

The Signs of Mental Life: Understanding the Impact of Transculturalism on the Primitive Landscape in Selective Judith Wright Poems

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Abstract

A unique interpretation of land, which influenced and continues to influence human relationships with the Earth. Societies are not sensitized to the natural world in ways that affirm indigenous modes of being and knowing. Indigenous cultures and life ways need to be valued, especially traditional environmental knowledge which includes fire management, regenerative agriculture and climate adaptation. The primitive inhabitants adore carrying over their structural pattern of living style, stereotypes of culture, rituals, tradition and beliefs to the upcoming generation via carvings, rock art, body markings, folk lore and sermons in the ceremonies. The term 'Migration' created magical revolution among the innocent nomads. As a result, non – indigenous settlers pollute the landscape, customs and traditions and culture of the indigenous people. Aboriginal inhabitants are still living and preserving their cultures despite the deleterious effects of loss through oppression and settler colonialism. This article analysis the aboriginal intense feelings of searching for identity, disability, quest for the past, oppression in the hands of the white officers and the non – English – speaking immigrants through the selective poems of Judith Wright.

Keywords: Settlers, Native Aborigines, Oppression, Identity, Primitive Landscape.

Introduction

Due to the socio – economic and political effects, the British government was indeed to establish a colony at Botany Bay for displacing its convicts. The convicts were encouraged to settle on the land and serve as travelling laborers linked to local stations. The vibrant and colorful oral literature captured the natural and social environment of the penal system and Australia in the genre of ballad by the convict community of Irish origin. The white officers manipulated the tension between immigrants and the indigenous aborigines by their well – repudiated 'divide and rule'. Irish settlers

and the white officers created powerful influence in Australian literature by introduced culture, law, education, language among the existing indigenous inhabitants. The Australian literature faced the division between the writers of aborigines and non - English- speaking migrant. The two groups of writers depict their literary works on the themes of alienation, loneliness, identity, displacement, oppression, subjugation, disability, inefficiency and withdrawal from their rights and clan community.

Impact of Transculturalism

Most of the indigenous literature has the strong conviction that the land is their primary teacher. The aboriginal inhabitants memorized and carried over their duties to the land and their ancestors form one generation to another generation through their song cycles and stories during the ritual sermons, speeches, cultivation and festival time. Their civilization developed from knowledge gleaned from the land, from life on the land, and from the wider universe. Indigenous people have an intense connection with the earth, environmental condition, wildlife and flora in the region where they live. The diversity of indigenous societies is a natural result of the diversity of living systems on Earth. After the invasion of the convicts and the white settlers, the colonizers disrupted the native people's culture, oral and artistic tradition. When the colonizers framed stereotypical dominant policies, the aboriginal inhabitants begin to fight for their native land. Certain policies caused ferocious outrage against the transculture where the indigenous people work as laborers in their birth landscape, their women raped by the white officers, their clan people were humiliated by the settlers. Intolerable atrocities were faced by the primitive people who influenced Judith Wright to use poetry as a powerful weapon for retrieving the aboriginal rights in their native land against the colonizers and the imperialists. The aboriginal writer Judith Wright insisted such themes as quench of identity, quest to retrieve the past, the sense of being an outcast and the threat of impending violence in her poetry collections of *The Moving Image*(1946) ,*Woman to Man* (1949), *The Gateway* (1953), *Five Senses*(1963), *Train Journey* (1978) etc.,

Aborigines' Ineptness

Most of the Judith Wright's poems portray the bond of indigenous people with the native landscape, ancestral spirits, and the beauty of the native land and the nostalgic moments of the history but "Niggers Leap, New England" poem title itself conveyed that the formation of new country in the primitive inhabitants. The first title "Niggers Leap" represents the aboriginal tribes and the second half represents the invasion of the white colonizers to establish New England in a foreign island. Wright begun the poem sun sets in the east which symbolizes the evil things might be happened in the lives of the native people. In the year of 1788, the colonial white settlers invaded as a penal colony with convicts and jailers transported from Britain. Their main notion is to extend their governing policy, make the inhabitants as marginalized, and divert the native people to adopt new culture and tradition by offering job and food.

"The eastward spurs tip backward from the sun.
Nights runs an obscure tide round cape and bay
And beats with boats of cloud up from the sea
against this sheer and limelit granite head."

Without giving any alertness, they arrived on the aboriginal shore with convicts and advanced guns. The indigenous tribe couldn't protect their clan community by their wooden and country weapons from the white colonizers. On account of their inefficiency, black aboriginal tribes surrendered and obeyed the order of new invaders by falling from the cliff. The colonial victims witnessed their tropical lands were measured by the colonizers poles, their charming home turned

into meaningless and their harmonious lives were lost in their silence ultimately leading to their imprisonment in the sea.

“Night buoys no warning

Over the rocks that wait our keels; no bells

Sound for the mariners. Now must we measure

Our days by nights, our tropics by their poles,

Love by its end and all our speech by silence.”

Judith Wright vehemently conveyed her strong hatred for the invaders’ acts of humiliating and vandalizing the indigenous people in their homeland by posing critical questions.

“Did we not know their blood channelled our rivers,

And the black dust our crops ate was their dust?

The voiceless and defenseless tribes were forced to experience the horrible pain of broken bones. So they all were aware of their blood channeled in their river and the heavenly landscape drastically transformed into the dust of the aboriginal blacks. Judith Wright couldn’t understand the colonizers hatred towards the black people. Despite portraying the emotional suffering of the indigenous people, Wright ultimately expressed an optimistic belief that the aborigines should never be disconnected from their land, much as a shadow cannot be detached from its real picture at the end of the poem.

Displacement of Convicts

Mainly, the prison was constructed for the British’s convicts to house them as well as to control the overflow of war prisoners. So establishing the penal colony was the only solution for the colonizers. Hence, the imperialized government abducted the uninhabited islands, where only the indigenous tribes lived. Judith Wright recollects the nostalgic incidents of the convicts and prisoners of the cell in her poem “The Old Prison”. The Old Prison symbolizes the impact of colonization among the aboriginal people and the primitive land’s transformation in history. The poem begins to explore the present condition of the prison as the rows of cells were unroofed; the white officers hunted the native black people as an angry bee hunts honey.

“O dark and fierce day:

the wind like an angry bee

hunts for the black honey

in the pits of the hollow sea.”

The empty shell of the prison sung the bitter song of their ill – treatment, oppression; hard working for shaping the penal colonies of New South Wales, their desolation, hardship to mingle with inmates and difficulty to adopt the new premises and culture and finally the prisoners disappeared from the world.

“Who built and labored here?

The wind and the sea say

Their old nest is broken

and they are blown away”

Finally Judith Wright concludes the poem with alienation and desolation tone because nobody experience concern or love in the cell. The wind only now cried through the flute of stone when once the prisoners cried lonely.

Cultural Diversity

Many indigenous people held the deep belief that the land, rivers, hills, flora, fauna, and universe itself were incarnations of their ancestors’ spirits. As the ancestral spirits wandered from location to location, they imprinted themselves through physical contact with sites regarded as holy. The

acquired knowledge was transmitted through the recitation of mantras during ceremonial rites by the prominent members of the clan community, who assume the form of ancestral spirits.

A multitude of ceremonies were conducted within the tribal territory, including public ceremonies and initiation rituals, among others. Upon reaching adulthood, a young man was required to participate in the initiation ceremony; only then was he regarded as a man within the clan community. By participating in these ceremonies, young individuals could gain knowledge about cultural practices such as body painting, chanting mantras, and the significance of ancestral spirits as well as the focal points of their culture. After European settlement, the indigenous land's cultural and ritualistic practices gradually diminished. As a result of European colonization, many indigenous people saw traditional rites as barbaric and primitive.

Judith Wright pictures the extermination of the primitive people's culture in the hands of imperialist kingdom of the world. In her poem "Bora Ring," she delicately points out how modern people fail to consider the music, values, identity, traditional beliefs, and practices of their predecessors. Bora Ring is an initiation ritual for men performed within the circular stone monument.

"The song is gone; the dance
is secret with the dancers in the earth,
the ritual useless, and the tribal story
lost in an alien tale."

When once the melodies occupied the landscape, now only the grass and apple gums echoed the previous corroboration. The spear and the tribal weapons were shattered by the native captors. The indigenous nomads were unable to overcome their deep-seated fear of being humiliated by the white settlers. This poem expressed the speaker's worry for the dominance of the foreign cultivation methods and foreign crops, loss of the native culture, tradition, cultivation methods, rites and rituals, interlinked with the natural environment and forgetfulness of the native identity.

Disdain Attitude

Judith Wright effectively expresses her frustration and anger towards the Australian people for their disregard in safeguarding their declining environment. Judith Wright urges the Australian people to remember their tame animals, barren landscape, to remain the nature as it is, to keep fighting against the human interventions and free from the colonial activities. Being an environmentalist, Wright wrote ferociously "Australia 1970" for sustaining the Australian environment as their homeland before the invaders. Australian people should fight like a ferocious wedge – tailed eagle who cursing its captor, die like a tiger snake who hunts its killer's dreams, suffer like iron wood and fight like a soldier ant which mindless the distracting thoughts.

"For we are conquerors and self – poisoners
More than scorpion or snake
And dying of the venoms that we make
Even while you die of us"

Wright wished that the people must awake from the blind influence of European culture because they were hurting themselves unknowingly by polluting the landscape. As a result, the nature gives what it receives from the human race as boomerang.

"I praise the scoring drought, the flying dust,
The drying creek, the furious animal,
That they oppose us still;
That we are ruined by the thing we kill."

Wright admired on the barren land, flying dust, the empty stream and furious animal for

opposing its invaders cum captors. Likewise humankind must learn to preserve its environment from the invaders and also maintain the ecological system as it is.

Conclusion

Judith Wright, a genuine aboriginal and environmental activist, endeavors to bridge the divide between white colonizers and black indigenous people. She effectively imparts to the white colonizers the understanding that “all men are one man at last,” emphasizing the futility of discriminating based on language, race, culture, tradition, or color. Wright desires for the white population to comprehend and respect the aboriginal way of life, which is deeply intertwined with their native landscape. Due to the influence of European settlers, the indigenous people have lost touch with their invaluable culture and traditions. Therefore, Wright strives to awaken the younger generation to embrace their native values and customs, to remember the annihilation, humiliation, and vandalism inflicted upon the aboriginal people, and to advocate for their rights with dignity. The majority of her poems concluded with pessimistic tones, aiming to provide hope and aid in the restoration of the indigenous people from the lasting impact of colonization.

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