

### Dominant Reading: (post-colonial lens)

The novel invites to consider the perspective of convicts in a sympathetic light.

Human's innate desire for a sense of belonging and place in society can manifest into colonial attitudes of ownership.

❖ violence of colonialism  
→ destructive to both colonised & colonisers

### Alternate Reading:

Feminist lens: self-sacrificial quality

- ❖ Sal was technically the 'owner'/'master' of Thornhill, however in the end she still ends up conforming to gender norms and being submissive towards him
- ❖ She nurtures ~~her~~ the children - As Thornhill doesn't participate in ~~but~~ upbringing as much
- ❖ Really wanted to go back to England  
→ but ~~was~~ had to sacrifice ↓

Masculinity: they turn to (flowers)  
violence to prove themselves 'masculine'

❖ Social class system of England as oppressive

- historical revisionism present colonisers as more sympathetic
- In a story about about Aboriginal ppl → they are voiceless (zoomorphism)

### Resistant Reading:

value people for who they are (humanist lens)

The representation of Aboriginal People as "not-human"  
mystifies them (humanism)

↳ Aboriginal voices are silenced throughout novel.

While Colonisation is bad and destructive  
→ it lead to social mobility for European people.

## • Dominant Reading •

view of colonisation and settler culture as destructive.

Critique of Eurocentric values— the convicts, settlers think land should be developed as there are no 'signs; houses, fields, flocks.'

Dharug people are represented as part of the land, but are also mysterious

Destructive to both victims and perpetrators of Colonialism

Colonialism can lead to violence due to humans desire for power and mate ownership.

CLARE TAMIIKA

## ALTERNATE READING!

colonisers and settlers cause destruction on the landscape, but to an extent deserve our sympathy?

Feminist lens: Sal is labelled the master of William Thounhill

Men resort to violence when masculinity is threatened

Sal has to be self sacrificial

Almost no representation of Aboriginal People.

Colonialism was destructive, but it allowed for people to improve their living standard. (Those in London, who would have otherwise been in poverty)

## BESI~~SIS~~STANT reading

Opposite of Dominant Reading

Australia was free land for the taking.

The settlers were right in taking Australia and forming the land.

Aboriginal people did not own the land.

Novel presents Dharug people as a disturbance that inhibits European settlement. However they are the ones in true harmony with the land.

### Dominant

- commentary on attitudes from the coloniser compared to the values of Indigenous Australian
- more leaning towards the Indigenous values being better
- Thornhill pulls out dairy cows but gets mad when Indigenous people pull up his corn, shows he doesn't understand their way of life

### Alternate

- the importance of land ownership?
- the imagery of the land, the language Thornhill uses when he finally gets his land
  - Thornhill! "His own. His own, 'tis me of him standing on it."
  - (when he arrives at his newly owned land)
- And then while he's talking about how he owns every rock and creature in his land, he sees a black crow, who (fails) to leave the branch he's sitting on, representing the Aboriginal people

### Resistant

- The European coloniser have a better way of life
- Thornhill ends up wealthy at his society flourishes while the Aboriginal Australian suffer

# What is the dominant reading?

o Colonisation was a destructive process for both the colonisers, and the people that got colonised, i.e. Indigenous people.

↳ Characterisation of smasher & Sagittarius

↳ Graphic depictions of violence

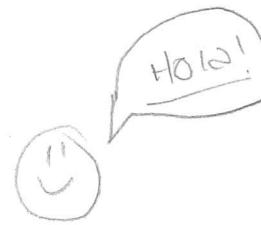
"The face was unrecognisable as a face, the only thing clear the yellow ear of corn stuck between the pink sponge that had been the lips"

"Blood so dark that it was almost black had welled up thick out of the wound, through his shirt"

↳ Due to their fragile masculinity, they offer security  
and new feeling of survival with this  
violence to compensate for their lack of masculinity.  
↳ "In my own case for survival we would though  
have been the victim and instance,  
Henry, Thornhill have pined &  
the darkly shipwrecked, he  
drooped and died"



Kenneth 7"7"7"7"7"3"



# Dominant

- colonisers don't deserve the sympathy of Australia
  - ↳ the attacks on IA (cut off hand, hung body)
- colonisation was a destructive event that had negative effects on both the colonisers and Indigenous Australians
  - ↳ convicts were forced to go to Aus to avoid death sentence
  - ↳ Indigenous Australians lost their home, land and were attacked
- colonialism is violent

# alternate

- gender → women were expected to be positive and nurturing constantly
  - ↳ Sal giving up all her time and energy for her kids
  - ↳ Sal having 5 kids
  - ↳ Sal always joking and looking on the bright side (when thornhill got convicted)
- race → The British are selfish and greedy
  - ↳ they always refer to something as 'mine'
  - ↳ they keep taking without giving back
  - ↳ Thornhill wants to get more land even though he has a good life where he is
  - ↳ concept of "give a little, take a little"
  - ↳ overfishing
  - ↳ exploitation of resources
- even in a story about Indigenous Australians, there is a lot about them, there isn't really a strong representation of them

# Reinterpret

- colonisers deserve sympathy
  - ↳ Thornhill's experiences in London
    - he lived in poverty, had to steal to survive
- colonising Australia led to the modernisation making Australia what it is today
  - ↳ built the houses
  - ↳ overfishing the farming (agriculture)
  - ↳ built roads
  - ↳ travel mediums

## ~~DOMINANT~~

- colonisers' perspective are renounced
- coloniser's do not deserve our sympathy
- William's third person limited perspective  
↳ Indigenous voices are silenced
- graphic visual imagery of the effects that colonisation had on the indigenous  
↳ sympathy to the indigenous  
↳ representation of colonisation
- attitudes and ideals regarding land ownership  
↳ ignorant  
↳ intelligence was not associated with the indigenous
- colonisers rationalising their actions  
↳ euphemise the cruel and brutal actions they committed
  - Thornhill telling Indigenous to "be off"
  - ↳ power hungry
  - ↳ eager to climb the social hierarchy
- obfuscation of Indigenous representation of colonisation → marginalised as a disease  
↳ infecting the natural land

## alternate.

- gender roles:
  - men-egotistical
    - ↳ wanting to own land
    - ↳ greedy
    - ↳ would do anything to climb the social hierarchy
  - women
    - ↳ nurturing
    - ↳ child carriers
      - Sal who follows Thornhill to an unknown land
    - ↳ follow male counterparts
- identity crisis
  - ↳ clash in culture
    - ↳ rat poison death of Indigenous (graphic imagery)
- perverse gender roles
  - ↳ ~~Thornhill~~ Thornhill being given to Sal
  - ↳ assigned
  - ↳ challenges masculinity
    - ↳ fragile masculinity
- feminist lens; self-sacrificial

## resistant reading

- colonisers deserve our sympathy
  - ↳ forced to do what they did.
  - ↳ were "good" to begin with.
- not all colonisers are bad
  - ↳ forced to / poor pressure/social hierarchy
  - ↳ Thornhill helping the child poisoned by rat poison when no one was watching.
  - ↳ social hierarchy in the colony prevents him from helping the Aboriginal when there are other colonisers around.
- e.g. Thornhill uses his status to prevent violence against Aboriginals, threatens gun with a flagging.
- e.g. Thornhill pointing gun but not using it ↳ doesn't want to be an active part of violence against Aboriginals.
- e.g. Thornhill struggling to shoot Walker Harry; struggles to pull the trigger; subconscious attempt to escape the situation.
- social mobility; improved some lives
- humanism; evaluate people for who they are.
- not relevant to society

menino ? very "

## Dominant

### Colonialism Reading - Bad

- Bad because ~~yes~~ they took the Indigenous Australians culture and traditions away. They broke families apart, took over the Indigenous heritage as well.

- This is a dominant reading because this theme is present throughout the novel, e.g. The British taking over NSW

- Quotes:  
"There were no signs that the black felt the place belonged to them. They had no fences that said "This is mine"..."

## Alternate

### Neutral

The colonisers acted in an inhumane and cruel manner towards the Indigenous community. For this ~~they~~ we can see them as evil and amoral. However, when taking into consideration the oppression they faced from High English Society, we ~~can~~ see ask ourselves the question, "Were they inherently immoral individuals or moulded into that by their circumstances?". As well as that, we can ask the question, "Who is to blame for the ~~atrocities~~ carried out on Indigenous Australians - the convicts that actually did them or the English High Society that taught them to be cold-hearted and unethical." The Secret River leaves us with more questions about Colonial Australia, than answers.

## Resistant

### Why the colonial guys are good

Socially, just write about how they were oppressed from (low society) in England and then they went to Australia and they were given power and strength.

They did not know how to act properly because big society is English and was always oppressing low class and so when they were given power they started acting like the English big society. The colonisers were not inherently heartless and cruel but they ~~were~~ are because of their white European historical significance in Australia's colonial society.

# RESISTANT READING

(opposite of dominant)

→ colonisation in a more positive light

→ a resistant reading highlights

how it may inadvertently reinforce  
colonial ideologies

→ a resistant reading challenges thornhill's  
portrayal by emphasising  
how his pursuit of  
prosperity ultimately  
rests upon the violent appropriation  
of land and ~~injuries~~ from the indigenes

→ sympathetic

→ sanitising  
brutality  
reality

→ sympathy for  
colonists who  
were ridiculed by  
higher society  
→ mistreatment and  
stereotypes of women

# DOMINANT READING

→ exploration of the moral  
and ethical implications of  
colonial expansion and possession  
of Indigenous lands

between  
settlers  
and Aboriginals

cultural differences

violence from  
British settlers  
towards Aboriginal

humanist  
vs Aboriginal's  
as non-human

Iamy & Travis

masculinity

contextually - in  
reference to Australian  
history

neutral - mix of  
the dominant and  
resistant reading

mix

mix

mix

mix

mix

mix

# ALTERNATE (Feminist, class, etc.)

downplays  
injustices  
committed by Thornhill  
violent acts and  
sanitising  
brutality  
reality

→ sympathetic

→ sympathy for  
colonists who  
were ridiculed by  
higher society  
→ mistreatment and  
stereotypes of women

REFLECTION

reflection on  
complexity of  
Aussie history

Clashes  
settlers

between  
Aborigines

lomy & Travis

classism  
as Thornhill very  
noticeable  
and  
interactions between nothing  
local Indigenous  
people

classism  
as Thornhill was  
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→ connect

Grenville's  
portrayal of both the settlers and  
the Indigenous characters  
initially examine the  
settlers on both sides  
but then examine the  
Indigenous characters  
on both sides  
invites readers to  
imagine the  
impact of colonisation

no representation  
of Aboriginal people

Thornhill instead of  
asserting dominance, could  
actively seek to understand  
and appreciate the  
Indigenous  
way of life.

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## Alternate Reading



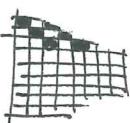
Mix of dominant + resistant  
readings -

Feminist → self-sacrificial femininity

- Sal lets Thornhill do whatever he does, even though she is his master
- sacrifices herself for her children
- sacrifices her want to go England
- sacrifice beauty for child-bearing.

Emasculation → turn to violence  
when masculinity repressed.

Rigid Victorian class structures.



## Dominant Reading

Colonialism is violent

"Then he saw that they were hands cut off at the wrist. The skin was black against the white of the bone."

Clashes between Indigenous and whites

Cultural differences

Moral/Ethical implications  
of violence towards Indigenous people

## Resistant Reading

Colonialism

~~is good~~ allows for economic growth

Indigenous and white people  
are not clashing

Indigenous people don't deserve  
their land because it's not settled

"Yellow ear of corn stuck between  
the pink sponge that had been the  
lips"

Indigenous man ~~stealing~~ caught stealing,  
dealing with the pests.

→ Stealing is ~~seen~~ seen as an ~~act~~  
~~criminal~~ criminal act, detrimental to economic  
growth.

→ Dealing with these aboriginal people

~~by hanging them~~ who commit an  
an act detrimental to economic  
growth, establishes ~~this~~ this a direct  
step towards economic growth.