Aboriginal people in the station.

The Boss' suggestion to send Wunman to the mission is used metaphorically in this play to refer to the colonizer's process of breeding out the Aboriginal race. Auber Octavius Neville, who was assigned as chief protector of Aboriginal people, observed that the purpose of forcibly removing Aboriginal children from their mothers was to eventually forget that there were ever any Aborigines in Australia and ultimately erase any memory of the existence of Aboriginal people (1947, p. 59). This is an example to show how Aboriginal children were forcibly removed from their parents and sent to missions. Although Wunman has a family that loves him and wants to keep him, the boss treats all Aboriginal children as slaves who have to work hard for him. If they do not meet the master's expectations, they are forcibly removed. This instance refers to an awful chapter in Australian history where the Australian government hid all the details of this racist process until 1997, which marked the release of the *Bringing Them Home report*, which is the first government report to specifically address the topic of the Stolen Generations. This report shocked the public, who, following the official proclamation, regarded Aboriginal stories as all alleged. It is worth noting that members of the Aboriginal children who were the target of this racist policy came to be known as the Stolen Generations. This instance evidences how this play not only casts light on but also dismantles the colonial enterprise, which has hidden that incident away from the public epistemology, as it did later with the colonization of Australia, which they termed before as *Terra Nullius*, under the pretext of civilizing its people.

The techniques used by colonial governments to destroy Aboriginal communities, such as prohibiting mixing with mixed-blood persons and encouraging couplings only among

whites or those of pure descent (full blood), attempted to progressively eliminate the indigenous black occupants. This is an indirect reference to the rape of Aboriginal women by white colonisers. Such narratives were not documented by colonial enterprises. Old May comments on this racist policy to breed out Aboriginal children by saying. The White boss' viewpoint resonates with Neville who asserted (1947, p. 56). As Neville noted here the contact between mixed-descent Aboriginal individuals and full-blood Aboriginal individuals will delay the process of assimilation and hinder efforts to eradicate any remaining full-blood individuals.

Milroy's play highlights this issue by referring to a story from the play about the child that was the result of the relationship between Wunman and the white woman, Missus. When the baby is born, the white doctor shouts at MayMay "Bring him outside. Now, I want you to get rid of the baby. Get rid of it. It's not a white baby. Do you understand what I'm saying?" (Milory, 2013,.p. 225). The doctor's words are a testimony that, according to white mentality, black babies are not entitled to live. This seems to be a notion shared by both the doctor and the boss who forces MayMay to go with him and Malvern to sell the cattle regardless of her pregnancy. As such, the play discloses how black lives and children do not matter compared to white lives and children. Accordingly, Milroy's *Windmill Baby* not only preserves the Aboriginal heritage of storytelling but also manipulates it to narrate Aboriginal resilience and resistance to the colonial enterprise that subjects Aboriginals and presents them in a stereotyped and negative way.

An example of how Old May manipulates the spatial elements on the stage and links them with the context of the story is when "a watermelon rolls across the stage to announce the beginning of a new story" (Milroy, 2013, p. 210). Despite his disability, Wunman manages to take care of and cultivate the gardens. Historically, throughout the era of colonization, handicapped children were often subjected to neglect and abandonment, resulting in fatal outcomes (Lewis, 1971). The treatment of disabled Aboriginals by the colonizers is conveyed through the character of Wunman, who acts as a symbolic representation of this group. Contrary to the white boss' expectations, Wunman is able to cultivate the gardens in the station in an expressive image of Aboriginal people's resilience. Old May comments on Wunman's ability with reference to animals, such as kangaroos, and also the white lady, the missus:

> And that windmill started turning, the water started pumping and all them kangaroos started wagging their tails because everything started coming up green. The missus reckoned Wunman had green fingers. (Milroy, 2013.p. 211).

This scene refutes the colonizer's claim that they have the right to seize Australia and consider it their own as its inhabitants were unable to cultivate it. Milroy proceeds to analyze the political backdrop of the relationship between black and white individuals in Australia to ridicule the idea of *Terra Nullius*, which invalidates the existence of the Aboriginal people before the arrival of white settlers in Australia. Terra Nullius is a Latin term that denotes a piece of land that is not claimed or owned by any individual or entity. In Australia, the phrase referred to a region that no European country had yet claimed. Sven Lindqvist (2012) argues that in the context of Australia, the term signifies the validation of British colonization and its

associated actions of displacement and the eradication of the native society. Lindqvist contends that Britain used this philosophy in Australia, a country where the Aboriginals once lived, to drive down (Lindqvist, 2012, p.13). The above example, in which Wunman, despite his disability, turns the land into a green field, counteracts the colonizer's premise.

As the boss is on a journey with Malvern and Old May. Wunman revives both the garden and the life of Misuss. He fills the garden with flowers, take some to Missus, and sits with her on the verandah Various kinds of flowers appear, like Daisy, Violet, and Pansy. The relationship between Wunman and Missus gets closer as he plays the gramophone on the verandah and Missus dances. When she becomes pregnant, Wunman tells young MayMay how she tells him about Eden.

The narrative of this love begins to escalate as Wunman establishes an amorous connection with the Boss' wife. Wunman converses with her on the verandah, sharing anecdotes and narratives about gardening. Aboriginal employees were subjected to restrictions that prohibited their entry, seating, and conversation with members of the family. However, Wunman persistently presents flowers to Missus and manages to captivate her with his kind demeanor and engaging narratives.

The lack of a bond between Aboriginals and white colonizers is a major factor in the failure of this relationship between Wunman and Missus. Like the two in Missus' story about Eden, Wunman and Missus break the white law because they have a love affair and Missus becomes pregnant. Wunman is sure that the baby is his, and this is why he tells MayMay. "I want you to promise that one day you'll bring that windmill Baby to me. Make sure you keep that keep that promise" (Milroy, 2013, p. 224). This statement by Wunman suggests that even entities that have been subjected to degradation and marginalization may still possess inherent value and ultimately achieve success. It serves as a symbolic message for Aboriginal communities, who have experienced colonization, that highlights their resilience and presents their narratives and historical experiences to undermine the colonial enterprise. As such, Wesley Enoch strongly emphasizes the narration of diverse experiences that effectively communicate the enduring history of inequity and grief experienced by Aboriginal communities. Enoch asserts the notion of embracing a diverse range of narratives rather than adhering to one storyline, stressing the need to see the multifaceted nature of individuals beyond superficial appearances (Enoch, 2001). The act of multiplying faces and tales serves as a representation of the rich variety of languages, customs, and narratives among Aboriginal peoples., contrary to the colonizer's project, which regards all Aboriginal people as having a homogeneous identity.

As stated earlier, this play moves in a non-linear trajectory. Old May moves freely between the past and present. In a particular scene, that evidences her change of tenses and presenting the past in the present, we find her telling stories and playing roles of other characters. Specifically, she discusses their roles and places of work at the station. Then, in a good example of the employment of the alienation effect, she turns to the present time to engage in a conversation with a helicopter, as shown by her fluctuating use of tenses and her presentation of previous events in the present tense (pp. 216-217).

After relating the injustices experienced by other characters, Old May relates her own. She narrates how the white boss forced her, fifty years ago, to go with him on a journey, while she was pregnant, to sell the cattle at the city. Malvern, her husband. Yet, the white boss insists on taking her with them. One of the workers, named Jim, sustained an injury while assisting Malvern. Despite her pregnancy, the boss refuses to postpone Jim's duties and instead instructs MayMay to accompany Malvern in completing the arduous task. When Malvern objects to this, the boss displays a callous attitude and expresses a desire to harm Malvern. MayMay and Malvern reach a mutual agreement to go on a journey. During their travels, Malvern presents MayMay with a ring adorned with a ruby gemstone, expressing his desire to name the child Ruby. However, due to the hard conditions of the journey and the demanding labor imposed upon MayMay by her employer, she tragically loses her baby. Ruby is not the only child lost in the play. The second one is Missus' and Wunman's baby. This devastating event leaves both MayMay and Malvern overwhelmed with sorrow and sadness. This incident demonstrates explicitly the severe treatment of white colonizers and the hardships endured by the colonized populations.

2. Deconstructing the colonial enterprise from a feminist perspective

2.1. An Overview of Feminist Theory

Over many years, women have engaged in a challenging battle to advocate for their rights and challenge the prevailing patriarchal norms within society. Hence, the global community is confronted with the feminist movement, that sought to advocate for the legal right of women to vote, equality and fair pay. Women have had a significant and essential role in the interpretation and representation of historical events through a feminist lens. The contributions made by those individuals have played a crucial role in questioning and reformulating prevailing narratives, revealing concealed narratives, and magnifying their perspectives and encounters. From a feminist standpoint, the role of women in the narration of history is to critically question and reformulate conventional historical narratives that have often marginalized or disregarded the voices, experiences, and contributions of women (Nicholson, 1997). The female body's ability to create a language that expresses her ideas and rights has become an essential feminist feature (Keif & Hamad, 2022). Black feminist writer Barbara Smith defines feminism as the political theory and practice to free all women: women of colour, working-class women, poor women, physically challenged women, and old women (Smith B., 1979).

The history of feminism has been categorized into three distinct waves. The first feminist wave emerged throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The first wave primarily pertained to the women's suffrage campaigns, followed by a subsequent wave in the 1960s and 1970s, termed the second wave, which referred to the concepts and ideas linked to the women's liberation movement (Frederic P. Miller, 2010). This movement advocated for the attainment of legal and social rights for women, and with a third wave that has persisted from the 1990s to the current day, emerged as a response to the perceived shortcomings of second-wave feminism and as a means of furthering its objectives (hooks, 2000).

The ideology of feminism has brought about significant changes in several domains of Western civilization, including cultural and legal spheres. It focuses on examining patriarchal cultural structures, which often result in the marginalisation and devaluation of women during significant historical periods. Women were historically seen as insignificant or unimportant. In essence, women were assigned the responsibility of engaging in the reproductive process, nurturing and rearing offspring, and attending to their spouses' needs and well-being (Nati, 2020). Feminist activists have actively advocated for the legal rights of women, encompassing various aspects such as contractual rights, property rights, and suffrage, and for women struggling for identity (Mankhi, 2020). They have also championed women's entitlement to bodily integrity and autonomy, including the right to access safe and legal abortion as well as reproductive rights, which encompass the availability of contraception and quality prenatal care (Friedan, 1963).

In 1984, bell hooks, also known as Gloria Jean Watkins, released a pioneering analysis of the prevailing feminist discourses of her day. She saw that feminist thinkers focused on the oppression experienced by women due to their gender while also advocating for rights that were exclusively available to males. Although feminist scholars emphasize the need to include diverse groups in philosophical and theoretical discussions, it seems that they have intentionally overlooked non-white, underprivileged women (hooks, 1984). Expanding upon the commonly understood meaning of feminism as the pursuit of equal rights for both genders, hooks argues that this oversimplified definition overlooks the significance of race and social class in conjunction with sexism, which collectively determines the degree to which an individual may face discrimination, exploitation, or oppression (1984, p. 18). The widely recognised notion of feminism, according to hooks, exclusively favours white Bourgeois women. She insists that feminism should have a broader scope that strives to address the experiences of all individuals who are subjected to exploitation, discrimination, and/or oppression. (2000, p. 8).

2. 2. The Aboriginal feminist perspective as a dismantling process in David Milroy's *Windmill Baby*

Aboriginal women have played a significant role in the development of the performing arts in Australia, including several disciplines such as theatre, dance, music, and storytelling. These media platforms have been used as a means of articulating one's cultural identity, disseminating narratives, and fostering consciousness on socio-political matters (Rory & Piepmeier, 2003). Throughout history, women have used the medium of theatre as a means to reclaim and reimagine the past, with a particular emphasis on narratives that highlight women's experiences and their significant societal contributions (MacKenzie, 2020). In contrast to the imposed norm, in which history is mostly presented through the perspective of the colonizers, the play is presented through a feminist lens, where an Aboriginal woman recounts the narratives of several personalities and plays their roles, including that of the white colonizer.

In the play, Old May clearly demonstrates that the performing body may actively engage in the interaction between the performer and the audience. Daniele M. Klapproth maintains that the interaction between the audience and the storyteller is considered a crucial

and inseparable component of this social practice (Klapproth, 2004). This physical existence indicates defiance against categorizing women and restricting them to a single fixed identity. Old May deliberate interaction with a member of the audience to narrate a story clarifies her narrative goals and emphasizes the veracity and authenticity of her story. Maymay employs these strategies to give her tale greater credibility and reality.

She successfully silences any opposing accounts, emphasizing her entire authority in narrating her past and thereby providing a contrary narrative, which is a powerful statement of her agency and reality. In the first scene of the play, Old May expresses the notion of completing unfinished matters. Old May intends to recount her colonial past, and now is the opportune moment to fulfill her objective and deliver her discourse. This endeavor is an effort to deconstruct the colonial enterprise, as she exposes the reality of their colonialist practices, including the severe mistreatment that resulted in the tragic loss of her child. Regarding the relationship between Aboriginal women and white women in colonial societies, hooks (1984) would likely highlight the complexities and power dynamics. hooks observes that white women, as a group, have historically held social and economic privileges in colonial societies due to their racial and class positions. This privilege could result in a power imbalance between white women and Aboriginal women, where white women may unintentionally or consciously perpetuate the oppression of Aboriginal women (hooks 1984, 35).

Waltzing the Wilarra, another play by David Milroy examines a period in Western Australia's history when mixed-race people were more likely to be arrested for interracial interactions and racial tensions ran high. It examines the role of white female characters in the double marginalization of Aboriginal women in the play. Elsa, a member of the Stolen Generations, reunites with her mother after years of separation but cannot live with her in the same home because the mother works for a white Australian family. Elsa's story reveals the effects of the forcible removal of Aboriginal children from their parents, as well as the contribution of white women to upholding patriarchal power. This instance is a protest against the involvement of white women in marginalizing Aboriginal women (Az-Zubaidy, 2018, p. 75). Black women's identities and agency have historically been erased and marginalized as a result of the superiority complex and hierarchical interactions that have existed between white women and Aboriginal women. This was eloquently shown in *Waltzing the Wilarra,* where white and black women have no solidarity or proper relationship as Aboriginal women are instead treated as slaves and servants. Elsa draws attention to this problem by showing her lack of maternal care for her daughter due to the disruption of her relationship with her mother colonial agenda has a drastic impact on Aboriginal peoples and their parental relations. As portrayed in this play, Aboriginal women were denied basic rights by white women who had no empathy for them. In *Windmill Baby*, Milroy opens up opportunities in the text where solidarity might be achieved between white and Aboriginal women to counter the colonizer's agenda.

Huggins, on the other hand, exemplifies the possibility and potential benefit of cooperation between white and Aboriginal women in Australia through her actions. Huggins asserts in the concluding section of a 1993 conference paper she co-wrote with white historian Kay Saunders that white and Aboriginal feminist historians may be able to form alliances (Huggins & Saunders, 1993). Huggins often stresses the need for this shared

grounding in her work, and she highlights the significance of cross-cultural learning and reconciliation (Huggins. 1994, p. 76). Despite the power imbalances, there can be opportunities for solidarity between Aboriginal women and white women. Recognising shared struggles against sexism and patriarchy can foster understanding and collaboration in feminist activism and this is depicted through the collaboration between Misuss and MayMay. Ample instance is when the first tells the latter: "MayMay, I want you to help me make a quilt for my baby'' (Milroy, 2013, p.223).In contrast to her husband, Missus shows kindness towards Maymay by requesting her assistance in crafting a quilt for her baby.

The dynamic between the two characters, Missus and MayMay, exemplifies the positive aspects of their social position. This quality prompts MayMay to assist Missus throughout her pregnancy. The born child serves as a symbolic manifestation of the demise of colonialism. As such, *Windmill Baby* offers a turning point in the relationship between Misuss and Maymay. Instead of aligning with the oppressor, as is the case in *Waltzing the Wilarra*, the white female character, in *Windmill Baby*, participates in the articulation of a counter-narrative to that disseminated by the colonizers. Portraying such a narrative in the theatrical sphere helps foster such a bond in the national sphere. As such, this play and other works attempt to undermine and disrupt the colonial agenda.

3. Conclusion

Milroy's *Windmill Baby* explores the employment of the storytelling technique and conveys its role in disturbing colonial enterprise from two perspectives. In addition to relating Aboriginal peoples' traumatic experiences, the play depicts Aboriginal resilience, resistance, and preservation of cultural identity. While acknowledging this, the text opens up spaces where the colonial narrative is being countered and refuted. In contrast to the white notion where Aboriginal peoples are observed as inferior and lack the expertise of cultivating nature, the play presents a crippled Aboriginal who, regardless of his disability, succeeds in turning the fields green. Moreover, The Aboriginal woman is depicted as being able to endure the work normally assigned to men albeit being pregnant. Further, contrary to the white notion that women are marginalized in non-white communities, the play portrays the great role Aboriginal women play as disseminators of Aboriginal narrative, history, and culture. Last but not least, the play provides the opportunity for achieving a collaboration between white and Aboriginal women, another endeavor to counter the colonial scheme, which impedes such attempts.

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