

Faculty of Humanities

Department of Communication and Cultural Studies

The Telling: A Novel

and

**Navigating Ethics: An Investigation into the Representation of
Indigenous knowledges and subjectivities**

Jacqueline Jane Wright

This thesis is presented for the Degree of

Doctor of Creative Arts

of

Curtin University of Technology

October 2008

Declaration

To the best of my knowledge and belief this thesis contains no material previously published by any other person except where due acknowledgement has been made.

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university.

Jacqueline Wright

Date: 6 October 2008

Abstract

This thesis consists of two parts; a creative piece called The Telling and a critical essay which investigates the representation of Indigenous knowledges and subjectivities by non-Indigenous writers. In different ways, the novel and the exegesis attempt to tackle the problematic engagement which can ensue between Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultures regarding issues of representation and, as a whole, the thesis aims to make a contribution to understanding the negotiation process involved in issues of representation.

Two main protagonists drive the plot of The Telling; a garbage man and a postgraduate university student. Interleaved between these two main storylines are a series of fictionalised oral history transcripts. In the process of conducting research to complete her degree, Annie Fletcher gets drawn into a mystery surrounding the disappearance of a young girl in a remote community in the northwest of the country. Annie uses her position as a researcher to collect stories and unravel a web of deception and intrigue. This leads her to a remarkable truth with ethical implications which has her questioning the basis of much she has taken for granted. The Telling is set in the landscape of remote north western Australia and represents a complex tapestry of people's lives, disparate cultures, history, current politics and social upheaval.

Navigating Ethics: An Investigation into the Representation of Indigenous Knowledges and Subjectivities takes the thematic strands pursued by the novel in order to examine the implications of non-Indigenous efforts to represent the Indigenous, in an Australian context, and investigate how this shapes the writing/research process. This exegesis explores the intersections between ethics, politics and storytelling as they enfold into each other and within the larger domains of culture. It examines the documentation of Indigenous knowledges and subjectivities by non-Indigenous researchers and writers with a view to providing ethical insight into the current climate of writer accountability. In doing so, it illustrates how the location and positionality of the speaker/author/narrator impacts on those being spoken for and spoken about. In addition, the nature of the problematic engagement between the Australian Indigenous community and non-Indigenous writers and researchers involved in the representation of Indigeneity is explored.

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Chapter 1 Literature Review	5
Chapter 2 The Mutual Entanglement of Literary and Ethnographic Texts	18
Chapter 3 A Case Study: The <u>Broometime</u> Debate	34
Chapter 4 A reflection on the Writing Process	49
Conclusion	59
Bibliography	64
Appendices:	
Appendix 1: Manuscript Assessment, Melissa Lucashenko	73
Appendix 2: Manuscript Assessment, Rose Murray	80
Appendix 3: Letter to Manuscript Assessors	83

Introduction

The representation of Indigenous Australian people in the literature by non-Indigenous writers has a history characterised by patronising, derogatory, negative and inaccurate depictions. This representation, coupled with current political concerns regarding the appropriation of Indigenous culture and intellectual property, has prompted Indigenous writers, editors, community members and academics to hold contemporary authors accountable for what they write and demand more responsible attitudes towards writing and publishing. Recent attempts by some authors to redress concerns arising from the representation of Indigenous knowledges and subjectivities in fiction reveal just how Indigenous and settler/invaser cultures in this postcolonial era have become entangled in immensely complex ways. An examination of the literature reveals more about the social and psychological aspects of settler communities than it does of Indigenous people, yet this aspect often goes unrecognised by these communities. Social practice is revealed through a palimpsestic relationship to writing practices. The colonial and postcolonial narratives are now being overwritten by narratives of Indigenous Australia. A palimpsest of memoir, reportage, ethnography, testimony, fiction, historical literature and critique is now part of our Australian national landscape. This exegesis attempts to recognise a number of complex issues often overwritten by dominant discourse. It applies Nicholas Thomas's notion of mutual entanglement to examine the complexity of relations between and within Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultures.

Thomas's idea of entanglement was useful in coming to understand my own position and entanglement within the Indigenous community. This relationship is essentially palimpsestic in nature and reflected in the narratives influencing my own education. I was born of English immigrant parents and grew up in a semi-rural environment. My 'understanding' of Aboriginal people was exclusively informed by the Aboriginal 'myths and legends' of primary school years and the 'noble savage' of my secondary school subject, Australian History, written/interpreted largely by non-Indigenous Australians. This limited awareness was augmented by a range of texts through the literature stream of a tertiary arts degree. I was able to recognise the paucity of narratives in my early education through exposure to collaborative ventures between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people and texts of Indigenous authors. By this stage the issue of Aboriginal Land Rights was filtering through the

media and I began to argue with my father who was working as an engineer on the Ranger Uranium mine. However, my focus in these debates centered mainly on nuclear issues and it was only when I traveled to Alice Springs that Aboriginal people were made visible to me, not as ‘accounts’ but as living people. My undergraduate and subsequent postgraduate studies brought with them other narratives from literary, linguistic and educational streams of thought. The narratives occurring in and between these differing theories and methodologies, their theoretical and practical applications and the debates emerging from collegial relationships, challenged past narratives of how I viewed, understood and reflected on community, social and political issues. Other kinds of narratives were introduced when I was invited into a remote northwest Indigenous community to take on a teaching role in their independent bilingual school, narratives of Indigenous language survival and two-way schooling mixed with the spoken words of the men and women who were the first Aboriginal people in Australia to strike for wages and better working conditions in the cattle industry. There were the written words of Dorothy Hewett, Don McCleod and the hundreds of books produced for the children of the bilingual Strelley Community schools. By then it was the nineties and narratives relating to the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, Eddie Mabo and Native Title, The Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation and the report into the ‘Stolen Children’ were ringing loud and clear in the public arena. Allan Robins sums up this palimpsestic influence nicely, “As each story washed into me, it mixed with previous layers of narrative and meaning, settling into a new coalescence, a new set of stories adding new voices to my story of self: and thence to the story that I wanted to tell” (n. pag.).

As a teacher-linguist and interpreter trainer, I was continually required to address issues relating to privacy, ownership, identity, appropriation and representation throughout the course of my work. More recently, fiction has allowed me the freedom to explore the problematic relations of cultural translation/interpretation that have been at the heart of my linguistic work. The ethical protocols, developed as a response to the concerns of Indigenous people, which I was required to pursue in my profession as a linguist, crossed over into my fictional endeavours. They compelled me to question what I was writing about, how I was writing it and, most importantly, why I was writing it in the first place. A comment Barry Lopez made during a radio interview also ran through my mind;

during the writing process he constantly asks himself whether he needs to burden a world that is already burdened with too much of the same thing? Surprisingly, these kinds of questions did not stifle my creative muse. In fact they challenged me to explore the means by which I represent ‘the other’ in ways that diverge from dominant discourse. I soon realised too, in the course of the writing process, that I more easily and readily wrote about issues of representation through the genre of fiction than when I addressed this subject directly through the medium of an exegesis. My subsequent exploration of this conjunction has contributed to a better awareness of the role fiction can play in understanding the social and moral obligations of what being a storyteller entails and to realise how these obligations are particularly confused in postcolonial society.

Around about the second draft of the novel, The Telling, amidst this kind of interrogation, I realised the focus of my gaze had shifted from ‘the other’ to myself as researcher. I suddenly understood that it was not about getting the representation “right” so much as engaging with the issues of representation as a novelistic device and the ethics and politics of representation. The question regarding the purpose of my novel troubled me; I was writing a novel to make sense out of my own experiences working with Indigenous people in the northwest. Did the reading public, and particularly Indigenous readers, really need to be burdened with another novel where a white author grapples with her relationship to Indigenous Australia? Around about this time, the book Broometime was published, sparking a controversial debate that revolved around the representation of the Broome community’s ‘mixed-race’ population. At the time it was launched, I was a member of the Broome community and had met the authors in my capacity as the northwest Literature Officer (a state government funded position). I found the public debate after the launch of Broometime largely inadequate, and although I identified with the authors’ concerns regarding censorship of sensitive issues, I struggled to understand their defense of and justification for writing the book. As I watched the debate proceed, I realised that couching the issues in easy, journalistic binaries ensured that the debate descended into predictable taunts on both sides which did little to advance any understanding of a complex situation.

In this research, I suggest that fiction writers from Australia’s dominant culture have a responsibility underpinning their representation of Indigenous people and knowledges. Being accountable for their texts is a fundamental ethical concern,

and this recognises people as moral agents who are responsible for not only what they write, but the effects generated by what they write. To listen beyond the prevailing discourse of ‘the other’ to those who have been silenced, demeaned, mistreated, abused, taken away and divided is part of that challenge. This exegesis contributes to an emerging body of work addressing how non-Indigenous Australian writers can engage constructively with Indigenous people to monitor, challenge and even modify certain writing practices pertaining to the representation of Indigenous knowledges and subjectivities. This research does not aim for big resolutions, but rather a glimmer of insight into age-old dilemmas.

To properly examine the implications of non-Indigenous efforts to represent the Indigenous in an Australian context, and to investigate how this shapes the writing/research process, requires an investigation into the history of representation. This exegesis explores the intersections between ethics, politics and storytelling as they enfold into each other and are enveloped within the larger domains of culture. It examines the documentation of Indigenous knowledges and subjectivities by non-Indigenous researchers and writers with a view to providing ethical insight into the current climate of writer accountability. In doing so, this thesis will illustrate how the location and positionality of the author/narrator impacts on those being spoken for and spoken about. In addition, the nature of the problematic engagement between the Australian Indigenous community and non-Indigenous writers and researchers involved in the representation of Indigeneity is explored. This work draws on, among others, the work of the following Indigenous writers and scholars; Marcia Langton, Anita Heiss from the Wiradjuri nation of western New South Wales; Aileen Moreton-Robinson, a Geonpul woman from Minjerribah (Stradbroke Island) and Yawaru people Patrick and Michael Dodson. Chapter One reviews non-Indigenous attempts to represent Indigenous people in literature and explores the relationship between ethnography and fiction. The shaping of these representations by historical, political and subjective perspectives is revealed through a presentation of critical literature on the subject. Chapter Two examines the relationship between literary and ethnographic genres of writing with a view to introducing an ethical dimension to the discussion. Chapter Three is a case study which explores the public debate surrounding Broomtime and the tensions that exist between freedom of speech and representation. Essentially, it is an attempt to demonstrate how particular colonial notions persist in contemporary issues concealing the entangled nature of both the

media and the encounter between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. Chapter Four is a reflection on the writing process which stems from two commissioned Indigenous readers reports on the novel comprising part of this PhD.

Durkheim once said that we are at once collective and individual. Society is mysterious to us because we have lived in it and it now dwells inside us at a level that is not ordinarily visible from the perspective of everyday life. As a writer who uses fiction as a means to make sense of the complicated picture that emerges from the intertwining of these issues of representation, I see this exegesis as making a contribution to understanding processes of negotiation between non-Indigenous writers and Indigenous people and communities.

1 Literature Review

In the struggling literary community of colonial Australia, the majority of writers did not include Indigenous Australians in their work. The wave of nationalism preceding Federation generated a polemic which corroborated this tendency. Indigeneity was linked to Australianness. If Indigenous people were included in literature, they were only part of the exotic background. J.J. Healy's subjective and phenomenal account, Literature and the Aborigine in Australia, reveals that Indigenous Australian people first began appearing in diaries, letters, journals and works of an autobiographical nature, which documented the nature of contact Indigenous people had with pearlers, pastoralists, property owners and missionaries.

Nationalism, Social Darwinism and Modernism shaped the representation of Indigenous people in literature emerging from Federation. Healy asserts these early works spoke a great deal more about settler society and the contrary and conflicting notions of nationhood than they did of Indigenous people. Indigenous-as-theme and Indigenous-as-character depicted Indigenous people and behaviour in a generally unfavourable light reflecting "the level of ignorance" and the "sheer distance between the two races" (21). Indigenous people could also feature as objects of curiosity or, alternatively, were invested with the charisma of the 'noble savage'. In K.G. Willey's short story "Baan" the main protagonist, Marbuk, is depicted as taking part in ceremonies of a paganistic nature; losing himself in the heat of the dance, seeking to merge with the earth mother.

The literary treatment of the Anglo in the interior was a reoccurring theme, during this period. Emphasis was placed on settlers battling courageously against a backdrop of natural hazards, the Aboriginal being one of them. Ion Idriess' Outlaws of the Leopolds focuses on European ambitions in an alien landscape detailing the exploits of an Aboriginal man defying legitimate laws of settler society. A fiction of ridicule also emerged, which mocked Indigenous Australians. Indigenous characters were also used in a tokenistic sense, usually depicted as a homogenous group of 'blacks' or 'natives'. Rarely were they portrayed as distinct characters, and if they were, writers placed them in subordinate positions. The stockman was little more than a domestic servant rather than the mainstay of the cattle industry. The Aboriginal friend of the main protagonist, Heriot, in Randolph Stow's To the Islands, is depicted as a faithful companion accompanying an old man on his voyage of self-

discovery. On the whole, there was very little attempt in literature to question accepted stereotypes.

Adam Shoemaker's Black Words, White Page: Aboriginal Literature 1929-1988 examines the effect of socio-historical contexts, such as government policies of assimilation, on Black Australian Literature. His sociological perspective highlights the wider ramifications of political activism and provides an interesting contrast to dominant historical paradigms. In a chapter addressing the representation of Indigenous people by non-Indigenous writers, Shoemaker suggests that while some Australian literature, in the mid 1900s, motivated positive and much-needed changes in literary perceptions of Indigenous people, there was a stock of popular literature, from authors such as Idriess, Willey, Upfield and Bates which did not deviate from past norms.

Attempts to understand the complexities of Indigenous Australian life were initially made by female authors who challenged the conventional modes of Australian writing by emphasising the individual as a social being and the interior life of a character. Aeneas Gunn and, later, Mary Durack depicted Aboriginal people with what they genuinely believed to be compassion and understanding. Their pastoralist backgrounds enabled prolonged contact with Aboriginal people, which transformed the usual shallow portraits of Indigenous people to identifiable entities with positive human traits. However, today their representations are mostly perceived as reflecting attitudes of benign paternalism. Gunn's Aboriginal characters are read as a cross between a cheeky child and a faithful pet. The song Dalgerie sings to Rolt in Keep Him My Country is described by Durack as "love magic" (71). The stories she tells him are "quaint, erotic legends" (74), and the creation stories are comprised of people "wandering in the burning sun, pausing for long interludes of incestuous procreation" (74). Katharine Susannah Prichard's Connardoo captures the deep-seated prejudice of white Australia through an exposé of interracial sexuality. Her concentration on the spiritual affinity between cultures and emphasis on the interior life of the two central protagonists gives a certain depth to the feelings of a heroic, although ultimately pitiable, Aboriginal girl. Coonardoo and Vance Palmer's The Man Hamilton, published four years later, helped challenge the previous 'black velvet' stereotype of Indigenous women presented in previous works of Australian fiction.

In his critical study of oral and written Indigenous Australian literature, The Indigenous Literature of Australia: Milli Milli Wangka, Mudrooroo, also known as Colin Johnson, classifies the narratives of Gunn, Durack and Prichard as belonging to a romantic genre of writing in which history is trivialised into a bygone era of nostalgic recollections. In his study, Mudrooroo reminds us that a history of invasion and oppression is essential to our understanding of texts. Not only do we need to situate texts within historical contexts, but we also need to deal with the ideas and beliefs that shape our thoughts about other cultures in the same way. The recognition of the role of history in the construction of literary texts is a necessary adjunct to the renegotiation of ideas about Indigenous people. Mudrooroo examines the implications of non-Indigenous writers who use narrational positions to represent the thoughts, reasoning and feelings of Indigenous characters. He claims these interior monologues misrepresent Indigenous people. Adopting these narrational positions provides non-Indigenous authors with an authoritative voice enabling them to characterise Indigenous people and culture in whatever way they choose. Mudrooroo recognises the political importance of such representations and advocates a recapturing of them by Indigenous people as a way of empowerment.

The late '50s through to the '70s represented a period in Australian literature where black and white relations were written about at length. Integration-thinking, feminism and protests against racial discrimination influenced Australian literature at the time. Healy states that "The Aborigine as theme moved from the status of soliloquy to that of public debate" (291). This position, he believes, was driven by two impulses: the philosophical and private inclination of authors such as Prichard, Palmer and White and the political and public position of Keneally, Casey, Vickers, and Herbert. Once largely ignored, Indigenous people were firmly placed in a literature of social protest and this was reflected in literature under the guise of Indigenous-as-dilemma/problem arising from non-Indigenous authors' concern for the plight of the underprivileged minority and/or the need to validate their own particular social or political cause. Healy argues that Voss and Riders in the Chariot opened important windows on the past and on contemporary Australian society, "structurally and morally, which is to say in symbolic terms, the Aborigine was central to an understanding of white Australia" (204). In The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith, Keneally satirises the conventional, evangelising rhetoric to illustrate cross-cultural misunderstandings between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. It

can also be seen to resolve issues of difference by translating them into the realm of universal values. Keneally makes use of the Aboriginal as a ready-made device to validate his own political cause emphasising the position of class. Similarly, Lynn Andrew's The Crystal Woman attempts to break through the boundaries of 'us' and 'them' by portraying all women as sisters. Mudrooroo suggests:

This ideology stresses that women are women first and Indigenous people or settlers second, and it is through womanhood that 'the other' may be done away with and a common sisterhood formed across racial and cultural boundaries. (65)

This feminist coalition is generally not supported by Australian Indigenous women. In "The Dialogue Between White Feminism and Indigenous Women", Chilla Bulbeck quotes Jackie Huggins who argues that Australia was colonised on a racial basis and it is this which has determined her position and alliance as an Indigenous woman.

In the '70s, Indigenous Australian writing began deconstructing the subjective colonial viewpoint and confronting non-Indigenous writers with issues concerning black/white social and political relations. Indigenous people challenged historians' right to plunder their own personal histories. While facing-up to the shames of the past, non-Indigenous writers reflected on Indigenous issues of the day often documenting the role colonisers played in the oppression of Indigenous Australians. Herbert's Capricornia and Poor Fellow My Country were written during a period of assimilation and this political sub-text essentially drives its theme. Thea Astley's A Kindness Cup addresses a major Indigenous skeleton in the Colonial closet — white man's sexual abuse of Indigenous women by detailing a particular act of massacre and rape by white settlers on an Aboriginal tribe. Although Astley's novel is not founded on an actual historical incident, the novel draws on the esoteric authority of a story which reverberates around the country. A reunion of the townspeople who played a role in the incident, either as perpetrators or impotent objectors, reads as an ironic comment on the hypocrisy involved in concealing past wrongs.

By the '80s Indigenous people in literature were, Shoemaker concludes, "fully fleshed and clothed with individualised humanity in Australian literature" (98). Mudrooroo supports this contention stating, "Few post modern writers seek to contain the Indigenous in the old stereotypes formed from outmoded conventions of

nineteenth century characterisation and Aboriginalist anthropological texts” (61). The emergence and popularity of Identity politics during the ‘80s was taken up by Indigenous Australian writers and remains a crucial political strategy for Indigenous writers today. Identity politics provided Indigenous writers with a valuable form of resistance. The wave of independent Indigenous publishing houses, which began in the 70s and took root in the 80s, meant that Indigenous Australians did not have to write under the guise of Western pseudonyms or conform to mainstream publishing requirements and editorial practices. After a long period of restraint, Indigenous people were finally able to speak for themselves using the language and genres of their own choice. While some authors used fiction as a vehicle to voice critical judgements of past attitudes and situations, others wrote autobiographies which starkly revealed atrocities committed against Indigenous Australian people. This blooming of Indigenous literature meant non-Indigenous writers had a direct and authentic source of information in the form of plays, oral histories, novels, poems, biographies, autobiographies and landmark films. For the first time in Australian literary history, non-Indigenous writers had to compete with Indigenous writers for footholds in a publishing industry. Mark Mordue speaks of the enlightenment and displacement this plethora of Indigenous literature had on him, asking: “[w]here was my meeting place in this, my history, my role as a writer?” (120). Access to such information generated an enormous interest in how ‘the other’ constructed his/her own past. In Convincing Ground: Learning to Fall in Love with Your Country, Bruce Pascoe discusses the questions raised by Indigenous and non-Indigenous authors in their work arguing that they arise from the basis of “the deeply informed perspective of hard experience” (213). He cites, as a case in point, Kim Scott’s Kayang and Me which, he argues, examines the psychological foundations of various Australian authors.

‘Aboriginality’ featured highly in the construction of a national identity, bringing to the forefront vexed issues of identity, hybridity and authenticity. The identities of notable Indigenous writers, such as Roberta Sykes, Mudrooroo and Archie Weller, were questioned not just by members of the non-Indigenous community, but Indigenous people themselves. The ‘80s also brought issues of appropriation to light. Artists adopted Indigenous identities and knowledges to increase their chances in a highly competitive market. In 1997, the national press revealed Eddie Burrup, an Aboriginal artist, to be Mary Durack’s sister, Elizabeth

Durack. Until then, 'Burrup' had been contributing to Indigenous exhibitions for a number of years and was twice selected for Indigenous awards. Serbian migrant, Bozic Sreten, used the pseudonym B. Wongar in his book, Babaru, which related stories about a particular tribe from the minds and mouths of Indigenous. Leon Carmen crossed genre and gender boundaries with his creation of both the Indigenous persona and story of Wanda Koolmatrie with the publication of the 'autobiography', My Own Sweet Time. The authenticity of Marlo Morgan's Mutant Message Down Under was also challenged. Originally published as a work of non-fiction, Mutant Message Down Under was apparently based on Morgan's trek across the Australian desert with a remnant tribe of traditional Aboriginal people. A significant campaign, launched by Dumbartung Aboriginal Corporation, ended in Morgan confessing that she had never undergone such a trek and the book was subsequently republished as a work of fiction. These cases well reflect the complexities of representation in its journey from the text to the public sphere.

The '90s heralded extraordinary and unique partnerships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. Collaborative ventures augmented quests to find an authentic Indigenous voice. Partnerships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people inverted past methodologies whereby Indigenous people were used as invisible informants communicating history and experience of their world through the non-Indigenous writer's hand. These new hybrid approaches had well-thought out ethical and methodological procedures so, rather than being objectified and treated as passive sources of information, Indigenous people become active participants in the exchange of ideas. Both Paddy Roe and Stephen Muecke's Gularabulu: Stories from the West Kimberley and Howard Pederson and Banjo Woorunmurra's Jandamarra and the Bunuba Resistance were heralded as 'new histories' not only because they presented an Indigenous side to past events but also because they were accounts which recognised the problematic nature of integrating 'stories' of Indigenous spiritual significance into standard, recognised western genres. In his introduction, Muecke states that, "The simple act of writing down stories (as well as phrasing them in "good" English) inevitably involves departures from Aboriginal narrative style" (vi). These ventures have initiated robust re-definitions of the 'author's role: extending it from the traditional solitary figure to a collective authorship, when working with an Indigenous community. Collaborative writing emphasised connection rather than separation and it is this aspect which

initiated a critical response from members of the Indigenous community. This ‘feel-good’ literature, they believe, extols messages of tolerance and understanding, hampering Indigenous efforts to strike out alone and make their own connections between their past and present society.

Collaborative ventures have highlighted the importance of adopting a methodology of research appropriate to all good writing as well as the harnessing of common respect in the writing process. In “Writing Whiteness: The Personal Turn”, Anne Brewster claims that personalised Indigenous writing of the ‘80’s and ‘90’s has created a new methodology of writing. This provides a niche for a more ethical way to proceed because we move away from setting up ‘the other’ as a form of reference and focus instead of “placing white identity formation under the microscope” (6). Both Margaret Somerville and Mari Rhydwen write from self-reflexive positions and identify ethical considerations which have not yet been fully realised in fictional writing. They discuss the ethical implications of writers/researchers who speak on behalf of Indigenous Australian people. In Body/Landscape Journals, Somerville writes about the compromised position she found herself in when working with Pitjantjatjara women in the Northern Territory: namely the obligation she felt to be a conduit through which these women’s stories pass and her reluctance to write herself out of the process completely. In Writing on the Backs of the Blacks, Rhydwen interrogates her own fieldwork practices, as a non-Indigenous academic in order to demonstrate how so called ‘objective’ accounts can create characters and interpret events.

The last two decades has seen an increase in critical writings by both non-Indigenous and Indigenous scholars prompting critiques which ask intelligent questions about the representation of Indigeneity. In their deconstruction of postcolonialism, Darkside of the Dream: Australian Literature and the Postcolonial Mind, Bob Hodge and Vijay Mishra advocate a reading strategy which moves away from historical, colonial and nationalistic reading practises and is orientated to criticism and change. In Literary Formations: Post-colonialism, Nationalism and Globalism, Anne Brewster uses these strategies to examine agency, audience and the repressive hypothesis through an examination of Indigenous women’s autobiographical narratives. In doing so, she provides interesting work on the history of othering by interrogating knowledges of ‘the other’ which can assist non-Indigenous people to rework the nature of the encounter. She argues that Indigenous

women's autobiographical narratives are often de-politicised and aestheticised by dominant discourse, despite the fact that they are politically strategic and developed in response to an ongoing process of colonisation. Muecke analyses discourse to reveal how the construction of the Indigenous in language and cultural studies, is politically shaped. In Textual Spaces: Aboriginality and Cultural Studies, he explores the notion of 'text', from European and Aboriginal perspectives, and its subsequent impact on knowing and meaning. In her publication, 'Well, I Heard it on the Radio and Saw it on the Television...' Marcia Langton, an Aboriginal activist and academic, scrutinises dominant attempts to understand 'the other' through notions of Aboriginality as a colonial construct. This construct, she maintains, supports the notion of Indigenous people as a homogenous group rather than a nation comprised of many heritages. Langton extends this thinking to Indigenous Australians in her essay "Trapped in the Aboriginal Reality Show". In her appraisal of the renewed debate sparked by the Northern Territory Intervention Program, she is critical of Indigenous people who perpetuate the notion of solidarity for its own sake. Problems arise, she states, "when there is a presumption of shared experience and willingness to overlook the moral, ethical or even rational view or particular behaviours" (n. pag.). Langton advocates a new agenda for Indigenous relations which discourages Indigenous people, far removed from remote area communities, from speaking on behalf of other Indigenous Australians. She believes this practice perpetuates a disturbing co-dependency among Indigenous Australians.

Indigenous critical analysis has opened up a discursive space in fields usually constituted by non-Indigenous perspectives. The anthology, Blacklines: Contemporary Critical Writing by Indigenous Australians is a compelling demonstration of how Indigenous Australians can be active agents in the conceptualisation and analysis of their history and culture rather than, as editor Michele Grossman puts it, supporting "the enthusiastic interventions of non-Indigenous critique" (7). Many of the critiques included in this collection highlight the contentious nature of representation. In his article "Better," Martin Nakata criticises Western experts who 'discover' and 'convey' the truth of Indigenous culture. He applauds efforts which constantly question and challenge Western notions of Indigeneity. It is this contentiousness which often prompts non-Indigenous authors to distance themselves from the Indigenous. One strategy Robins

pursued while writing his novel was to shroud the Indigenous group and the places involved in his novel “in a mist of non-specificity” (n. pag.). Other strategies used by non-Indigenous writers involve the presentation of Indigenous people in their work as a backdrop or leaving them out of their work completely¹. This demonstrates that fictional writers, along with historians and anthropologists, can be uncomfortable with addressing aspects arising from representation.

At this point, it will be useful to overlay this chronological review with an examination of the relationship between ethnography and literature involving Indigenous Australian people. An examination of the relationship between the two registers reveals how the influence of certain ideologies from one genre, wind their way into the other, and also why the subsequent entanglement of the two is particularly relevant to the debate regarding representation in postcolonial Australia.

The study of Indigenous Australian people, their culture and society began in earnest in the 1800s with Spencer and F.J. Gillen, A.W. Howitt and others who ventured into the interior or sailed around the remote coast of Australia. The interest generated by these explorers, and people from scientific backgrounds, was taken up in earnest in the years proceeding Federation. On their return from a year-long field expedition in 1902, Spencer and Gillen began a series of lectures on Aboriginal life and ritual, which were enormously popular and extensively reported in the press. The controversial Daisy Bates, who apparently lived almost entirely with Aboriginal people between 1912 to 1945, published close to 300 articles on Aboriginal people in journals and newspapers. Anthropologists, Catherine and Ronald Berndt conducted life-long studies of Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory and other communities throughout Western and Southern Australia. Photographs and extensive collections of Indigenous Australian artefacts also contributed to this body of knowledge. Etymologist, Norman Tindale, documented Aboriginal genealogies as well as producing a map of Australia showing his interpretation of the geographical location of Indigenous cultural groups. Indigenous languages were recorded by linguists.

¹ In the 1968 ABC Boyer Lectures, *After the Dreaming*, anthropologist, W.E.H Stanner chastised historians for their part in what he called “the great Australian silence”.

Non-Indigenous writers drew extensively on this body of knowledge. In 1930, emerging anthropologist, William Ramsay Smith used a great deal of David Unaipon's 1929 manuscript, Legendary Tales of the Australian Aboriginals to write and publish Myths and Legends of the Australian Aboriginals without providing any credit or reference to this source. Other Indigenous Australian myths, legends and song cycles were published as poetry and children's literature. Anthropologists, Elkin and Strehlow wrote their own verse based on their experiences with Aboriginal people. More recently, anthropological journals have been known to publish poetry and even devote editorial positions to these areas.

Deploring, celebrating, historicising and naturalising the condition of Indigenous Australians are, in some ways, common characteristics shared by both anthropological and literary texts. The position of the ethnographer over the years is often reflected in fiction. Characters as castaways, salvagers and translators can be found in Australian literature, as can the more modern perception of someone performing reparation for past injustices. The main protagonist in Mary Patchett's novel, Warrimoo, is sent away from his home in post-war Britain to live in the bush with a tribe of traditional Aboriginal people where he must perform two Herculean tasks before returning. Douglas Lockwood's I, the Aboriginal translates Indigenous experience through a biography about Phillip Roberts, published under Lockwood's name, yet using first person to suggest Robert's subjective position. One of the themes running through the recent phenomenon of reconciliation literature examines how guilt and shame can be a precursor to a more mature recognition and understanding of the situation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. Gail Jone's Sorry deals with culpability and the repercussions of refusing to apologise to Indigenous Australians for past damaging acts.

The seachange which occurred in anthropology contributed to the breaking down of barriers between various disciplines and discrete intellectual scholarship. The relationship between ethnographers and writers began to extend into the field. Mary Durack's friendship with Phyllis Kaberry provided a deeper understanding of Kaberry's publication, Aboriginal Woman: Sacred and Profane, which informed her own novel, Keep Him My Country. Katherine Susannah Prichard had her manuscript, Coonardoo, read and verified by the Chief Inspector of Aborigines, a man who, according to Prichard, had extensive experience and knowledge of northwest Aboriginal people. Randolph Stow studied anthropology, and it was his

experience living on a mission in far north Western Australia which inspired To the Islands. In order to gather the information required to write The Brown Land Crying, Richard Beilby “accosted” people in parks and on Aboriginal reserves with a tape recorder. A key moment in the conceptualisation of Bruce Chatwin’s The Songlines was a lecture he heard by John Mulvaney about Indigenous traditional life and the Dreaming and Chatwin’s subsequent meeting with him where they discussed his ideas at length.

Anthropological texts and practises have contributed to a more earnest attempt by novelists to incorporate Indigenous Australian terms and detailed descriptions of their customs into their work, but this came at a cost, according to Shoemaker. While recognising the importance of the work conducted by anthropologists during the 40s and 50s, he asserts that their work served to assert traditional Indigenous Australian culture as the only authentic Indigenous voice. In Writing from the Fringe: A Study of Modern Aboriginal Literature, Mudrooroo tells how non-Indigenous authors, who are challenged by members of the Indigenous community often undermine the diversity of Indigenous experience by insinuating that Indigenous people who do not have full knowledge of traditional Indigenous Australian culture are not truly Indigenous. While anthropological discourse was used politically to support the assertion protectionist and assimilative policies. Howard Morphy argues that the shift of this discourse into the public arena also served, among other things, to correct colonial misconceptions by demonstrating the complexity of Indigenous history and the values of their society. This, as we have seen is, at times, reflected in postcolonial literature.

The relationship between novelists and ethnographers has become increasingly fraught in postcolonial society. Writings by authors like Chatwin challenged anthropological theories touted in the name of science. Similarly, anthropologists, like Eric Michaels, have called novelists, like Chatwin into question, because they felt they had overstepped some kind of boundary that separate the two genres of work. More recently historians and fictional writers have contributed to this dialogue. It is now largely accepted that history is full of contradictions. It is how these contradictions are handled by writers from different persuasions that provoke heated debates. Nigerian writer, Chimamanda Ngazoi Adichie reveals in her book Half of a Yellow Sun that she had taken many liberties for the purpose of fiction, but claims that her intent is portray her own imaginative truth not the real

facts of war. This process of re-imagining as opposed to reinvention has been challenged by historians—some even assert the superiority of fiction over history to transport the reader into the past through an imaginative process. In a radio interview, Inga Clendinnen warned against the dangers of fictionalising history, referring to Kate Grenville’s award winning novel, Secret River. Due to their broad appeal, Clendinnen stated that fiction had the propensity to move people in its reconstruction of experience which many readers could interpret as truth. The implication is clear: fiction, unlike history, is not subject to the rigours of research and scholarship, and is therefore unqualified to take liberties with the sensitive, fragmented and fragile nature of historical records. Michaels and Muecke question aspects of Chatwin’s book: Michaels in regards to problems related to reading and criticising the text; Muecke because of its citing as evidence in a central Australian Land rights case. The Songlines is described variously as a quasi-fictional outback odyssey, or a hybrid autobiography with anthropological overtones. Despite this ambiguity, it is often read as a straightforward ethnography. In his review, “Winding Path: The Ethics of Chatwin’s Fiction”, Muecke asks, “what peculiar conjunction exists here between the legal and the literary which intensifies the otherwise predictable text and make it, in a sense, perform to be accountable?” (22).

Iain McCalman supports the interrogation of writers by academics especially when they misconstrue and twist the findings of specialist scholarship and cites David Irving’s² fictive dealings with the Holocaust as a case in point. Indigenous people have undoubtedly been historicised and creatively represented but there is a resistance to see that creativity as part of the historical process. The ‘history wars’ points to the problematic of this issue.³ Altercations occurring between novelists, historians, ethnographers and academics transport us past the veracity and accuracy of the text into what Mary Louise Pratt asserts is “a set of problematic links between ethnographic authority, personal experience, scientism and originality of expression” (29).

² In 1998 writer David Irving was accused of misrepresenting and manipulating historical evidence, in his published works, for his own ideological reasons. He eventually served a prison sentence in Austria for glorifying and identifying with the German Nazi Party.

³ Stuart MacIntyre and Anna Clarke in their publication, The History Wars, argue that the ‘history wars’, which are largely being conducted in the media, are not about history, as such, but concern the control of the past as a political resource. They maintain that a nation’s history is always open to interpretation and should not be generated and propelled by pressure groups, think tanks and a political coterie who attempt to impose a single and correct view of history which usually runs along the lines of us against them, right against wrong.

Tracing the representation of Indigeneity in works of Australian literature since Federation, coupled with an examination of the critical literature and the relationship between ethnographic texts and Australian literature, shows how increasingly complex issues relating to identity, authenticity and appropriation in terms of representation are in postcolonial Australia. Working through the themes introduced by anthropologists, historians and Indigenous and non-Indigenous writers and scholars results in dialectic debates arising from a variety of theoretical frameworks, each having their own set of problematics. The dialogic relationship between these diverse discourses is often simplified, especially when issues spill out into the public arena. The paucity of the public discourse does not reflect the tension existing between the representation of Indigenous knowledges and subjectivities by non-Indigenous writers and the notions of privacy, customary law and the principles of free speech and expression. The writing and researching of Indigenous people and culture, which initiate calls for accountability, are too readily interpreted as Indigenous censorship. The following chapter attempts to identify issues pertaining to representation that are often overwritten by dominant discourse or forced into dichotomous paradigms which undermine the complexity of the situation.

2 The Mutual Entanglement of Literary and Ethnographic Texts

As demonstrated in the previous chapter, an examination of the history of ethnographic writing reveals interesting parallels in the way fiction represents 'the other'. In Fear and Temptation: The Image of the Indigene in Canadian, Australian, and New Zealand Literatures, Terry Goldie reiterates Healy's contention that a study of fiction reveals more about the tensions within the settler/invader culture than of Indigenous people. The ideology of authors and their cultures, he maintains, is reflected in their texts through mental representations of the world which see-saw between fear of 'the other' and glorifying 'the other'. He supports both Shoemaker and Mudrooroo by arguing that beyond this ideology lies a history of invasion and oppression and contends that literature is one of the more visible examples of the reification of Indigenous people which affords semiotic control to the invaders. In Langton's article, "Aboriginal Art and Film: the Politics of Representation", she argues that the majority of information non-Indigenous Australians receive about Indigenous Australians comes through literature and the media rather than Indigenous people themselves. She points out:

They are *accounts*, and it is in these representations that the Aboriginal-as-subject becomes, under the white gaze, imagining the Aboriginal, the object. The audience, however, might be entirely unaware that they are observing an *account*, usually by the authorial We of the Other." (123)

Her comment demonstrates that the control which the dominant brings to bear on Indigenous people in postcolonial societies still operates through subtle and insidious means. Force is exerted by the dominant culture in a different guise other than physical power; practices, for example, which work to silence 'the other' while masquerading as positions which support liberal democratic values.

As Elizabeth Burns Coleman points out, Western culture is resistant to the idea of 'theft' by representation. Appropriation, she maintains, is seen as an acceptable, even important element of freedom of expression. "Indigenous people cannot claim they created the propositions or representations about them in the way that they can of their knowledge. They are subjects of these representations, but not their creators" (19). The assertion of Western artistic practice as a normal form of ethical legitimation is one such means by which the dominant culture exerts control in postcolonial struggles.

Most ethnographers now acknowledge that the process of cultural representation is inescapably contingent, historical and contestable. Many fiction writers believe that their cultural inventions are sensitive, fair and insightful. Yet, every now and then, they find themselves caught up in political, epistemological and ethical questions and demands which ethnographers are constantly required to address. The introduction of a literary consciousness into ethnographic writing has prompted a critical discussion which has transformed the social sciences, yet largely by-passed Australian literature. The elastic boundaries of the imagination afford fiction writers a freedom that, some believe, exempt them from being accountable.

In this chapter, I will argue why contemporary writers concerned with social reality might consider themselves to be an essential part of a dialogue into which ethnography has so willingly entered. To do this, I will conduct an examination of the prevailing discourse in order to reveal its weaknesses. A framework for better understanding the tensions existing between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people to issues of representation in a liberal democracy will be developed through the notion of mutual entanglement. This notion will be teased out through a comparison between fiction and ethnographic writing and an examination of the implications of introducing anthropological and literary consciousness into each respective genre. An application of the issues raised in this chapter to various novels is undertaken to illustrate how fiction can embrace or ignore the complexities of mutual entanglement.

The work of Homi Bhabha has revealed that the split between the coloniser and the colonised, the invader and the invaded is not straight forward. Yet, the altercations that occur with the publication of ambiguous texts are too often presented in the public debate as a homogenous Indigenous collective pitted against a homogenous non-Indigenous collective. This 'us versus them' scenario does little to help understand the diversity and power relations both within and between Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultures. It does not accommodate, for example, alliances formed between dominant and minority cultures in order to expose appropriative or fraudulent treatment of Indigenous intellectual or cultural property by individuals belonging to the dominant culture. It supports the assertion that "whiteness" is

unproblematic when non-Indigenous writers of fiction speak through characters about Indigenous issues. It does not show us how modernity and traditionalism are entangled through the images of the bushman or the literacising of Indigenous languages. It does not portray identity as shifting or make in-roads into the relationship between representation and appropriation. Nor does it expose how self-appointed writers represent the dominant and speak on their behalf. Dichotomies present skewed perceptions, setting up, for example, the 'National Interest' against 'Indigenous Rights.' As David Ross argues in his paper "Why This Country Needs a Treaty", Indigenous people are often forced to choose between having the right to retain a distinct identity or the right to access the fundamental rights of Australian citizens.

The ineffectualness of the prevailing discourse is apparent in Terry Goldie's discussion of the notion of "belonging". He writes: "The white Canadian looks at the Indian. The Indian is Other and therefore alien. But the Indian is indigenous and therefore cannot be alien. So the Canadian must be alien. But how can the Canadian be alien within Canada" (12)? As Brewster points out in Literary Formations: Post-colonialism, Nationalism, Globalism, the prevailing discourse disempowers Indigenous people by limiting their ability to define themselves only in relation to 'the other'. The presentation of neat paradigms flattens complex issues by simplifying the nature of encounters between Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultures. In "The Aboriginal Critique of Colonial Knowing," Ian Anderson writes that debates "often get stuck on the issue of 'authority' – that is, who may represent Aboriginal people, and in what contexts" (21). Indigenous people are compelled by the dominant society to present standardised protocols and codes of ethics. But while there is a general consensus about what constitutes reasonable and unreasonable offence and behaviour, Indigenous people are reluctant to take up positions of central gatekeepers with the primary task of passing such verdicts. As a Caucasian writer, I am never asked to speak on behalf of my race, yet there is enormous pressure exerted on Indigenous people to do just that. As Donny Woolagoodja put it in a presentation given at the Oral History Association of Australia conference, there are lots of Aboriginal people in Australia with different stories to tell.

These arguments demonstrate that social, historical and political factors are inescapably part of the equation influencing the way writers of both fictive, historical

and ethnographic persuasions think about and represent Indigenous people. These factors, and the recognition of epistemological and ideological foundations underlying European thought, complicates the association between ethnography, history and fiction in contemporary Australian society. The notion of intertextuality, where works are made possible by prior works and comprised of other works through a process that takes up, repeats, challenges and transforms texts, captures this problematic. It implies that texts exist between and among other registers and through their relations to them. Mary Louise Pratt, who has published widely on speech-act theory and discourse analysis, speaks of the “anguished and messy tangle of contradictions and uncertainties surrounding the interrelations of personal experience, personal narrative, scientism and professionalism” (29). Specifically, she speaks of ethnographic writing, but her comment applies to all forms of writing published in postcolonial societies.

Rather than attempting to disentangle these uncertainties and contradictions I propose to demonstrate that they contribute to, rather than detract from, a better understanding of these issues. To achieve this, I will apply Thomas’s notion of mutual entanglement to the dialectic of cultural representation. Thomas is an anthropologist with a deep interest in art. In Entangled Objects: Exchange, Material Culture and Colonialism in the Pacific, Thomas demonstrates how modern anthropological paradigms fail to capture the inherent complexity of relations which occur when different cultures come into contact with each other. Although the prisms of anthropological theory produce several ways of examining cultures, they do not adequately acknowledge that the processes are intricate and difficult to untangle. Thomas breaks down the over-simplistic values of the world as a mosaic of different and distinct cultures through the notion of mutual entanglement, putting forward this concept as an alternative means of investigating the dialectic relations resulting from encounters between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.

Entanglement, Thomas argues, is a condition of culture which only becomes evident when conflict occurs between different cultural groups. We only need to look beyond dichotomous paradigms to appreciate how Thomas’s concept of mutual entanglement can be used as a starting point to acknowledge diversity both within and between Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultures. This does not entail a denial of cultural differences and identity. Rather, it resists the notion of Indigenous people

always inhabiting completely separate domains to non-Indigenous people. Thomas suggests that mutual entanglement will assist us to break away from conceptualising ‘the other’ as an inside/outside relationship or characterising ‘the other’ as inversions of ourselves.

Mutual entanglement assists in understanding that power should not be seen as belonging to a single group, characterised as the dominant group, but as rather highly fractionalised and stratified, and not always emanating uni-directionally from the top down. It suggests a complicated process where threads weave themselves through and between cultures and not as easily separated by the hard, albeit shifting, line that some critical analysis and much public debate assumes. Differing ideas about what constitutes intellectual property are revealed through mutual entanglement. Cultural property is legally defined in terms of tangible objects, whereas intellectual property, such as stories rituals, songs and ways of life, is far more nebulous. The concept of mutual entanglement also recognises that representations are politically important, and systems of power have an enormous propensity to control and shape these representations, often through discourse that camouflages, even represses, important subtexts, thus hindering the identification of more fundamental and subtle issues at play.

Thomas’s notion of mutual entanglement is a useful tool to incorporate into an analysis of literature which centres on Indigenous issues and characters. It expedites the recognition of the sheer complexity to matters pertaining to Indigenous representation, political or otherwise, through an exposition of artificial divisions. Mutual entanglement applied in an analysis of Alex Miller’s novel Landscape of Farewell for example, reveals how the threads of fiction and non-fiction are inescapably intertwined and any attempt to separate out these threads is futile and unproductive. The narrator of this novel, a German historian by the name of Professor Max Otto, is saved from suiciding by an Aboriginal intellectual, Professor Vita McLelland. In exchange for delivering a paper at Vita’s cultural studies conference in Sydney, she takes Max to meet her Uncle Dougald in northern Queensland. At the beginning of the book, Max remarks, “By the way, I am not making any of this up. It all happened to me only a little over a year ago, just as I am reporting it here. I loathe books that are made up...” (28). The entanglement of memory with history, both oral and written, ethnography and fiction, is encapsulated by Miller in a cumulative chapter where Max, on Dougald’s request, writes, and

subsequently re-invents, the story of Dougald's great-Grandfather about the massacre of a powerful settler/invader family wiped out in one afternoon by local Aboriginal people. Leichhardt's journal of an expedition thorough Dougald's traditional country, Max's own personal journal, and Dougald's oral history are intertwined in the narrative with personal experience and the memories brought about by Max's intense grieving for his dead wife. The character, Max, declares his account of the massacre a work of fiction, but in his acknowledgments, at the end of the book, the author, Miller, states that the 'Massacre' chapter is based on a real event in the Central Highlands at Cullin-la-Ringo. Miller's exploration of fiction's intersection with history and memory shows the reader how difficult it is to separate the made-up from the real.

Throughout Landscape of Farewell, history's silence when it comes to acts of atrocities is a constant source of agitation for Max who grapples with his own silence regarding his father's role as a Nazi soldier. Writing "my fiction of his life" (228) is one way that he considers coming to terms with the crimes of his own past generation. Yet he is unsure that the fictionalising of history is the best way to reconcile his feelings. He also asks: "What if the facts of my father's story were so dire they refused to yield to the poetics of fiction" (228)? While Max is acutely aware of fiction's capacity to dissolve pain too readily, Miller, at the same time, demonstrates its ability to provide a means by which writers can write about subjects which they usually cannot address directly.

The alignment of the made-up and the real with fiction and non-fiction is often at the heart of conflicts arising from ethical debates concerning representation. Disagreements occur when descriptions of people, places and events in novels with contemporary settings are mistaken for real people, places and events often prompting people to ask questions such as: 'Is it shaped by reality or imagination?', or 'How accurate is it?' In his review, "Winding Path: The Ethics of Chatwin's Fiction", Muecke refuses to apply these questions to Chatwin's work. Rather than going back to an anthropological reading of the text, to check if Chatwin's understanding of Aboriginal concepts are correct, Muecke suggests that a tougher interrogation of fiction's fraught and ambiguous transactions with the real needs to occur, namely through deconstruction of the text and attention to "how our writing acts agentively" (22). Hybrid genres such as The Songlines signal the beginning of problems in critical appraisal. Literary hybrids are now extensive; postcolonial

literature abounds with imaginary biographies, creative non-fiction, travel writing, contemporary histories, historical novels, ethno-fiction, fieldwork memoir, popular anthropology, documentary novels and testimonial writing. Because they are not marked as representations of a particular order, say for example, as a novel or ethnography, it is difficult to determine how they should be read. Literary texts tend to be debated through literary approaches to meaning; ethnographies through sociological approaches to meaning. Eric Michaels, focusing on consumption rather than production, argues in his essay “Para-ethnography” that texts arising from hybrid genres should not be excluded from either disciplinary debate. They can therefore be subject to the very questions which current theory and discourse is concerned with addressing, namely:

What is the self in any culture and how do characterological conventions affect cultural conceptions? What is a defensible position for the cultural subject and how are the relations of observer to observed to be themselves observed? And what are the responsibilities of inscriptive practices, the consequences of publishing folk traditions? As in the case of Chatwin where must privacy, or secrecy or sacredness be respected (175)?

Michaels’ comments point to how the entanglement between ethnography and fiction moves beyond discussions of genre into the ethical considerations pertaining to self-reflexive aspects of both disciplines. The application of reflexive practices, adopted by anthropologists and ethnographers, to contemporary fiction demonstrates how cultural pressures, ideology, epistemology and the official demands of post-colonisation affect what writers write. The importance of self-reflexivity in ethnographic writing is raised by James Clifford in his introduction to Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography, asking questions such as, “Who speaks? Who writes? When and where? With or with whom? Under what institutional and historical constraints” (13). Michaels recommends a necessary part of the dialectic would be the implementation of a strategy by which the relations between the observer and the observed are scrutinised. He declares that it is all very well for authors to be analytic about their practices, but if at the same time the author does not allow the subjects to be reflexive about the author’s practices there is an uneven balance of power.

The dovetailing of literary and ethnographic attitudes coupled with reflexive enquiry prompts a different kind of investigation into epistemologies underpinning

how writers from “dominant” cultures portray non-Western people. Although there is no unanimity about how social relations and cultural meanings should be discussed, this kind of investigation has contributed to the development of contradictions that challenge traditional notions of power by exposing authorial and political intent.

Self-reflexive enquiry is supported by Aileen Moreton-Robinson in her article “Tiddas Talkin’ up to the White Woman: When Huggins et al. Took on Bell.” Moreton-Robinson suggests that we examine how non-Indigenous academics have come to know Indigenous people and issues in order to constructively and truthfully represent them. She demonstrates how the synthesis and presentation of certain views perpetuated from colonial to postcolonial societies afford control to certain groups of people. Similarly, Linda Tuhiwai Smith in her book, Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples, calls for the decolonisation of research methods. Her critical examination of the historical and philosophical bases of Western research coupled with a framework for an Indigenous research agenda demonstrates how the institutionalisation of information collected about Indigenous societies poses a very real threat to the control of their own knowledge and culture.

The difficult but significant relationship between personal narrative and impersonal description in ethnography is addressed by Michael Fischer who asks if “textual theories can revitalise our [ethnographers’] ways of thinking about how a culture operates and refashion our practice of ethnography as a mode of cultural criticism (195).” Both James Clifford and Dennis Tedlock conduct a dialogical critique of anthropology in an attempt to locate it within a broader literary discourse. Clifford questions the monophonic authority of ethnographic texts that claim to represent culture. He reassesses ethnographic practice by showing various ways in which ethnographies can be read and written. Although Clifford’s work has been deeply contested in anthropological circles, his work has undoubtedly helped shape the politics of ethnography.

Clifford draws on Mikhail Bakhtin’s notion of dialogism to argue that the process of cultural representation is contingent, historical and contestable. Bakhtin, a twentieth century Russian philosopher, coined the term ‘dialogism’ to refer to socio-

political contests over meaning embedded in individuals' and democratic cultural life. He advocates replacing Kant's monological conception of moral reason with a dialogical conception and rejects the traditional, linguistic-driven analysis of the language of the author which, he argues, isolates the novel from its social interaction with the world. Bakhtin saw language in terms of opposition and struggle that was not binary in nature. His notion of the diverse and stratified nature of language was best illustrated by the novel. In his translation of Bakhtin's essays, Michael Holquist asserts how Bakhtin contributed to the theory of the novel by defining it in the following terms: "The novel...dramatizes the gaps that always existed between what is told and the telling of it, constantly experimenting with social, discursive and narrative asymmetries" (p.xxviii). Essentially, he saw the novel as a living mix of varied and opposing languages, contexts and races stratified at a number of levels. Firstly, the generic level comprised of lexical, semantic and syntactical features of language knitted together with specific points of view, ways of thinking, nuances, characteristics. Secondly, a professional stratification with jargon featuring as a key characteristic. Finally, a social stratification which includes a temporal component—beliefs, ideologies, politics, world views. The novel recognises these dimensions, promotes them and struggles to unite them.

Dialogism goes hand in glove with the notion of mutual entanglement. Their discussion of insiderness/outsiderness, subjectivity/objectivity, self/other incorporates not just aspects of dealing with different cultural groups, but also the unequalness of power between cultures. Both theories attempt to capture inherent complexity; entanglement, of relations between cultures; dialogism, of language and its relationship to the real. The more complex the represented discursive space, the more the dialogical process flourishes. Dialogism signals the need to consider texts in terms of their historical contexts. The limited ways Indigenous Australians can be characterised in fiction is partly due to questions that deal with cultural difference being framed in purely ahistorical terms. One of the important elements of dialogism is that a text or an utterance can never operate in isolation from other texts or utterances. A work is never complete and no-one has the right to sign their name on what is really an ongoing conversation with humanity. They are shaped with a particular audience in mind and this shaping process is affected not only by prior texts/utterances but also with the anticipation of a response.

Consumption as an important component in the production of meaning is accommodated by dialogism. Meanings extend beyond the intention of the writer. Anthropologist, Stephen Tyler writes that text or speech “can eliminate neither ambiguity nor the subjectivity of its authors and readers...” (135). The author may have intended that their writing convey certain meanings but potential meanings are often independent of these intentions. Trying to contain them is one of the means by which semiotic control of ‘the other’ can be established.

The application of these kinds of ethnographic considerations to fiction demonstrates that storytelling in postcolonial societies goes beyond merely engaging the reader and emoting a response. The current trends placing fiction and ethnography into literary registers, demonstrates that they are no longer mutually exclusive categories. However, according to Kirin Narayan, in her article, “Ethnography and Fiction: Where Is the Border?”, ethnographies can be distinguished from fiction. In her attempt to establish a divide, albeit shifting and permeable between fiction and ethnography, she argues that the process of writing ethnographies and writing fiction involves distinct ways of thinking about the disclosure of the process, generalisation, representations of subjectivity and accountability.

I would like to propose that the perspectives Narayan uses to distinguish fiction from ethnography are as shifting and permeable as the border that is supposed to separate them, particularly in regards to representations of subjectivities. For example, novelists may adopt a narrative position which takes the reader into the heads of their characters in much the same way as some ethnographies strive to achieve the “native’s point of view” through examining what is said, observed and done. Narayan argues that ethnography makes explicit links between actual life and wider generalisations. While this may be true of more traditional ethnography, contemporary ethnographic descriptions, such as Clifford Geertz’s study of a Balinese cockfight, often create a general picture for readers where observations, taken from many vantage points are collapsed into a single scenario, not altogether unlike the rhetorical devices used by novelists to create their fictional worlds. If contemporary ethnographies and realist fiction tread uncertainly at the border of this developing frontier, then ethnographic fiction steps recklessly backwards and forwards. Tobias Hecht, in the introduction to his ethnographic novel admits that, while his novel is not a true story because it invents characters, distorts events, and

omits information, it aims to depict a world that was discovered through anthropological research.

The border that separates fiction from ethnography in postcolonial society is nebulous, but it would be unhelpful to collapse the two genres into each other. Novels deal with characters; ethnography with real people. While preparing Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics for publication, Bakhtin pointed out that characters, on the one hand, belonged to a given category that was pre-determined, monologic and finished-off, whereas people, on 'the other' hand, were dialogic and still-unfolding. Narayan maintains that it is imperative for this border to be preserved. This does not mean the border be restrictive: fiction writers and ethnographers can and do cross over. Some even travel clandestinely armed with pseudonyms. However, not to recognise a boundary exists would be perilous because fiction, Narayan points out, would stand to forfeit the imaginative freedom to "playfully mix and recombine elements from the known world" (144).

This does not mean, however, that fiction writers should be absolved from properly addressing the criticisms of those cultures they portray in their work. Part of the methodological practice underpinning realist contemporary novels usually involves the writer travelling specifically to areas where their novels are set; observing, recording, taking notes and photographs, writing in journals. Yet, it would be safe to assume that, unlike ethnographers, it is not incumbent upon novelists to disclose the process they have used to gather their information and the way they analysed it. Rarely would a novelist at the beginning of the work, like Hecht does, devote twelve pages, complete with footnotes, to discussing the origins, inspirations, methodology and justification of their work, nor should they.

Nevertheless, there is an emerging practice within fiction that seeks to explain the production of the text. Kate Grenville, for example, maps her journey into fiction through a writing memoir. Searching for the Secret River is an interesting account of how Grenville researched her book, The Secret River, and the struggle she had turning it into material for her imagination. In Secrets of the Code: the Unauthorized Guide to the Mysteries behind the Da Vinci Code, editor Dan Burstein provides readers with a wide range of perspectives from scientists, theologians, archaeologists, philosophers, historians, and art historians about the historical, religious, artistic, and scientific themes in Dan Brown's best selling novel, the Da Vinci Code. In a sense, these reflexive and meta-textual activities

ethnographise fiction. Maybe these texts are the beginning of some tentative steps that seek to acknowledge the lack of engagement in discourse by fiction writers?

An application of the notion of entanglement, raised in this chapter, will now be explored through two works of fiction, Alex Miller's Journey to the Stone Country and Marlo Morgan's Mutant Message Down Under, in order to demonstrate how fiction's highlighting or downplaying of entanglement affects non-Indigenous attempts to represent Indigenous people. Both Miller and Morgan appear to base their stories on the real. But while Miller captures the inherent complexity of relations when one culture comes into contact with another, Morgan simplifies the nature of encounter, perpetuating a fiction of purity. Despite claims by Aboriginal groups to the contrary, Morgan claims that her novel "was written after the fact and inspired by actual experience" (xiii). Miller conceives the novel as a cultural project. The main characters in both of these novels embark upon a journey that changes their lives. Morgan's narrator goes on a journey into the Australian desert with a traditional tribe of Aboriginal people called "the Real People" who will voluntarily become extinct, via celibacy, rather than compromise their traditional lifestyle. The narrator, renamed 'Mutant' by the Real People, undergoes a trial-by-fire initiation so that she is able to bring their knowledge to a world hell-bent on destruction. Miller's main protagonist, Annabelle, flees Melbourne, due to betrayal by her husband, travelling to far north Queensland where she works performing cultural surveys for local Indigenous groups. In the course of her work, she meets Bo Rennie, a member of the Jangga tribe. Bo promises to take Annabelle back to her childhood home, a cattle station in Suttor country, which is also ancient Jangga heartland, the place where he was also born and raised. Annabelle's trek is one of recovery rather than discovery. Annabelle's scant recollections are positioned next to Bo Rennie's comprehensive and vivid memory of his family's past as well as those of Bo's grandmother's sister who witnessed the massacre of her people at the hand of Annabelle's grandfather.

The Indigenous people of the Real Tribe in Mutant Message Down Under are represented as a homogenous group. Even when they are identified, they are known only as "Story Teller", "Tool Maker", "Secret Keeper", and so on. For the majority of the journey these characters speak to each other via a telepathic means of communication. In Morgan's case, it is through the narrator's observation, in the

role of ethnographer as castaway, and then later redeemer, that the reader learns about the Real People and their ways. In Miller's case the Indigenous characters are distinct, individuals with their own thoughts, feelings and allegiances, shaped by their own personal and largely undocumented national past. Miller's weaving of memory and imagination in the search for insight into common humanity is not without its challenges and complications, whereas Morgan's generalised amalgam of world-wide Indigenous cultures is used to affirm a New Age spirituality. While Mutant in Morgan's novel experiences physical hardship during her journey, there is little sense of internal resistance, confrontation and challenge throughout her journey. Mutant draws parallels to her old life in America as she journeys further and further into the Australian desert only to dismiss them as symptomatic maladies of the Western world whose unnatural focus is on the individual and the material.

Parallels, which flatten essentially complex issues, are not apparent in the Journey to the Stone Country. Rather, the threads of intergenerational and cultural attitudes to place, identity and history are interwoven throughout the novel. Annabelle is introduced to a mining worker as "a native to this part of the world", yet it is Bo who is able to remember incidents of a past she has long since forgotten. Listening to his stories, Annabelle "feels a touch of her own unexplored past in his history" (107). Bo's niece and nephew, Arner and Trace, spend much of their time in the air-conditioned cab of the truck drinking coke, smoking marijuana and listening to pop music, leaving Bo and Annabelle to look for evidence that constitutes significant Indigenous existence for their cultural surveys. The son of a struggling cattle station owner falls in love with Trace and, against his own mother's wishes, leaves the station of his parents behind to begin a life with his new-found lover. Bo's grandmother, a Jangga woman, marries a white man who was supposed to court the daughter of George Bigges, a fifth generation land owner in the district. When her husband dies, Bo's grandmother and her family inherit Verbena cattle station while the Bigge's property is abandoned because his daughters subsequently produce no heirs. Bo is called before Panya, the last of the women born in Jangga country, to answer for all the wrongdoing in both his and his grandmother's and his own life. The allegiances of Bo and his grandmother with non-Indigenous people unleash a wrath in the old woman who rejects him outright in favour of Bo's nephew, Arner, claiming that it is Arner who knows who he is and it is him, not Bo, who will do something for the Jangga people.

The uncertainty conveyed in Journey to the Stone Country through these complicated connections contrasts starkly with Mutant Message Down Under. The narrator in this novel is cast forth from the Real People with a message for the Western world to make a difference by stopping the destruction of the earth and of each other. Mutant's purpose is clear. The Real People have given her the key to remedy the problems of the world. If Annabelle is to journey back to the Stone Country, she will have to go with Arner, not Bo. As she stands in the crumbling homestead of the Bigge's family, eaten away from the inside by white ants, she realises that there are no answers and nothing is clear, especially her relationship to Bo. She asks herself: "Were their pasts too similar and yet too different for them to understand each other" (178)? Miller addresses this question at many different levels in the novel, but concludes with no easy resolutions.

An analysis of Miller's novel leads to a problematic, which is a feature of writing practice today — authors, while willingly admitting to an active engagement in the ethics of authorship, delegate issues relating to representation to an ethico-political realm existing outside the bounds of their own work. Some writers claim they approach their writing without any political agenda, yet the very act of writing about some topics is political in itself no matter how apolitical the writer's intentions may be. Many writers quite rightly see themselves as supporting the principles of a liberal democracy of which freedom of speech is a cornerstone. Freedom of speech rarely features in critical discussions involving ethnography in whatever way, shape or form. The ethics of authorship and principles of a liberal democracy have become entangled in more ways than authors care to admit. As David Ross points out: "Racism hides behind democracy and free speech to make the majority fearful so the minority loses out" (159). Historian, Anna Haebich talks about the challenges and choices she made with Broken Circles: Fragmenting Indigenous Families 1800-2000. She acknowledges the historical context underpinning her book, and the heart rendering, politically heated debate which ensued. In exposing other people's lives, she admits to careful consideration of the politics of the situation and the human emotions involved. She also had to reflect hard about her role as a non-Indigenous person, despite the fact that she was closely connected to the Indigenous Australian community through her partner. During her discussion, Haebich talks of the choices she made "as an historian" rather than a writer. Does this mean that the ethics

underpinning scholarly research change dramatically if an author decides to write contemporary fiction concerned with social reality? I suggest that writers of fiction are as accountable as ethnographers. Many writers are now well aware of the political and historical contexts in which they write.⁴ Most claim ethical authorship when it comes to writing about Indigenous people. Why then are some authors so defensive when called into account? Is it the really the loss of free speech they are protecting or is it more a relinquishment of power and ceding agency? Being held accountable is not an attempt to strip away freedom of speech any more than writing fiction is a means by which ethical authorship can be circumvented.

Compared to ethnographers, many Australian writers today seem reluctant to come to terms with social developments in race and identity that involve being answerable for their representations. Marlo Morgan, Phillip Gwynne and Bruce Chatwin are just some of the authors who have been challenged by Indigenous people. The reasons for this vary but their reluctance to properly address the concerns of those they seek to research and write about is comparable. This response and the media's general failure to recognise cultural variety within Indigenous Australia ensures that the resulting public debates focus on disagreements. Such disputes inevitably get locked into a dichotomous discourse which ignores the nuances intrinsic to ethical dilemmas. That, for example, the ethical considerations attached to writing the lives of others are not only limited to non-Indigenous writers, but Indigenous people writing about their own families. Inevitably, when disagreements surface in the media, far greater latitude is granted to writers of fiction than ethnographers regarding how they represent Indigenous people and culture.

Many fiction writers will insist they are guided by a literary code of ethics that, until recently, was unwritten and governed by respect. This code is now reflected in the Australia Councils statement of protocol that advises people on issues of cultural sensitivity when writing about Indigenous people/issues. This being the case, it seems no longer possible for authors to duck and weave the hard questions pitched by Indigenous members of the community and contemporary anthropologists. The implications for authors who fail to address these hard questions will be specifically addressed in a case study in chapter four.

⁴ Thomas Keneally expresses regret at appropriating the voice, however imaginary, of 'the other', wishing that at the time he wrote The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith in the early 70s, that he'd had a greater sensibility of the issues of writing from an Indigenous perspective.

In her essay, “The History Question: Who Owns the Past?”, Inga Clendinnen objects to what she calls “That practised slither between ‘this is a serious work of history’ and ‘judge me only on my literary art’” (31). Anthropologists are probably the first to admit to being a long way from resolving issues about representation, but that they are prepared to engage in a critical discussion is better than trying to sidestep concerns voiced by Indigenous people, especially considering the history of oppression in Australia. Admittedly, many authors, like Miller, deal with the complexity of entanglement within the context of the novel, few take it, like Grenville into the realm of reflective commentary. Making opaque the practise of writing fiction and its truth claim and truth effects, may be an admission of what has been absent from the writing process, and one of the means by which fiction writers can begin to constructively contribute to a critical discussion from which they have been conspicuously absent.

3 A Case Study: The Broometime Debate

Rapidly changing epistemologies have evolved in this postcolonial world that necessarily involve overlapping definitions, layered meaning, and the blurring of the line between fact and fiction. In the previous chapter, I introduced the idea that, while ethnographers readily critique their discipline's methodology and interpretations, fictional writers, on the whole, are not inclined to do so. When they do address questions regarding their construction of other people's reality, the debate tends to centre around the binaries of the private/public, black/white, and censorship/freedom of speech. An examination of the entanglement that occurs with ethnography and fiction in hybrid genres will be explored through a case study in this chapter. This examination reveals similarities between the two genres, particularly in regard to their methodologies, truth claims and truth effects. The following case study revisits the book Broometime, and the public debate surrounding its release, through the use of the idea of mutual entanglement in an attempt to move away from the simplistic polarisations characteristic of dichotomous discourse.

When Anne Coombs and Susan Varga moved to the northwest town of Broome in the late 90s to begin documenting the town's contemporary history, they envisaged a book that would tell the story of Broome through the people they encountered during their nine-month stay. Coombs comes from a journalistic background and has published three books, the most renowned chronicles the left-wing artistic movement of the Sydney Push. Varga is a law and literature graduate who has written an award-winning autobiography, Heddy and Me.

In 2001, during the launch of Coombs and Varga's collaborative venture, Broometime, the authors were accused of gossiping, raping, pillaging, betraying people's trust and "Broome-bashing." Their book was literally thrown at them. Demands were made for it to be pulped. They were told they transgressed the townspeople's trust by publishing private conversations and off-the-cuff comments out of context, doing irreparable damage to community relations and the process of reconciliation. Their response was essentially non-interactive. They insisted that they had conducted themselves appropriately, denied they had selectively presented particular constructions that were offensive, and defended the book saying it successfully captured the subtleties and contradictions of Indigenous people. Some months after the launch of Broometime, the book was recalled due to a complaint from the Western Australian Director of Public Prosecutions saying it might have

breached the Juries and Evidence Act by naming a child and a juror involved in a sexual-abuse case. The authors had also broken a Customary Law by publicly naming a deceased child. Eventually, the book was amended, reprinted and re-released as a revised edition with the relevant names omitted but, on the whole, the content unaltered.

The intricate relations which come into play when writers from a dominant culture attempt to represent Indigenous minority cultures with a long history of oppression is best addressed through Said's concept of Orientalism. Said charges Orientalists with producing false dichotomies between East and West. His discussion relating to Western portrayals of the non-Western reality introduces the notion that, having invented 'the other,' the dominant culture assumes authority to silence 'the other'. Through this theft of voice, the dominant produce the truth of minority groups and speak for them. In order to achieve this, Said points to colonialist structures which control the production and distribution of images and information pertaining to 'the other'. Writers, whose representations are challenged, often behave as if the information already belongs to them, reducing living people and their culture to the status of objects. In Literary Formations: Post-colonialism, Nationalism, Globalism, Brewster argues that "the more visible Aboriginal culture becomes, the greater the danger that it will be appropriated and commodified by the dominant white culture into which it is inserted" (77).⁵

In her article examining authenticity in Aboriginal literature, Sonja Kurtzer supports the notion that stereotypical images of 'the other' also become a justification for controlling 'the other'. Binaries condoning these discourses fail to capture the inherent complexity of debates revolving around issues of representation, privacy and free speech. Both the Broometime book and the authors' responses reinforce a discourse of 'the other', despite Coombs and Varga's claims to the contrary.

In their first full reply to their critics, printed in The Weekend Australian newspaper, the authors deny taking up polarised positions by refusing to simplify Indigenous people and issues. They insist they couldn't write about Broome without writing about its "multicultural mix" and, in doing so, they spelled out all the

⁵ For a discussion of representation as a political act, see Foucault's "Two Lectures".

permutations [of Aboriginality] in between” (27). They state at the beginning of Broometime:

Such a mix of races in any one visage. Often it is impossible to identify just what the mix might be—Malay/Chinese, Filipino/Aboriginal, Japanese/Thursday Islander or all of these? Six or eight races in a single family is not unusual. After a while it ceases to matter. (p. 3)

However the only permutations the authors spell out fall under the generalised banner of “mixed-race”, which yokes together distinct cultural forms into an overarching class and ignores the notion that there is not one race but many. In this slight of hand, the authors merely replace the black/other side of the binary with a mixed-race/other. In this way they remain talking about ‘the other’, yet insist they are doing this because they are talking about ‘mixed-race’. Replacing the Indigenous-other with the mixed-race-other not only can deny the right of people from a mixed-race background to claim an Indigenous identity, it also masks the discourse of ‘the other’. Rather than adopting a liberal position that acknowledges difference, they adopt a neo-conservative position that fails to recognise the significance of difference.

The authors portray the “mixed-race” population of Broome as complex, certainly, but in ways that can be understood by other white Australians. In their own words: “We felt it did far more honour to write about blacks in much the same way as one writes about whites. So there they are on the page, like anyone else, with family backgrounds and hassles at work and occasional domestic dramas” (27). This disavowal of difference has been identified by Bhabha, as a universalising process, which serves to destabilise the threat of cultural diversity to the hegemonic culture, assuming of course, it was a threat in the first place.

The term “mixed-race” also implies that a pure core culture is the yardstick used to measure the ‘other’ culture. Yet, to suggest Anglo-Saxon or Anglo-Celtic is anything but a hybrid culture is ludicrous. Varga herself comes from Jewish, Hungarian heritage; would she identify as a person of “mixed-race”? More importantly who, in the Broome community, would refer to themselves as being of ‘mixed-race?’ In her Herbert Blaiklock Memorial Lecture Heiss asks that if non-Aboriginal people are able to have one identity which includes many heritages, why can’t Aboriginal people? This “one Aboriginal identity with many heritages concept” avoids collapsing local and national Indigenous communities. However,

there is a general resistance to this kind of expansion. The integration of this “one Aboriginal identity with many heritages concept” into a national understanding of Indigenous cultures means that instead of listening to and responding to a ‘singular other’, the dominant culture will now have to deal with ‘multiple singular others’.

While the mix of races might “cease to matter” to Coombs and Varga, it might matter to members of the Broome population. The terms ‘part-Aboriginal’, ‘half-caste’ and ‘mixed-race’ are, Heiss points out, rarely used by Aboriginal people in referring to themselves. Instead, these have been adopted by non-Indigenous Australians to refer to the ‘other.’ Non-Indigenous Australians seldom refer to themselves as part-Australian, Heiss states, because they are terms which imply that a culture is never quite intact. In “Black Bit White Bit”, Anderson states that whatever terms are used: “‘mixed-blood’ or ‘part-blood’ or ‘half-caste’...This construction of Aboriginality, the ‘hybrid’ or ‘ambiguous’ Aborigine, must be properly understood as a product of assimilation colonisation” (45).

In the last decade the release of books such as Broometime has prompted many Indigenous people to voice opinions about non-Indigenous Australians writing about Indigenous society and culture. Michael Dodson in his Wentworth lecture urges Indigenous people to directly address what is being said about them through the strategy of speaking-back. Dodson points out that speaking-back is a highly political act. These acts “...are assertions of our right to be different and to practice our difference. They refuse the reduction of Aboriginality to an object, they resist translation into language and categories of the dominant culture (10).” In her article, “Aboriginal art and film: The Politics of Representation” Marcia Langton asserts that challenging constructions of Aboriginality, by Aboriginal people themselves, uncovers the shaky basis on which these constructions are formed. In a discussion paper, commissioned by the Australian Society of Authors (ASA), Anita Heiss acknowledges there is no law against writing about Indigenous issues, but asks non-Indigenous writers to expect to be asked to justify themselves by those they write about. Speaking-back is often understood by the dominant culture as an attempt to repress and control meaning rather than exert the right of all constituents living in a democracy. Lionel Shriver, believes the freedom of fiction writers is fast eroding in

this new “era of super-sensitivity.” She laments how the “nuisance” (8) of political correctness essentially promotes self-censorship. In a letter to the editor in the national newspaper, *Perpetua Durack Clancy*, the daughter of artist Elizabeth Durack, states that Indigenous people are setting an impossibly high bar for those wishing to explore or discuss Indigenous issues. Coombs and Varga claim in “Sacred Ground,” they “stumbled into a no-go area of discourse in Australia” (27). The act of speaking-back is often framed by the view that freedom of speech is under siege, despite Indigenous claims to the contrary. Dodson acknowledges, in his Wentworth lecture, that problems arising from non-Indigenous attempts to represent indigeneity simply cannot be halted by censoring those representations. Langton recognises that issues are not always clear-cut and urges, both in her article, “A Fireside Chat” and during a speech she gave at the State Library of Queensland, non-Indigenous people to speak to each other and engage in a rational debate with Indigenous people. Speaking-back is too readily interpreted as an attempt to gag non-Indigenous writers, rather than contribute to the discussion.

The questions raised by the Broome’s community, reflect concern at the ways in which Coombs and Varga managed their constructions in the service of particular individual, social and cultural ends. Yet, not at any stage in the debate do they acknowledge that they are being engaged in a critical dialogue. Instead they use words like “offended,” “outraged” and “hysterical” to describe the reaction of their critics. The authors receive ample press coverage from which to voice their defence, whereas the comments of the townspeople are, on the whole, paraphrased into general comments, their protest to the book limited to short quotes and edited views. Nowhere have they been given the same kind of media space afforded to Coombs and Varga. As Huggins points out in her article, “Respect V political correctness”: “With the new term “political correctness” introduced and flaunted in everyday discourse, one often gets accused of being “oversensitive” when one objects...” (12).

Colonised cultures demanding their colonisers to be answerable subverts the position of privilege colonisers have enjoyed for so long. This “no-go area of discourse” identified by Coombs and Varga extends further than the rhetoric of “sacred ground” or “impossibly high bars” or “politically correctness” would have us believe. Essentially, this response is an attempt to censor the subversive act of speaking-back, a way of silencing or ‘dumbing down’ the protest of ‘the other’. Artists who indulge in acts of cultural appropriation, writers who uphold their right

to offend or “to tell the truth as they see it” do so, it seems, while dismissing others’ right of reply. Speaking-back is characterised as uncontrolled, carping, obstructive and flying in the face of democratic principles, which suggests that freedom of speech is very much a one way street, reserved for a privileged and dominant culture.

A privilege often exercised by the dominant culture is the ability to shift position at will. Coombs and Varga adopt the positions of writers (but not historians), women (specifically lesbian women) who were vilified by the media, pro-Aboriginal (but not in the polemical sense). Broome’s “mixed-race” population do not enjoy such freedoms. They are first and foremost defined by race. The authors multi-faceted positioning provides them with a number of powerful strategies, not afforded to ‘the other’. Firstly, it enables them to bypass the rigour of research usually demanded of ethnographers and historians, yet adopt a traditional ethnographic stance of independent observer. Secondly, it allows them to draw ambiguous alliances with the ‘other’ when dealing with the “white media.” Finally, it demonstrates how their deployment of colonial discourses objectifies ‘the other’ and enables them to assert a dubious kind of veracity.

Coombs and Varga repeatedly defend their exposure of other people’s lives in Broometime through the right to free speech. The assertion of the public right to be heard over an individual’s right to confidentiality is compelling in a liberal-democratic environment. However, reciprocal arrangements regarding privacy issues between two cultures where one is dominant are more complex than the authors perceive it. As Nancy Fraser states, “it is not correct to view publicity as always and unambiguously an instrument of empowerment and emancipation. For members of subordinate groups, it will always be a matter of counterbalancing the potential political uses of publicity against the dangers of loss of privacy” (116). She questions the structures of inequity underlying the hegemonic understandings of public and private categories and asks how these structures affect the struggle to contextualise them. Fraser’s analysis illustrates that the debate is not centred around drawing the line between public and private; rather, it concerns the matter of who has political power to draw the line between the public and the private.

Whether or not Broometime is likely to generate disadvantage for a section of the Broome community is addressed by Heiss through a code of ethics checklist attached to her discussion paper. In it she asks: “Does the material empower the community/group you write about?” (9). Throughout the course of the debate, the

authors constantly reiterated their noble intentions to shift Australia's racial debate to new and constructive ground. They claim to have done Australia, and this, they presume, includes Indigenous Australia, a great favour. For many members of the local community of Broome, however, the public airing of their own personal thoughts and feelings was neither politically nor personally empowering. Despite their claims, the authors, did not accommodate personal identity and dignity among different cultural groups comprising Broome's community. The policy officer for the Kimberley Land Council, Wendy Attenborough, pointed out that Broometime merely reopened old wounds and entrenched differences many Broome families spent their lives trying to overcome." In "Remembering Whiteness: Reading Indigenous Life Narrative," Anne Brewster suggests that the only way "the deprivatisation of Indigenous memory and feeling" (8) can contribute positively to the public intellectual debate is through life narratives written by Indigenous people themselves.

Coombs and Varga disagree with this view. In "Sacred Ground", they state: "Australians are beginning, we suspect, to tire of the pro- and anti-reconciliation rhetoric. They are at the point of turning off. It's like hearing the atrocity of the Holocaust once too often. New strategies are needed" (27). The authors were critical of the limitations placed on them by what they saw as pro-Aboriginal groups: namely, the need to write only positively about Indigenous people and issues. The authors argued that they could be supportive of Indigenous people and issues while, at the same time, addressing the negative aspects of Indigenous life and obstructing the authors attempts to deepen the debate.

Another compelling line of defence mounted by Coombs and Varga stems from their motivation to write Broometime and provide Australia with an example to counter the country's growing support at that time for politician Pauline Hanson and the assimilative policies endorsed by her One Nation party. Hanson uses 'race' as a marker of irreconcilable cultural difference and it is precisely this rhetoric which Coombs and Varga attempt to counter with their apparently 'liberal' version of Broome's cultural history. While the authors admit that there are enormous differences in the history, experiences and beliefs between black and white Australia, their attempts to "humanise and contextualise" (27) Indigenous people usually boil down to drawing parallels between Indigenous Australians and white Australians. Attempts to counter the stereotypical images based on notions of difference and otherness with similarity and sameness in itself constitutes a binary. In their own

words, the authors "...give a portrait of the town's Aboriginal and mixed-raced people that would evoke a warm and emphatic reaction from people in other parts of the country" (27). Rendering people comprehensible to others is to invent them. Efforts by non-Indigenous writers to portray similarity rather than difference is not uncommon. In a reply to Sally Morgan's My Place, Judith Drake-Brockman, attempts to bridge the divide between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians in her book Wongi Wongi. Assimilative narrativisation, according to Jon Stratton, supports a policy of multiculturalism. Stratton argues multiculturalism replaces the White Australia Policy and its focus on 'race' with a culturalist approach. The emphasis on culture rather than biology promotes a rhetoric of "diversity" which endorses compatibility. Despite Coombs and Varga's claim that Broometime was a successful attempt to break through simplistic polarisations they, in fact, do not do the Indigenous community of Broome any favours by collapsing the differences between the colonised and their colonisers. Their embrace of diversity by denoting Broome as the nation's flagship of tolerance invokes difference as a fixed, rather than shifting entity. It fails to recognise that Indigenous people often racialise themselves in order to avoid the homogenising effect of ethnicisation bought on by Australia's official policy of multiculturalism. Race is often used by Indigenous people as an act of resistance. The use of certain language, while appearing to counter racism, actually supports a discourse which undermines the critical integrity of Indigenous people who demand answers and speak-back.

While it is possible to identify flaws in Coombs and Varga's response, through a rigorous analysis of unquestioned notions of diversity, critically appraising their text is a little more problematic due to its hybridised nature. Broometime is divided into twenty chapters, grouped under rather ethnocentric sections entitled 'Arrival', 'Sojourn', 'Involvement', 'The Wet', and so on. Preceding this is a map and a brief sketch of the town's history. A list of people, headed "The cast" (ix) are also included. The reader is informed that Coombs and Varga kept a double journal, "the place where we wrote to each other or jotted notes, where we expressed our frustrations and fears" (8). The chapters in each section are divided into sub-titled sections marked by the occasional days/dates and a calligraphic 'A' or 'S' indicating which author is writing.

The presentation of a journal as a literary device presents us with a number of difficulties. One involves the categorisation of Broometime. As a piece of literature,

it is billed as “a contemporary history” whereby personal lives are irrevocably tied to current political issues. The book has, in turn, been described as; a small-town tell-all, a diary-style book, an exposé, fish-out-of water memoirs, a tropical Peyton Place, an upfront deconstruction, a non-fiction snapshot, a documentary style of drama, a personal account, Australia in miniature, and even as a reality-style peep show in book form.

Despite the fact that Broometime is a manifestation of a nine month stint of participant observation, it is clearly not an ethnography. It does, however, contain elements inherent in ethnographic texts. Not only do the authors disclose the process of their research, they also draw on contemporary ethnography’s reflexive practice to probe their own definitions, assumptions and prejudices. Michaels suggests placing this kind of literature into a cordoned-off area called “para-ethnography” whereby it can be examined properly “without confusing our (or their) purpose” (175). Coombs and Varga draw on the ambiguous nature of their text to explain the misunderstandings that occurred in the public debate. They imply that the Australian reading public is unfamiliar with contemporary history and Broometime has been treated as a traditional ethnographic perspective when, in fact, it is something quite different.

Another difficulty regarding the use of the journal as a literary device involves the deflection of objections, raised by ‘the other’, through their use of reflective practices. Diarised accounts are used by anthropologists to respond to objections often voiced by the subjects of anthropological studies as stated by Michaels, namely:

What right have you to appropriate our lives and inscribe our histories to advance your own, and your culture’s objectives without even considering that this may be at the expense of ours? (127)

Centering themselves as objects of scrutiny seemingly addresses Melissa Lucashenko’s frustration, expressed in Heiss’s discussion paper, at “being the freak show of Australian popular culture” (3). However, as Michaels points out, reflexive practices can be used tokenistically as reasons to validate and persist with specific kinds of writing. “This in turn may have resulted in far more dishonesty than positivist perspectives could ever have been accused of” (128).

Coombs response to Dennis O’Rourke’s documentary, Cunnamulla, released only two months prior to Broometime’s launch, highlights that, no matter how

rigorous authors believe their reflexive practices to be, they inevitably fall short of accurate appraisals of their own work. The director, O'Rourke, like Coombs and Varga, spent the best part of a year living in Cunnamulla, researching and recording material for the film. Coombs gave vent to her anger in a review, "Cunnamulla Credibility Gets a Caning", claiming O'Rourke was "high-handed with people" failing to consider the "ramifications for them of the way he used their material" (9). By being highly selective in his choice of interviews and footage, he produced, she believed, a bleak, hackneyed vision of the town which did nothing to further viewers' understanding of country Australia "nor the rise and effects of Hansonism" (9). In short, it did a great disservice to the valuable work of recording contemporary history and raised questions about the ethics of documenting living people's lives. Her criticisms are startlingly similar to those aimed at Coombs and Varga and it was this response that baffled and upset them. Clearly, they found it difficult to understand the nature of the protest. Their book, they insisted, was undeserving of the same kind of condemnation Coombs leveled at O'Rourke and his film. Through a process which probed their own methods and interpretation of 'the other', they felt they were able to defend themselves against claims of being high-handed or insensitive regarding the public release of their research. The authors were reflexive, it is true, but only in so far as subjects within their own narrative. As authors they felt the kind of interrogation they were being subject to in the broader context of a public debate was well outside their jurisdiction.

In their address to the Sydney Institute, Coombs and Varga say they deliberately chose not to write about Broome using an "anthropological tome where everything is carefully checked for its academic correctness," or indeed a tourist style book with "dollops of safe history from Broome's past" (105). The safeness of history is a dubious claim, especially in light of Australia's so called history wars. So too is the assertion that their construction of Broome's "complex and layered portrait" (105) would be hampered by the inclusion of history. Nakata argues in "Better" that historical contextualisation is crucial if we are to understand how critical perspectives are generated. Thomas, too, asserts that "if actions and events are to be understood politically, they need to be situated historically" (9). If Broometime was

read in conjunction with Susan Sickert's book Beyond the Lattice: Broome's Early Years, a better understanding of the Indigenous response to its publication would be gained. Sickert discusses how the actual effect of racist laws had a far-reaching and damaging impact on local people. A pattern of grief, shame, secrecy and confusion is revealed in Sickert's book by Allan Bin Salleh who points out:

Stories don't match and some stories can't match. How can people understand unless you've been in that predicament, unless you have shared experiences? The family tree in our family is starting to become a serial. Problems can arise because the old people went to the grave with secrets. Some of them covered up for their friends by parenting or claiming a child when it wasn't even theirs. They were covering up for somebody else. A lot of prominent people in the early days of Broome, people like magistrates, sergeants, public servants and even priests were abusing the Aboriginal people left, right and centre. The outcomes of their wrongdoings were sent away to homes never to be seen again. (77)

Without this background, it is easy to trivialise the townspeople's reactions and undermine the significance past policies continue to have on people's lives. The authors, for example, use the following joke, familiar to many Broome people, in order to illustrate the forgiving nature of Broome's Indigenous and mixed-race population: "What's the definition of confusion? Father's Day in Broome" (4). Using this joke as the cornerstone of their book gives scant recognition to the negative impact of racist laws that affect Indigenous people's present day attitudes, experiences and values. Even if the authors did not want to write a book which included vast slabs of historical background, then perhaps a comprehensive reading of Broome's history would have provided them with the background to know, as Huggins states, "...when you are becoming an intruder rather than an accomplice" (12). Author, Gail Jones speaks about the trepidation she experienced when writing her novel Sorry. In her essay, "Surviving a Bootprint on the Page", she says that to represent the experiences of the Stolen Generation would be presumptuous. With this in mind, she was careful not to appropriate others' painful experience, choosing instead to deal with culpability for past actions and responses.

Coombs and Varga admit that the private/public debate is a vexed one and have no answer to when the line is crossed. However, they believe a neutral rendering of others' painful experience somehow prevents them from crossing this

line. In “Sacred Ground” the authors repeatedly say they made a concerted effort to observe Indigenous people “without taking a clear, polemical line, without making recommendations or offering solutions” (27). They assert that they did not speak for Indigenous people; they merely located issues of race within a wider perspective of power.

By instating themselves as the self-elected representatives of the voiceless dominant, Coombs and Varga not only reinforce the neo-conservative construct of a homogenous community sharing a particular set of views, they also support the naturalisation of the dominant’s discourse. The voiceless dominant’s view is rarely questioned whereas, if the minority speak, it always has to be qualified and grounded in some authority. Aileen Moreton-Robinson states that non-Indigenous authors’ intentions are often attached to the dominant colonial discourse, which “is both the measure and marker of normality in Australian society” (66), yet remains invisible for the settler/invasor community who do not associate it with dominance and privilege. Non-Indigenous authors consider writing an Indigenous character, for example, to be a literary exercise in trying to occupy another subjectivity often ignoring the political implication that representation necessarily involves taking up a position of power. Academics, Moreton-Robinson maintains, tend to gloss over their positions in settings inscribed with politics, which affords them more power than Indigenous people will ever have. This privilege, she claims, can occur overtly and covertly; overtly when Indigenous people’s version of events is questioned and dismissed; covertly, when Indigenous people are portrayed as being uncooperative in the pursuit of a noble cause. Coombs and Varga overtly exert their white race privilege above Broome residents in their article “Sacred Ground” by tracing the roots of peoples’ outrage to what they say is the “perennial thin skin of Australians,” and attributing the “hysterical” reaction to the book as “supersensitivity” and “exaggerated, almost paranoid notions of privacy” (27). Covertly, they pitch the ‘reaction’ of Broome residents against their noble intentions to combat Hansonism and shift the racial debate from the rut of reconciliation. From this position they portray Indigenous people who protest against Broometime as angry, ungrateful, even ignorant, thereby re-inscribing white superiority. Moreover, objections about use, ownership and control of knowledge are reduced to what they say is “good manners to talk about and not talk about” (27). They are reluctant to acknowledge that representation can be for the purpose and benefit of the representor.

Coombs and Varga assert, throughout the course of the debate, their status as independent, neutral observers in the writing process. Yet, according to Nakata in “Better”, writing is never, in this day and age, apolitical. This aspect of liberal positionality wields enormous power which often goes unacknowledged by non-Indigenous people. He points out how the majority of literature written about Aboriginal and Islander people “seeks to disguise its interventions behind a cloak of apolitical, scientific, culturally unbiased literalism” (141). An analysis of Coomb and Varga’s construction of particular people’s identities indicates that Broometime is not a simple collection of observations, albeit Eurocentric, as the authors would have us believe. The ordinary is sensationlised, at times, in their portrayal of the Broome community, namely the mix of races for example. Using a writing strategy not dissimilar from Clifford Geertz’s study of a Balinese cockfight, Coombs and Varga write about a Yawaru woman, Mary Tarran and her efforts to set up a cultural centre in Broome. The authors conduct a number of interviews with Tarran; they observe her at her work and socialise with her. A general picture is constructed for the reader taken from a number of vantage points and, as a result, Tarran is converted into a ‘character’ listed at the end of the book. In her article, “On Hurting Other People’s Feelings: Journalism, Guilt and Autobiography,” Carolyn Wells Kraus maintains journalists, in particular, find it very difficult to admit that the very act of writing changes meaning. “Undoubtedly, reducing a person’s story to words on a page robs it of its complexity” (283).

To genuinely engage in a dialogue with Indigenous people is to recognise that if non-Indigenous writers choose, like Varga and Coombs, to “wade into the muddy waters of Aboriginal identity” (27), they are, in effect immersing themselves in racialised political power relations, whether they like it or not. Acknowledging that Indigenous people have the freedom to state multifarious views on all matters instead of having to band together in support of pro- and anti- positions is part of this dialogue. Speaking-back against publications such as Broometime does not constitute a feather in the cap of Pauline Hanson, just as it does not represent a threat to freedom of speech. There are many ways to combat Hansonism, and for many members of the Indigenous community of Broome, the publication of Broometime was not one of them.

An ethics is emerging from scholarly discourse recognising these important subtexts and the significant role they play in the entanglement occurring between non-Indigenous writers and Indigenous subjects. Meme McDonald appeals to writers to be part of the solution in Australian racial relations, rather than adding to what she sees as “a great gulf of understanding and prejudices between our two cultures” (181). McDonald questions the absolute right of an author to write about whatever they choose. She discusses how writers have perpetuated inaccurate prejudices by failing to provide full social, political and historical contexts. Louis Nowra recently revitalised the stereotype of the violent, abusive Aboriginal male in his book, Bad Dreaming: Aboriginal Men’s Violence Against Women and Children. These stereotypes compound community prejudices and fears hoodwinking a non-Indigenous readership into believing that the dilemma, whether it be alcoholism or sexual abuse, is racial rather than social. In “Surviving a Bootprint on the Page”, Gail Jones identifies the conflict that occurs between the individual voice of the writer and the broader issues of ethical and moral laws as one particular challenge facing today’s writers. The participation of the individual writer’s voice in a complicated dialogue of reciprocity and redistribution matters. The starting point for this participation begins with “...not speaking for others, not assuming the predominance of one’s own voice—possibly because it is louder, or more prestigious, or somehow more skilled...”(25).

Non-Indigenous writers need to examine not just why we write about Indigenous issues and how we write about them, but also what the barriers are to achieving a meaningful dialogue with Indigenous people. Difficult questions which may arise from such dialogue do not come hand-in-glove with solutions. Often, in our desire to resolve contradictions, right imbalances and reach compromises, we rein in free and vigorous discourse. Deborah Bird Rose addresses questions of repair as an ethical responsibility in Australia. She draws on the work of eminent philosophers to outline a kind of action which might address possibilities for relation and action based on a dialogic approach to ethics. Fackenheim’s concept of “turning toward” asserts that the key to truly open and conducive dialogic exchanges is to accept that the uncertainty of any outcome involves embracing risk. If we apply the principle of “turning toward” to the framework of dialogue and risk outlined by Levinas, then we can “lay an ethical ground for the starting point” (215). Of course, this may mean that parts of our knowledge, position and understandings are

contested at a base level and that difficulties will not necessarily be overcome but, as Bird Rose suggests, it is a “direction of action that contains possibilities for healing and for locating ourselves...” (215).

The challenge for non-Indigenous Australians wishing to include Indigenous Australians in their writing is to look beyond the discourse of ‘the other’ and give adequate recognition to the lived complexities of Australian Indigenous people’s experience. Broometime and its ensuing debate has not broken any new ground about the way non-Indigenous people write beyond the limits of locked borders and stereotypes. If it does represent the new kind of strategy Coombs and Varga maintain is needed to achieve the illusive goals of reconciliation, then why did it fail to empower the very community it set out to immortalise?

As this case study demonstrates, the prevailing dichotomous discourse is inadequate when investigating the representation of Indigenous knowledges and subjectivities. The notion of mutual entanglement reveals the subtexts which play a significant role in the balance of power between non-Indigenous writers and their Indigenous subjects. It creates the possibility for a multifaceted understanding by allowing the complicated issues to see the light of day. More importantly, mutual entanglement provides a basis from which to interrogate the prevailing discourse and perceive what values and political ends it ultimately serves. This notion shows us how Indigenous acts of speaking-back are interpreted as attempts to censor rather than engage in a critical dialogue. It exposes the commodification and appropriation of Indigenous people and culture, concealed under the guise of well-meaning paternalistic intentions. It demonstrates how narratives have a social life existing outside the substance of the text itself which are entangled in notions of representation, ownership and the authority of truth. It highlights the need to properly situate the debate in political and historical contexts and reveals how non-Indigenous attempts to combat racism are not necessarily compatible with Indigenous means of resistance.

White race privilege is often uninterrogated and unrecognised, while remaining glaringly obvious to Indigenous people. If the notion of entanglement provides a better means of understanding the subtext of such debates, then an ethics of care might be a way of negotiating the dialogue that emerges from such an understanding. In “Sacred Ground,” Coombs and Varga speak of a “great denial” going on in Australia that prevents non-Indigenous writers from writing about

Aboriginal Australia “within the bounds of honest observation” (27). I suggest that this “great denial” is in fact a denial of their own polemic, both on racial and political grounds; a failure to recognise the complexities of the debate and a steadfast refusal to relinquish the position of power we have asserted since colonisation.

4 A reflection on the Writing Process

The acceptance of mutual entanglement as a *fait accompli* of cross-cultural engagement between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians requires a receptivity to narratives which have been erased, transposed, rearranged and overwritten by the foundational narratives of settler/invader cultures. This involves embracing the uncertainty of meaning as we read between the lines, cross borders between disciplines and confront the tensions within and between communities.

Members of a majority culture often advocate finding a common ground when addressing issues of Indigenous representation which necessarily means setting aside differences in order to reach a compromise. For a minority culture, downplaying difference is not always an option. In *The Ethical Imagination: Journeys of the Human Spirit*, Somerville says accepting the unavoidable presence of uncertainty allows for our understanding of truth and consensus to change. Common ground need not be bedrock, it can shift depending on how reality is viewed and shaped through differing human knowing, disciplines and methodologies.

My own acceptance of the unavoidable presence of uncertainty in order to address questions of repair as an ethical responsibility led to establishing, within my research, a consultation process with members of an Indigenous reference group. The University contracted two Indigenous writers, living in different regional contexts, to read and comment on the creative component of my thesis, a novel, entitled *The Telling*. In November 2007, I sent them a draft of 137,000 word novel. The readers responded in January 2008 through a written report.⁶ These readers form part of an Indigenous Reference Group who I consulted at various stages in the research process: Rose Murray, who has lived and worked in the area where the novel is set; and Melissa Lucashenko, a Murri woman of mixed European and Yugambah/ Bundjalung descent. The instruction given to the readers was minimal. Keeping in mind the central research question, my supervisor asked them to address the representation of Indigenous culture, people and communities, as well as providing any other general feedback. Murray and Lucashenko were also aware that I would organise follow-up consultations if my supervisor and I thought issues arising out of their reports warranted further discussion.⁷

⁶ These reader reports are included in appendix 1 and 2 respectively.

⁷ The letter sent to members of the Indigenous Reference group is included in appendix 3.

It is important to stress here that this component of my research was not implemented to obtain an endorsement. Two Indigenous readers do not constitute the views of the Indigenous Australian community. In fact, Murray stresses that her view is not to be taken as representative of the Indigenous community, going to great lengths, at the beginning of her report, to frame her position within the Indigenous Australian community. She asserts that, as a Pilbara Aboriginal woman not immersed in traditional Nyangumarta culture, she has been “an outsider looking in” and has had, on the one hand, a lot to learn about her family, local history and communication; on the other, her status as an outsider has enabled her to be “attuned to the lack of understanding and communication between Aboriginal and Non Aboriginal people living in the northwest” (1). Murray also points out that she is isolated from the Indigenous writers’ scene. Identifying her outsider position signals her acknowledgement of the dilemma that Indigenous people often face when asked to comment on aspects of non-Indigenous representation, namely how such comments are often misconstrued by the dominant culture to be representative of Aboriginal people. In addition, there is also a more universal consideration regarding the nature of readers and reading being individual and subject to flux.

The contracting of Indigenous readers’ reports was an attempt to inform my own representational practice by examining my response to the comments made. It wasn’t about trying to identify some kind of Indigenously derived ‘tenets’ which I could apply to my creative writing, but more about trying to understand how the implications of this dialogue impacted on the creative process. These motivations form the basis of the ensuing discussion in this chapter.

In his paper “Representing Indigeneity: A Reflection on Motivation and Issues,” Robins classifies the issues faced by non-Indigenous writers in Australia into two main categories: context and content. The contextual issues identified by Lucashenko and Murray involve problematics that are paramount to the narrative’s theme, which include the following: racialised understandings of the Aboriginal world and identity, the entanglement of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal world views, the way systems of knowledge are viewed and distributed in both cultures, the rules of communication between two cultures, the interpretation of Aboriginal culture and society by non-Aboriginal people, ownership and surrender of cultural information, and the implications of speaking for others. Issues of content include questions pertaining to the accuracy of language and social behaviour, the perpetuation of

positive and negative stereotypes, and the novel's inclusion of cultural and social content. Robins acknowledges the existence of mutual entanglement by pointing out that the categories of content and context overlap and interconnect. This interconnection occurs when Murray suggests I address issues of content through an examination of my own intentions as an author. I will now explore the implications of these contextual issues before moving onto those of content and a discussion of the implications of their entanglement.

The presentation of Indigenous world views and knowledge as polarised against non-Indigenous world views and knowledge is raised by Lucashenko. Aboriginal world views feature strongly in educational literature in the 1990s as part of a strategy supporting bi-cultural schooling. In his book, Two-Way Aboriginal Schooling: Education and Cultural Survival, Stephen Harris supports the anthropologist Stanner's premise that remote Aboriginal culture and Western culture have two distinct logics. Harris explains what he sees as the fundamental nature of some of these differences couching them in polarised terms; for example, religious versus positivistic, relatedness versus compartmentalisation, cyclic versus linear concepts of time, being versus doing, and closed versus open society. While acknowledging that there are fundamental differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous systems of knowledge, Lucashenko asserts that "Indigenous knowledge differs and is similar to, outsider knowledge" (1). I have attempted to address this tension in my novel by drawing on the oral or written dichotomies often used to characterise Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowledges respectively. While written words are certainly shown to be enduring, they are at times, Lucashenko points out, "empty useless instruments of white power to Aboriginal people" (4). As well as showing writing to be an exercise of power often used by a dominant culture, I have not attempted to valorise one over the other. My energies were directed at portraying language, whether it be written or spoken, as never absolute and always contestable. The inadequacy of both the written and the spoken word are constantly emphasised in order to demonstrate how truth, rather than being an objective concept, is temporal and multi-faceted. This is acknowledged by Lucashenko, who writes: "There are more than two positions here" (2). The difference between Indigenous and non-Indigenous world views are not only sophisticated, they are highly nuanced, she states, and it is these subtle distinctions that are revealed through the competing varieties and levels of knowledge when it comes to the missing child.

Lucashenko's discussion in the report regarding the representation and reception of Indigenous knowledge reveals its mutual entanglement. As she points out, access to Aboriginal knowledge is "at many, many levels depending on personalities and personal histories. And it can't be assumed that whites occupy a particular level of knowledge and blacks another - its always more complex than that" (3). I had tried setting up scenarios in my novel in order to demonstrate that positions are infinitely more multifaceted than presented in dichotomy. Insider and outsider status is not delegated to black and white respectively. Annie's status, as an outsider, shifts and slips in different contexts, as does Stirling's. The enormous gulfs of understanding that exist between people who 'belong' to the same culture are shown through Mick's relationship with Annie and Stirling's relationship with his tribal family.

Lucashenko acknowledges the novel achieves this in the sense it resists plotting the trajectory of the main protagonist (Annie) from silly, ignorant white girl to a sophisticated bi-cultural adult. Despite having lived in an Aboriginal community for over a year, Annie never becomes an "expert" on the residents there. In fact, as Lucashenko points out, towards the end of the novel, Annie is constantly making mistakes and backtracking, even after much learning. Lucashenko does not corroborate the stereotypes of ignorant white versus knowledgeable Aboriginal and is supportive of a white character (Mick) being portrayed as having understanding from almost an Aboriginal point of view. Stirling, a member of the Stolen Generation who has come back to live with the family, is prevented from learning through the children, as Annie learns, because of his pride.

Murray recognises that understanding hinges on situating events within historical contexts through a comment she makes directly on the manuscript. She asks that a document, within the narrative, be dated in order to show the reader that extreme government practices of repression are within the living memories of Aboriginal people today. Similarly, the inclusion of oral history transcripts is an attempt to show the reader how past events are not as distant as conventional history allows us to believe. Massacres, forcible removal of children from their Aboriginal mothers, being arrested for playing cards — all have an impact on successive generations of Aboriginal people. How the past continues to affect people's lives in profound ways is reflected in the character, Stirling, a pedophile and violent offender. He is not portrayed stereotypically. In fact, the presentation of his oral

history transcript within the main body of the narrative shows the reader how social circumstances inescapably shape his own personal history.

While both readers were generally supportive of these problematics being raised and not resolved, their discussion of them prompted me to review aspects of the novel with a view to making them more compelling and, in many ways, more complicated. Annie's grappling with her personal aspirations, and those of Mysterly, Ruthie, Louisa and Jalin, and the theoretical considerations of International rights and policy over the practical needs of the community, indicate a complicated negotiation of individual and societal needs influenced by political and cultural agendas. Encouraged by Lucashenko's discussion regarding levels of knowledge, I also gave Mick a stronger voice in revised editions of the novel. This meant Annie and Mick fought more often and more regularly and, despite her resistance, this conflict, together with her contact with the children and older women from Yindi, served to facilitate some, but not all, aspects of Annie's understanding.

Claims by non-Indigenous writers that Aboriginal people are trying to censor them are not corroborated by Lucashenko and Murray's comments. Indeed, Lucashenko supports the discussion of uncomfortable issues raised in the book, such as the use of the term "quadroon", saying that it is "correct and an important conversation to include" (3). However, the use of the term "full-blood", even in the mouth of an Aboriginal character, is rejected by Lucashenko for the following reason: "Unfortunately, the degree of racism still inevitable in Australia means that the use of this term can't ever be condoned" (6). She suggests replacing the term with "tribal" and then further minimising its effect by making the eyes of the Aboriginal woman who spoke it blue instead of brown. This, she maintains, would emphasise to the reader "that people of mixed decent are also indisputably Aboriginal" (6). Her comment supports the contentions of many Aboriginal people who question dominant constructions of Aboriginal people with mixed heritage as being somehow compromised when they choose to identify as Indigenous. Lyn Henderson Yates, presenting a paper at the West Australian branch conference of the Oral History Association of Australia, describes growing up as a fair complexioned Aboriginal girl and discusses the implications of non-Aboriginal people who match their complexion to her identity.

There are limited restrictions placed on the author by the readers who encourage fair and open portrayals of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous characters

and life. Lucashenko cautions against presenting the naïve view of utopian sharing amongst Aboriginal family/community. While acknowledging that communities in the Kimberly might be different, and recognising that relationships in remote communities can be fair and egalitarian, she cautions against portraying what, she states, “is often a sordid and very sad state of affairs on the East coast” (6). In consideration of the inordinate amount of negative press coverage preceding the Federal election in 2007 with the Commonwealth Government’s intervention in the Northern Territory, I understand from Lucashenko’s comment that the novel should not detail the negative aspects of Aboriginal communities; yet, neither should I present a romanticised construction of Aboriginal community life. In response to her comment, I decided, rather than delete my utopian portrayal from the novel, to provide a response that challenged it and have Stirling, an Aboriginal character, present the utopian picture and, Mick, a non-Aboriginal character, question it, albeit indirectly.

Murray urges the writer to reassess the negative attributes of white professionals portrayed in the book. She questions the novel’s premise that researchers, like Annie, would operate in Indigenous communities without all the correct protocols. She also asks me if lawyers, like Johanna, would venture an opinion in a public place and points out that ethical standards amongst white people in regards to Aboriginal people have come a considerably long way. I have deduced from Murray’s and Lucashenko’s comments that it is not *what* is depicted by non-Indigenous writers which is often called into question, but *how* these issues are depicted.

Many of Murray’s comments deal with issues of content. One involves the veracity of Indigenous characters’ language and their response to specific scenarios related by the novel. She points out Aboriginal women would not swear in mixed company when sober. Murray is also concerned about the absence of support from Aboriginal women, particularly of Kuj, who disappears into the desert, and her grandmother, Mysterly, who is distraught about her disappearance. Importantly, Murray draws my attention to some Aboriginal cultural and social aspects presented in the novel. Despite the fact that it doesn’t break cultural protocols, Murray wonders about my objectives as a writer and urges me to be reflexive in regards to the degree of information shared with my readers. She asks, “When you include this amount of ethnographic type detail the writer really has to ask: Why have I included

this example? How does it add to the depth of the story? ... It can't be a curio" (1). Her comment reflects Lucashenko's frustration, expressed in Heiss's protocol paper, at "being the freak show of Australian popular culture" (3). Their remarks reflect Indigenous concerns regarding the exhibition of the other's cultural and social practices identified in ethnographic writing. They signal to me that the kind of knowledge described in the novel isn't being called into question, but rather the motivations of the author in presenting it. So I re-read sections of my novel with a view to examining my own motivations and, as a result, deleted, re-wrote and retained sections of it.

The description of a smoking ceremony, for example, was deleted. Not only did it detract from the storyline, but it was more important for the reader to have some understanding of why such a ceremony takes place, rather than a detailed description of it, because it is this aspect which reverberates with one of the main protagonist's (Annie's) experience of birth and motherhood. I re-wrote parts of the novel which detailed skin relationships in Aboriginal communities. I felt that the reader needed to get a sense that Aboriginal cultures in the northwest relate to each other in a variety of ways, and that way of relating was enormously difficult for an outsider to understand. Annie's failure to recognise this is the cause of many cross-cultural misunderstandings and subsequent blunders. The parts of the novel I retained involved the use of Aboriginal language and descriptions of ceremony, painting and song. Including these traditional aspects of Aboriginal culture in the northwest was an important aspect of the novel. My aim was to convey to the reader that the community Annie lived in not only maintained its traditions, despite incursions on and expectations of the non-Aboriginal world, but were also particularly adept at adapting to the western world. I also kept information regarding bush-names because it highlights Lucashenko's argument about access to Aboriginal cultural knowledge and is a good example of recognition, on Annie's behalf, about the implications of retaining and distributing such knowledge. Examining my own motivations, within a literary context demonstrated to me that the appropriation of cultural information by non-Indigenous writers has subtle complexities that go beyond the boundaries of what is/is not appropriate to be made publically available — the tokenistic presentation of 'acceptable' cultural information, for example. Implicit in this dialogue is the notion of the ethics of return. The giving away of cultural information is a reciprocal arrangement which requires a giving back, in this

case, the facilitation of dialogue, or in Murray's words, "How does this add to the communication between Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people?" (3).

Murray also draws attention to my use of Aboriginal English in the manuscript. She suggests that if Aboriginal English is to be used then it should be represented correctly, and asks if the writer's inaccurate representation of language is to assist a white readership's understanding. An examination of the text, in light of Murray's comment, revealed that I was indeed supporting this understanding and, in spite of paying particular attention to the spelling of Northern Nyangumarta words in the novel, failed to properly reflect that Aboriginal English does indeed have its own orthography. As I set about checking the orthography, a disturbing realisation occurred: I had Indigenous characters speaking a generic brand of Aboriginal English. I did not have my non-Aboriginal main protagonists speaking a generic form of English; moreover I had made a concerted effort to make the speech of each of Maggot's circle of friends distinct so the reader could more readily distinguish these many characters from each other. Murray's comment enabled me to see that, despite all my good intentions, I was not personalising the Indigenous main protagonists in a similar way through dialogue. So, on Murray's advice, during a follow-up interview, I re-read publications involving transcripts from Aboriginal people with a view to particularising the dialogue of Tommy Mutton Junior, Ruthie, Stirling, and Louisa. This was not as successful as it could have been, but I did manage, I think, to make some distinction between how older and younger Aboriginal people speak English in the region the novel was set. In particular, how Stirling's speech differed from those people of his generation, who had not been forcibly removed from their parents.

Both readers felt that there were too many characters and thus too many histories, which has compelled me to consider amalgamating one or two of the characters into one. However, a danger inherent in condensing characters is the tendency to render them stereotypically; for example, older Aboriginal people portrayed as vessels of knowledge and wisdom, and the friends of another main protagonist (Maggot) being portrayed as white, narrow-minded, parochial country-dwellers. Compromises are difficult to reach in this regard and this, I suggest, is a result of the limitations of this genre. Characters can be culled in order to make the reader's job easier, but this will be at the expense of a diverse cast that challenges readers' preconceptions. Rather than cull characters or merge them, I stuck with my

cast and set about trying to distinguish them more from each other, although this was difficult considering word count restrictions. I tried particularising the friends of the character Maggot; Fearless Bob, for example, was not made more courageous, but more ignorant and stupid. The character of Corlaee, instead of fleeting, became a little more substantial. This could occur because of changes prompted by Murray's comments. The absence of Louisa towards the end of the story enabled the presence and development of the character, Coralee.

The novelisation of issues revolving around the representation of Indigenous people is problematic. While the novel was a useful way of examining ethical dilemmas faced by non-Indigenous researchers, because it pitched the formality of ethnographic texts against the internal thoughts of the ethnographer. The fictionalised oral history transcripts however, were less successful in other aspects — the interview, where the roles are reversed between Annie and Louisa, for example. A shift like this seemed a great idea at the time, providing a dramatic and timely realisation of the power relationship between the interviewer/interviewed. However, having an older Aboriginal adult asking direct questions sat uneasily with me. Rarely, in my experience as a linguist working in the northwest, does this occur, and it took much work on the transcript to get my point across without the standard question-answer format characterising standard interviewing techniques. Punctuating the oral history transcript also proved difficult. I wanted to retain the 'oralness' of it and not 'literise' it too much; however, my supervisor rightly pointed out that it needed to be clear to readers. Eventually, after much experimenting with square brackets, full stops and commas, I reached a compromise that I am not altogether satisfied with. This compromise comes unstuck in the transcript where Louisa draws on a traditional method of storytelling, using props to support her personal narrative. The difficulty I experienced, and did not properly resolve, points to comment made by Lucashenko regarding the rules of white communication and the difficulty experienced by non-Aboriginal people regarding re-education. I considered deleting this transcript from the novel altogether. But after revisiting Bakhtin's notion of dialogism, I decided to retain it. I did so because I felt that, although its clunky awkwardness helped dramatise the gaps between what is told and the telling, this transcript, I feel, epitomises the struggle that occurs between the stratification of language, context and race.

Importantly, the manuscript assessment process provided me with the presence of an Indigenous reader, whereas previously I had imagined readers as non-Indigenous. Of course, imagining ‘an Indigenous reader’ plays to the mythic homogenous collective, which I am well aware of, but it also showed me how my cultural positioning is unconscious and assumed during the creative process. Throughout the final drafts, the Indigenous reader sat on my shoulder, together with the linguist, probing and questioning. The actuality of readers’ reports, however, prompted a more rigorous interrogation of not only content and contextual issues, but also my own motivations. They also reinforced a contention on which this research is based that, as a nation, embarking upon a new dialogue necessarily entails freeing ourselves from the spurious discourse that sets white up against black.

Conclusion

In his address at the National Press Club, just after Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd apologised to the Stolen Generation, Patrick Dodson stated how considered dialogue between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people “was overwhelmed by conflict, fear and solutions imposed by vested interests” (7). In attempting to navigate the ethics of representation, the critical component of my research has identified the simplification of extremely complex issues as an impediment to considered dialogue.

The mutual entanglement of Indigenous and non-Indigenous in postcolonial Australia means that issues revolving around representation of Indigenous knowledges are full of contradictions. An examination of the public debate demonstrates its astounding inadequacy to deal with this complexity. Substantive issues are often reduced to binaries, and existing stereotypes and prejudices compounded through a tendency to typify cultural groups through the ascription of simplistic characteristics. This black/white binary collapses people into one of two groups and has had the insidious repercussions of positioning Indigenous and non-Indigenous viewpoints in neat, diametrically opposed counterpoints. The reasons which motivate such a capitulation of feeling and opinion from Australia’s Indigenous community are often rendered as unreasonable, overly sensitive or a direct assault on the right to free speech. Writers who underestimate or ignore this complexity often become the subject of voluble criticism from Indigenous people.

Literature can be powerful in its ability to create and perpetuate misinformation. How Indigenous people and their knowledges are represented in literature reverberates in Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities for many years. The image of the violent, hostile Aboriginal male, characterised by a certain kind of fiction, has been recently regurgitated through the ideological crusade of the Northern Territory Intervention Program. This stereotype has been criticised by some, but not all, Indigenous leaders as supporting neo-liberal prescription for Indigenous policy as well as compounding fears which support subtle and entrenched racist views in the Australian community.

The continued desire for control and management of Indigenous people is still part of modern settler/invaser Australia. This power is asserted through subtle and insidious means, often coupled with a denial that such a desire no longer exists, and if it did there are no longer the means available to achieve it. However, an examination of the literature and postcolonial critique, for example, demonstrate how

writers attempts to represent Indigenous people in literature, either positively or negatively, is essentially an attempt to produce, distribute and essentially control images and information about many aspects of Indigenous life. This aspect is largely unrecognised in public discourse and goes some way to explaining the shock, surprise, even hurt, non-Indigenous writers often feel when Aboriginal people refuse to be silenced and voice opinions on non-Indigenous efforts to represent them and/or appropriate their culture and, at times, demand writers be accountable for their work. Indigenous people have put questions regarding the representation of Indigenous knowledges and subjectivities squarely on the agenda of current political debate; it is now time for writers to properly address these questions while recognising that a consensus may only ever be partial and temporary.

Despite ethical leaps forward in the social sciences, such as ethnography and anthropology, the ethical compass that guides non-Indigenous writers working in the literary field is not one that always recognises the rights, interests and responsibilities of Indigenous cultures who, to this day, are unrecognised within the Australian constitution. An examination of ethnographic writing reveals the important place of reflexivity in the ethics of researching and writing about Indigenous cultures and although reflexivity is problematic, it can turn the focus of the gaze from 'the other' back to the author. This can compel writers from all sectors of the community to ask questions which assist them to acknowledge their own positions, question their own definitions and motivations, recognise the impact this has on those being spoken for or spoken about, and formulate or revise their representational practice. However, many writers of fiction, as well as writers who straddle fictional and non-fictional genres, feel exempt from asking the kinds of questions anthropologists have been asking about their own representations of Indigenous people.

These writers do not always recognise they occupy a particularly privileged position in their society and that this position affords them rights and liberties that people from minority cultures have spent many years fighting for. Examining the response of white writers who are called into account by Indigenous members of the community shows us how uneven the stakes can be. Authors from dominant cultures have extraordinary freedoms that enable them to change the rules of play, often without being challenged. Fiction writers, in particular can be particularly adept at dodging and weaving the ethical challenges thrown at them by Indigenous protestors. They often fall back on the defence that, as writers of fiction, they can write about

anything they choose. It is a defence based on the premise that Australia is a free country and its citizens are at liberty to say whatever they want, whenever they want, while disregarding the plausible reality that it is usually the dominant culture who is granted this privilege.

The impact of conceptual frameworks used to legitimise practices of colonisation, which continue to have significant influence on modern Aboriginal society, are often underrated by the dominant culture. In order to avoid being beset by conflict, fear and solutions imposed by vested interests, it is imperative that non-Indigenous writers be attentive to the subtle and insidious practises of projecting cultural practises and ways of thinking onto 'the other'. Writers from dominant cultures can contribute to a constructive dialogue by recognising the privileged position they occupy and interrogating the cultural biases which affect those being spoken for and about. This interrogation may assist writers to recognise that what Indigenous people have to say about representational issues is a positive contribution to the principles of free speech.

This exegesis has identified alternative ways in which writers from dominant cultures might think about matters relating to the representation of Indigenous people and cultures and how to use this knowledge to inform their future writing practises. However, as has been shown, the study delves into just one aspect of what is an enormously entangled and complex field. My original aim was to concentrate on the representation of Indigenous people in works of fiction, but the more research I conducted, the more I realised the boundaries of fiction in this post-modern world swell and burst into other genres, so I simply could not ignore this aspect. This makes for a wide-ranging discussion which is not neatly resolved. One aspect which I felt I did not give adequate attention to was the historical genres and the entanglement of history with issues of representation. Unfortunately, it was not within the scope of this exegesis to properly examine historical texts, although their contribution, as demonstrated by public debate concerning the history wars and the release of Keith Winscuttle's controversial book, The Fabrication of Aboriginal History, has important repercussions. A more comprehensive discussion regarding the relationship between appropriation and representation, particularly in regards to Indigenous and non-Indigenous notions of intellectual property and identity is also lacking. Given that Canada's equivalent to the Australia Council has now defined 'appropriation' as the portrayal of minority cultures, other than one's own, in both

fiction and non-fiction, it would be a timely discussion to have. Coleman's response to Aboriginal claims about their art and identity and the way their arts should be protected reveals some interesting insights about cultural diminishment through appropriation and how cultural property should be used. The impact on fiction of historical issues arising from the public and scholarly debate and the notion of appropriation as applied to representation of Aboriginal knowledge in fiction needs to be explored in future academic research. I am also aware of the methodological constraints of commissioning only two readers for my work-in-progress. A larger group of Indigenous readers would have been preferable, but the practical realities of time and money prevented this from occurring. Nevertheless, my focus has been concerned with challenging the presumptions and fears that block the dialogue between Indigenous people and non-Indigenous writers. One of the consequences of my research may be that it raises questions which could, one day, be addressed by the mainstream publishing industry.

Numerous writers spend a great deal of time and effort researching historical, social and cultural aspects of their novels. Throughout the course of the writing process they may ask themselves: How shall we conduct ourselves as writers? What is the right way to behave? There are no easy resolutions to these questions and there is a general reluctance to embark on a consultation process which involves addressing the comment and feedback regarding their representations of Indigenous people by Indigenous people themselves. I suggest that this reluctance is fuelled by a fear among writers that entering into this consultation process will somehow compromise their freedoms and rights as writers living in the liberal democracy that is Australia. But, as Dodson stated in his speech, "It takes courage to begin a journey where the destination is imagined and not known" (2). As a writer from a dominant culture, the questions I asked myself, which gave me courage to begin my journey, are these: Is a right truly a right if it applies to some members of the Australian nation and not to others? Is a freedom really a freedom if it serves to benefit one culture at the detriment of another? Throughout my journey I tried to remain alert by recognising the introduced narratives of colonial and modern Australia and choosing not to play along with them. Instead of turning away or creating other stories designed to cover and conceal the voices that have fought hard through the centuries to make themselves heard, writers can commit instead to listen to Indigenous people,

monitor, challenge, and even modify, their writing practices, positively contributing to the creation of a new relationship with Indigenous Australia.

Bibliography

- Adiche, Chimamanda Ngozi. Half of a Yellow Sun. London: Fourth Estate, 2006.
- Anderson, Ian. Introduction. "The Aboriginal Critique of Colonial Knowing." Blacklines: Contemporary Critical Writing by Indigenous Australians. Ed. Michele Grossman. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2003. 17-24.
- ."Black Bit, White Bit." Blacklines: Contemporary Critical Writing by Indigenous Australians. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2003. 43-51.
- Andrews, L.V. The Crystal Woman: The Sisters of the Dreamtime. New York: Warner Books, 1987.
- Astley, Thea. A Kindness Cup. Melbourne: Thomas Nelson, 1974.
- Attenborough, Wendy. "Writers Stretch Town's Tolerance to the Limit." The Australian 22 March 2001: 2.
- Bakhtin, Mikhail. The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M.M. Bakhtin. Trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Ed. Michael Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981.
- . Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics. Trans. Caryl Emerson. Theory and History of Literature. Ed. Caryl Emerson. Vol. 8. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984.
- Bates, Daisy. The Passing of the Aboriginies: A Lifetime Spent among the Natives of Australia. London: John Murray, 1938.
- Beilby, Richard. The Brown Land Crying. London: Angus and Robertson, 1975.
- Bell, Diane, and Topsy Napurrula Nelson. "Speaking About Rape Is Everyone's Business." Women's Studies International Forum 12.4 (1989): 403-16.
- Berndt, Catherine. Land of the Rainbow Snake: Aboriginal Children's Stories and Songs from Western Arnhem Land. Sydney: William Collins Pty Ltd, 1979.
- Berndt, Ronald, and Catherine Berndt. Man, Land and Myth in North Australia: The Gunwinggu People. Sydney: Ure Smith, 1970.
- Bhabha, Homi The Location of Culture. London: Routledge, 1994.
- Brewster, Anne. Literary Formations: Post-colonialism, Nationalism, Globalism. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1995.
- . "Remembering Whiteness: Reading Indigenous Life Narrative." borderlands 4.1 (2005): 1-12. 28 Aug. 2006 <<http://www.borderlandsjournal.adelaide.edu.au>>.
- . "Writing Whiteness: The Personal Turn." Australian Humanities Review June.35

- (2005): 1-12. Aug. 21 2006 <<http://www.lib.latrobe.edu.au>>.
- Brown, Dan. The Da Vinci Code. New York: Doubleday, 2003.
- Bulbeck, Chilla. "The Dialogue between White Feminism and Indigenous Women." Lila-Asia Pacific Women's Study Journal 6 (1996): 35-50.
- Burstein, Dan, ed. Secrets of the Code: The Unauthorized Guide to the Mysteries Behind the Da Vinci Code. New York: Vanguard Press, 2006.
- Casey, Gavin. Snowball. Sydney: Halstead Press, 1958.
- Centre for Aboriginal Studies. Ways of Working: Aboriginal Cultural Awareness Modules. Perth: Curtin University of Technology, 2006.
- Chatwin, Bruce. The Songlines. London: Jonathon Cape, 1987.
- Clendinnen, Inga. "The History Question: Who Owns the Past?" Quarterly Essay issue 23 (2006): 1-47.
- . "Who Owns the Past." Late Night Live. Australia: Radio National. 11 Oct. 2006.
- Clifford, James. "Introduction: Partial Truths." Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography. Eds. James Clifford and George E. Marcus. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986.
- Coleman, Elizabeth Burns. Aboriginal Art, Identity and Appropriation. Anthropology and Cultural History in Asia and the Indo-Pacific. Eds. Pamela Stewart and Andrew Strathern. Aldershot, Eng.: Ashgate, 2005.
- Coombs, Anne. "Cunnamulla Credibility Gets a Caning." Canberra Times. 23 Jan. 2001: 9.
- . Sex and Anarchy: The Life and Death of the Sydney Push. Melbourne: Viking, 1996.
- Coombs, Anne, and Susan Varga. Broometime. Rev. ed. Sydney: Scepture, 2001.
- . "Broome: Frontier Town or the Future Shape of Australia." Sydney Papers Autumn (2001): 96-106.
- . "Sacred Ground." The Weekend Australian 26 May 2001: 27.
- Cunnamulla. Dir. Dennis O'Rourke. Film Australia, 2001.
- Davis, Jack, et al., eds. Paperbark: A Collection of Black Australian Writings. Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 1990.
- . Plays from Black Australia. Sydney: Currency Press, 1989.
- Dodson, Michael. "The End in the Beginning: Re(De)Finding Aboriginality." Australian Aboriginal Studies number 1 (1994): 2-13.

- Dodson, Patrick. "After the Apology." National Australia Bank Address. National Press Club, Canberra. 13 Feb. 2008.
- Drake-Brockman, Judith. Wongi Wongi: To Speak. Perth: Hesperian Press, 2001.
- Dumbartung Aboriginal Corporation. 28 Nov. 2000
<<http://www.dumbartung.org.au>>.
- Durack, Mary. Keep Him My Country. Adelaide: Rigby, 1955.
- Durack, Perpetua Clancy. Letter. "Lessons May Be Learned from Broometime." The Weekend Australian 7 Apr. 2001: 18.
- Durkheim, Emile. The Elemenatry Forms of Religious Life. Trans. Karen E. Fields. New York: The Free Press, 1995.
- "Emergency Response to Protect Aboriginal Children in the NT." Australian Government. Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs. 11 Mar. 2008 <<http://www.facsia.gov.au>>.
- Elkin, A.P. The Australian Aboriginies. Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1938.
- . "The Dreamtime." Songs of the Songmen: Aboriginal Myths Retold. Eds. W.E Harney and A.P Elkin. Adelaide: Rigby, 1968.
- . "Wanderer's Lament." Songs of the Songmen: Aboriginal Myths Retold. Eds. W.E Harney and A.P Elkin. Adelaide: Rigby, 1968.
- Fackenheim, Emil. To Mend the World: Foundations of Post-Holocaust Jewish Thought. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994.
- Fischer, Michael. "Ethnicity and the Post-Modern Arts of Memory." Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography. Eds. James Clifford and George E. Marcus. Berkeley: University of California, 1986. 194-233.
- Foucault, Michel. "Two Lectures." Trans. Colin Gordon, et al. Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-77. Ed. Colin Gordon. London: The Harvester Press, 1980.
- Fraser, Nancy. Justice Interruptus: Critical Reflections on The "Postsocialist" Condition. New York: Routledge, 1997.
- Geertz, Clifford. The Interpretation of Cultures. New York: Basic Books, 1973.
- Gilbert, Kevin, ed. Inside Black Australia: An Anthology of Aboriginal Poetry. Melbourne: Penguin, 1988.
- Glass, Colleen, and Archie Weller, comp. and eds. Us Fellas: An Anthology of Aboriginal Writing. Perth: Artlook Books, 1987.

- Goldie, Terry. Fear and Temptation: The Image of the Indigene in Canadian, Australian, and New Zealand Literatures. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989.
- Grenville, Kate. Searching for the Secret River. Melbourne: Text Publishing, 2006.
- . The Secret River. Melbourne: Text Publishing, 2005.
- Grossman, Michele ed. Blacklines: Contemporary Critical Writing by Indigenous Australians. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2003.
- Gunn, Aeneas. We of the Never Never. London: Hutchinson 1908.
- Gwynne, Phillip. Deadly Unna. Melbourne: Penguin, 1998.
- Haebich, Anna. Broken Circles: Fragmenting Indigenous Families 1800-2000. West Austral.: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 2000.
- Harris, Stephen. Two-Way Aboriginal Schooling: Education and Cultural Survival. Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 1990.
- Healy, J. J. Literature and the Australian Aborigine in Australia 1770-1975. St Lucia: UQP, 1978.
- Hecht, Tobias. After Life: An Ethnographic Novel. Durham: Duke University Press, 2006.
- Heiss, Anita. "Writing Aboriginalities: Authors on Being Aboriginal: 2006 Herbert Blaiklock Memorial Lecture." AWAYE! Australia: Radio National. 13 Oct. 2006.
- . "Writing About Indigenous Australia—Some Issues to Consider and Protocols to Follow: A Discussion Paper." Southerly 62.2 (2002): 197-205.
- Herbert, Xavier. Capricornia. Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1938.
- . Poor Fellow My Country. Sydney: Collins, 1975.
- Hewett, Dorothy. Wild Card: An Autobiography, 1923-1958. Melbourne: McPhee Gribble, 1990.
- Hodge, Bob, and Vijay Mishra. Dark Side of the Dream: Australian Literature and the Postcolonial Mind. Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1991.
- Howitt, A.W. The Native Tribes of South-East Australia. Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 1996.
- Huggins, Jackie. "Respect V Political Correctness." Australian Author 26.3 (1994): 12-14.
- Idriess, Ion. Outlaws of the Leopolds. Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1952.

- Irving, David. Goebbels: Mastermind of the Third Reich. London: Focal Point Publications, 1996.
- Jones, Gail. Sorry. Sydney: Vintage, 2007.
- . "Surviving a Bootprint on the Page." The Australian Literary Review May 2007: 24-25.
- Kaberry, Phyllis. Aboriginal Woman: Sacred and Profane. New York: Gordon Press, 1939.
- Keneally, Thomas. The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith. Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1972.
- . "The Borrowers." The Age 30 August 2003: n. pag. 19 Aug. 2008. < <http://www.theage.com.au/articles/2003/08/29/1062050656844.html>>
- Koolmatrie, Wanda. My Own Sweet Time. Broome, West Austral.: Magabala Books, 1994.
- Kraus, Carolyn Wells. "On Hurting People's Feelings: Journalism, Guilt and Autobiography." Biography 26.2 (2003): 283-97.
- Kurtzer, Sonja. "Wandering Girl: Who Defines 'Authenticity' in Aboriginal Literature?" Blacklines: Contemporary Critical Writing by Indigenous Australians. Ed. Michele Grossman. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2003. 181-88.
- Langton, Marcia. "Aboriginal Art and Film: The Politics of Representation." Blacklines: Contemporary Critical Writing by Indigenous Australians. Ed. Michele Grossman. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2003. 109-25.
- . "A Fireside Chat." Prehistory to Politics: John Mulvaney, the Humanities and the Public Intellectual. Eds. Tim Bonyhady and Tom Griffiths. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1997. 134-43.
- . "Trapped in the Aboriginal Reality Show." Griffith Review Feb.19 (2008): n. pag. 11 Apr. 2008 <<http://www3.griffith.edu.au>>.
- . 'Well, I Heard It on the Radio and I Saw It on the Television...' Sydney: Australian Film Commission, 1993.
- Levinas, Emmanuel. Emmanuel Levinas: Basic Philosophical Writings. Eds. Adriaan Peperzak, Simon Critchley and Robert Bernasconi. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996.
- Lockwood, Douglas. I the Aboriginal. Adelaide: Rigby, 1962.

- Lopez, Barry. "Imagining the Arctic and Antarctic." The Book Show. Australia: Radio National. 26 July 2007.
- MacIntyre, Stuart, and Anna Clark. The History Wars. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press.
- McCalman, Iain. "Latitude for the Popularisers." The Australian Literary Review 6 Sept. 2008: 7.
- McLeod, D.W. How the West Was Lost: The Native Question in the Development of Western Australia. PO Box 139 Port Hedland W.A. 6721, Australia: n.p., n.d.
- McDonald, Meme. "Whose Story?" The Writer's Reader: A Guide to Writing Fiction and Poetry. Ed. Brenda Walker. Sydney: Halstead Press, 2002. 178-82.
- Michaels, Eric. Bad Aboriginal Art. Tradition, Media and Technological Horizons. Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1994.
- Miller, Alex. Journey to the Stone Country. Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 2003.
- . Landscape of Farewell. Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 2007.
- Mordue, Mark. "White Words, Black Spaces." HQ Magazine. June (2002): 118-21.
- Moreton-Robinson, Aileen. "Tiddas Talkin' up to the White Woman: When Huggins et al. Took on Bell." Blacklines: Contemporary Critical Writing by Indigenous Australians. Ed. Michele Grossman. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2003. 66-77.
- Morgan, Marlo. Mutant Message Down Under. New York: Harper Collins, 1994.
- Morgan, Sally. My Place. West Austral.: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 1987.
- Morphy, Howard. "Empiricism to Metaphysics: In Defence of the Concept of the Dreamtime." Prehistory to Politics: John Mulvaney, the Humanities and the Public Intellectual. Eds. Tim Bonyhady and Tom Griffith. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1997. 163-89.
- Mudrooroo. The Indigenous Literature of Australia. Milli Milli Wangka. Melbourne: Hyland House, 1997.
- . Writing from the Fringe: A Study of Modern Aboriginal Literature. Melbourne: Hyland House, 1990.
- Muecke, Stephen. Textual Spaces: Aboriginality and Cultural Studies. Kensington, Austral.: New South Wales University Press, 1992.

- . "Winding Path: The Ethics of Chatwin's Fiction." The Age Monthly Review 10 Feb. 1988: 21-22.
- Murray, Rose, comp. Wumun Turi: Pilbara Aboriginal Women's Stories. Port Hedland, West Austral.: Wangka Maya Pilbara Aboriginal Language Centre, 2001.
- Nakata, Martin. "Better." Blacklines: Contemporary Critical Writing by Indigenous Australians. Ed. Michele Grossman. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2003. 132-44.
- Narayan, Kirin. "Ethnography and Fiction: Where Is the Border?" Anthropology and Humanism 24.12 (1999): 134-47.
- National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their. Bringing Them Home: Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families. Sydney: Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 1997.
- Night Cries: A Rural Tragedy. Dir. Tracey Moffatt, Prod. Penny McDonald. Ronin, 1989.
- Nowra, Louis. Bad Dreaming: Aboriginal Men's Violence against Women and Children. Melbourne: Pluto Press 2007.
- . "Culture of Denial." The Australian Literary Review May 2007: 3.
- Pachett, Mary. Warrimoo. Leicester: Brockhampton Press, 1961.
- Palmer, Vance. The Man Hamilton. Adalaide: Rigby, 1960.
- Pascoe, Bruce. Convincing Ground: Learning to Fall in Love with Your Country. Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2007.
- Pederson, Howard, and Banjo Woorunmurra. Jandamarra and the Bunuba Resistance. Broome, West Austral.: Magabala Books, 1995.
- Pratt, Mary Louise. "Fieldwork in Common Places." Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography. Eds. James Clifford and George E. Marcus. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986. 27-50.
- Prichard, Katharine Susannah. Coonardoo. Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1975.
- Read, Peter, and Jay Read, comps. and eds. Long Time, Olden Time: Aboriginal Accounts of Northern Territory History. Alice Springs: Institute for Aboriginal Development, 1991.

- Rhydwen, Mari. Writing on the Backs of Blacks. Brisbane: Queensland University Press, 1996.
- Robins, Allan. "Representing Indigeneity: A Reflection on Motivation and Issues." TEXT 12.1 (2008): n. pag. 15 June 2008 <<http://www.textjournal.com.au>>.
- Roe, Paddy. Gularabulu: Stories from the West Kimberley. Ed. Stephen Muecke. West Austral.: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 1983.
- Rose, Deborah Bird. "Rupture and the Ethics of Care in Colonized Space." Prehistory to Politics: John Mulvaney, the Humanities and the Public Intellectual. Ed. Tim Bonyhady and Tom Griffiths. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1997. 190-215.
- Ross, David. "Why This Country Needs a Treaty." Indigenous Peoples, Racism and the United Nations. Ed. Martin Nakata. Sydney: Common Ground Publishing, 2001. 153-61.
- The Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. Commissioner Elliot Johnson QC. 1991. Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation. 23 July 2008 <<http://www.austlii.edu.au>>.
- Scott, Kim, and Hazel Brown. Kayang and Me. Fremantle, West Austral.: Fremantle Arts Press, 2005.
- Shoemaker, Adam. Black Words White Page: Aboriginal Literature 1929-1988. Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 1989.
- Shriver, Lionel. "The Last Refuge of the Outrageous." Weekend Australian Review Sept. 30 2006: 8-9.
- Sickert, Susan. Beyond the Lattice: Broome's Early Years. West Austral.: Fremantle Art Centre Press, 2003.
- Smith, Linda Tuhiwai. Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples. London: Zed Books, 1999.
- Smith, William Ramsay. Myths and Legends of the Australian Aboriginals. London: George G. Harrap, 1970.
- Somerville, Margaret. Body/Landscape Journals. Melbourne: Spinifex Press, 1999.
- Somerville, Margaret. The Ethical Imagination: Journeys of the Human Spirit. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2007.
- Spencer, Baldwin, and F.J Gillen. The Native Tribes of Central Australia. New York: Dover Publications, 1968.

- Stanner, W.E.H. The Boyer Lectures: After the Dreaming: Black and White Australians—an Anthropologist's View. Sydney: Australian Broadcasting Commission, 1968.
- . White Man Got No Dreaming: Essays 1938-1973. Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1979.
- Stow, Randolph. To the Islands. London: McDonald, 1958.
- Stratton, Jon. Race Daze: Australia in Identity Crisis. Annandale, Austral.: Pluto Press, 1998.
- Strehlow, T.G.H. "Ankotarinya." The Collins Book of Australian Poetry. Ed. Rodney Hall. Sydney: Collins, 1981. 38-39.
- . "Aranda Song." The Collins Book of Australian Poetry. Ed. Rodney Hall. Sydney: Collins, 1981. 40.
- . Aranda Traditions. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1947.
- Sykes, Roberta. Snake Cradle. Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1997.
- Tedlock, Dennis, and Bruce Mannheim, eds. The Dialogic Emergence of Culture. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1955.
- Thomas, Nicholas. Entangled Objects: Exchange, Material Culture, and Colonialism in the Pacific. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991.
- Tindale, Norman. Aboriginal Tribes of Australia, their Terrain, Environmental Controls, Distribution Limits, and Proper Names. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974.
- Tyler, Stephen A. "Post-Modern Ethnography: From Document of the Occult to Occult Document." Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography. Eds. James Clifford and George E. Marcus. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986. 122-40.
- Unaipon, David. Legendary Tales of the Australian Aboriginies. Eds. Stephen Muecke and Adam Shoemaker. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2001.
- Upfield, Arthur. Man of Two Tribes. London: William Heinemann, 1969.
- Varga, Susan. Heddy and Me. Melbourne: Penguin, 1994.
- Vickers, F.B. The Mirage. Melbourne: Australasian Book Society, 1955.
- . No Man Is Himself. Sydney: Australasian Book Society, 1969.
- Ward, Glenyse. Wandering Girl. Broome, West Austral.: Magabala Books, 1987.
- Weller, Archie. The Day of the Dog. Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1981.

- . Going Home Stories. Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1986.
- White, Patrick. Riders in the Chariot. London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1961.
- . Voss. London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1957.
- Willey, K.G. "Baan." Summer's Tales 1. Ed. Kylie Tennant. Melbourne: MacMillan, 1964. 126-41.
- Woolagoodja, Donny and Valda Blundell. "Oral History and Ethnography: Keeping the Wanjinās Fresh." Oral Histories: Revealing Hidden Histories. Oral History Association of Australia W.A Branch. University of Notre Dame, Broome. 19-20 July 2008.
- Wongar, B. Babaru. Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1991.
- "Writing: protocols for producing Indigenous Australian Writing." Australia Council. Publications. 24 Feb. 2009 <www.australiacouncil.com.au>
- Yates, Lyn Henderson. "Out of Sight, out of Mind: The Invisibility of a Fair Complexioned Aboriginal Woman." Oral Histories: Revealing Hidden Histories. Oral History Association of Australia WA Branch, University of Notre Dame, Broome. 19-20 July 2008.

Every reasonable effort has been made to acknowledge the owners of copyright material. I would be pleased to hear from any copyright owner who has been omitted or incorrectly acknowledged.

Appendix 1: Manuscript Assessment, Melissa Lucashenko

External Reader's Report: Jacqui Wright Manuscript "The Calling"

Premise: ideas of Indigenous representation and negotiation of knowledges

Throughout the manuscript Ms Wright displays an impressive handling of complex and sensitive matters to do with Indigenous culture generally. She has an obvious good understanding of remote Indigenous life, and this is matched by a thorough interrogation of White Australian racial identity and racialised understandings of the Aboriginal world she portrays. She presents an interesting and thoughtful approach to the ways in which Indigenous knowledge differs and is similar to, outsider knowledge.

The main character, Annie, arrives in the Kimberley from Perth full of good intentions and misunderstanding of black lives and black politics. Annie believes that she can help the Indigenous people of Yindi by presenting her academic anthropological research to the UN Nations. Annie is never entirely dissuaded from this belief, although it does receive a good bucketing from the reality of remote Aboriginal life and culture. Annie moves from being an innocent, naive white researcher to someone accepted by the Indigenous community and given a nickname in the local language. She even has a bush road named for her by the older women whom she drives down it regularly, ie her identity enters the landscape in a significant way.

Annie builds relationships with Mick, the local white project officer, with Mysterly, a white woman who has married into the community, and with the Aboriginal people of the remote township. She gradually comes to some understanding of how much she doesn't know, and of how her research is about her and the university's agenda, not that of the Yindi people. Annie gains a great deal in language, understanding and sensitivity yet, pleasingly, in the final chapters the amount of knowledge she *has* gained serves to obscure the truth from her yet again. At no point does Annie become the "expert" on the Yindi people. Her status as the outsider shifts and slips in different contexts, but she is always, even amongst the young Aboriginal children, the one with most to learn and least to offer. She retains her self-respect and at no time is abused by the Aboriginal community, but nor is she automatically given respect until she earns it. This careful treatment of Annie as a potentially valuable community member contrasts starkly with the convictions of Noddy, the racist plane pilot, who believes that whites are simply exploited for their material wealth by Aboriginal people.

Ms Wright shows a highly nuanced and sophisticated understanding of the differences between White and Indigenous world views. She also has excellent skills in wrapping this understanding in characters and voices which ring true in interesting ways.

The novel is long and complex, but I will mention some of the many important areas where Ms Wright demonstrates her insight, before going onto a few problematic areas.

Accomplishments

1.

Ms Wright writes of the presence of pedophiles and other violent offenders in remote communities without sensationalising this fact. Stirling (who is not put through the Law, and who dies beneath a road train in the final chapters) is a recognised child molester and attempted murderer, and yet is a part of the Yindi community and a man whom Annie interacts with regularly. It is also recognised that his tragic personal history has created him, without excusing his criminal acts.

That Ms Wright presents Stirling in this matter-of-fact way rather than as a monster who lives under a rock somehow apart from the people of Yindi, is a valuable insight and a realistic portrayal of community life.

2.

Ms Wright illustrates the tendency of many white professionals in remote communities to band together in a "whites only" club, which Annie is unwittingly part of by virtue of her background, and which she at first unconsciously inhabits. This is shown nicely by Annie's comment to Mick after the three white teachers leave town, "We're the only ones left". Mick, though, after four years, is no longer thinking as an outsider to Yindi, and corrects her, "there's a whole camp here". Annie's comment is an excellent demonstration of her unthinking association with the other white outsiders, and shows the enormous cultural gulf between herself and Mick, despite Mick's also being white.

3.

Around p.91-93 Annie interviews old man Tommy about the Rumble Creek massacre, but despite being willing to be interviewed, he reveals very little of his own story. Annie is frustrated, knowing how much the old man can help the UN project if only he opens up to her. She believes rather than being kept secret, "knowledge needs to be shoved in everybody's face." Upon listening back to her recording of the interview, she realises that she has unwittingly spent the time "telling Tommy about the massacre at Rumble Crossing" (!). Annie has not yet learnt to shut up and listen; she is, in fact, only barely beginning to realise that she doesn't know how to hear Aboriginal people.

This episode is very well written and skilful; it is a good exposition of Annie's despair and ignorance, and her first glimmering that she may have a problem herself.

The theme is explicated further on p.98 when Mick "interviews" Annie re her own painful history with her daughter. Finally, Annie begins to get it. She begins to understand what she is asking of the Aboriginal people when she asks for their massacre stories. The reader is also shown that a white man, Mick, can understand things from almost an Aboriginal point of view. There are more than two positions here.

4. In chapter nine, after suffering a bad bout of Hepatitis A and being forcibly evacuated from Yindi, Annie later recuperates at the Eight Mile community. Weakened and forced to be physically still, "at last she can listen." She learns by being still and quiet to learn from the country. Annie is no longer full of self-importance and white concepts which she is eager to thrust upon the Aboriginal people. A shred of humility has entered her, and her path to true understanding of Yindi and its people is now opening up. "It scares her, her own lack of knowledge" which is a long way from the Annie who arrived at Yindi to save the blacks a few short weeks earlier.

Ms Wright here shows that in Indigenous culture the land itself holds the key to most knowledge and that without a willingness to accept our own human frailty, little can be learned. Annie has to allow "the Northwest to enter her" before she can be productive or even understand where she is living. The episode is well written and evocative.

5.

On p115 a conversation re blood parts makes it clear that most Aboriginal people dislike and don't use terms such as quadroon etc. This is correct and an important conversation to include, given the ongoing use of offensive terms by mainstream society.

6.

Around p120-130 Annie readily accepts the teaching of local kids. The kids teach her some language words and show her some rudiments of culture, eg not to mention the names of recently dead people or to talk too freely about bush names.

Where the Aboriginal pedophile Stirling was insulted as a young man to be educated alongside little kids, Annie isn't. Stirling is uneducated through a tragic personal history, but his pride prevented him from learning in a similar context that Annie accepts must now be hers. Annie picks up some words and some understandings, and gains entry to another level of knowledge. Because Stirling was unwilling to humble himself in this way, his life took a terrible track, and he is essentially doomed.

Again, Ms Wright demonstrates a good understanding of how knowledge must be earned in Aboriginal society, rather than viewed as a right. Annie has failed to interview old man Tommy and other Aboriginal artists at the community by this stage. She must backtrack and find the correct "level" which in her case is that of the youngsters, including Kuj who is the child who later goes missing. At this point, the children are Annie's teachers.

7.

On p144 The only other white woman in town, Mysterly, tells Annie that the old artists aren't stupid enough to let sacred information slip out in public via their artworks. Ms Wright demonstrates here that Annie is not the only white woman around who is gaining access to Aboriginal knowledge. Access is at many, many levels depending on personalities and personal histories. And it can't be assumed that

whites occupy a particular level of knowledge and blacks another – it is always more complex than that.

The ongoing relationship between Annie and the art centre is also a good demonstration of how organisations in black communities function have many, many roles. Annie is initially very reluctant to get involved in the art centre, failing to understand that by doing so she would easily build important relationships with many older people as well as demonstrate a commitment to Yindi people. Her initial lack of understanding is well portrayed (though frustrating for this Aboriginal reader!).

8.

On p152 one of the elder women, Louisa, (grandmother of the missing Kuj) interviews Annie at the bush camp. By this stage Annie has developed relationships with the older women and takes them hunting in her vehicle. By interviewing Annie, Louisa is deliberately switching roles and asking for something back from Annie in the way of knowledge. This is a key component of Aboriginal culture – relationships are reciprocal, never one-sided.

We don't hear this story of Annie's until p165- we have to wait for it. Another Aboriginal practice in teaching patience! Once again, Ms Wright shows her good understanding of the way roles are carefully managed by older Aboriginal people, and how worthy young people and outsiders like Annie are "grown up" or educated until they are able to make a contribution to the community.

9.

There are numerous other examples of Ms Wright's good understanding and clear expression of the differences between Indigenous and white systems of knowledge. Some of these include the incident when out hunting the vehicle develops a flat battery. Annie panics, but Aboriginal Louisa calmly sends up a smoke for Mick to come. (ie communication from centuries ago is still effective when modern technology fails). Another is that when the Aboriginal-acculturated Mick (now Annie's lover) sends an olive branch to Annie when she is in Perth, it is in the form of a picture with just one written word on it – "listen."

Mick teaches Annie a great deal about the uselessness of the spoken and written word during the course of their relationship, and is a white conduit for Indigenous norms and practices throughout the novel, without ever lapsing into cliché or patronising "expert".

Third, Stirling, the stolen child abused by both his father and the church, had to "write out" God is love after being verbally and physically abused by the Missionaries. That is, words can say one thing while reality says quite another to a traumatised child. This scene shows very tellingly how words can be empty, useless instruments of white power to Aboriginal people.

10.

Lastly comes the main plot line of the missing Kuj, whom there are "lots of stories about". That is, there are competing varieties and levels of knowledge when it comes to the missing child. Some say suicide; some say murder. Some simply don't know. Annie is baffled and angry and thinks people should be doing more to find her – a typical white outsider's response.

The fact is that nearly everybody in the book except Mick and the older Aboriginal people think Kuj is dead and gone. Mick never says to his lover Annie that Kuj is safe, but neither does he suggest any plan of action to Annie re finding her. Even Mysterly – Kuj's mother – is distraught, and doesn't know the truth about the missing child she has tried to protect from her abusive Aboriginal father.

In the final chapters, an old man comes with the elder women to Annie, who has by now proven her worth to the community and learnt a bit about how to behave. He has a painting for her, which explains the story of the missing child. Kuj has seen men's business that she should not have; as a result she is losing her eyesight. She has been taken away by Elders. He and the old women tell Annie what happened to Kuj in their broken English.

And because Annie **still** doesn't listen carefully - but is full up with the small amount of knowledge she has gained - she interrupts them, and still doesn't learn what happened to Kuj. The women laugh at her amusing misunderstanding but don't enlighten her. It is left up to Mick to do so. Mick, who – though although he is white and originally from elsewhere – has learnt enough not to ask silly questions, and to "learn by watching and listening" in the Aboriginal way.

In the final irony it is an English word – "plane" which Annie fails to hear correctly in the mouths of the old Aboriginal people. She can't even hear her own language when Aboriginal people are speaking, despite her weeks and months of hard instruction.

Ms Wright demonstrates the terrible difficulty which white outsiders have in learning to shed the constricting rules of white communication. Real entry into Aboriginal communities requires a re-education and almost an abandonment of identity on the part of white people. The fact that Annie fails, in the final pages, to really understand what is being said to her, is a polished touch on the writer's part. It would be easy to have written Annie in a trajectory from silly ignorant white girl to sophisticated bi-cultural adult, but Ms Wright has avoided this exculpatory journey. Annie isn't perfect and she continues to make mistakes, even after much learning. This is much closer to reality, and a more useful device in showing us Annie's development both up to that point, and in terms of how far she still has to go.

Weaknesses

The exceptions to the above skilful handling of Indigenous content are few, and are listed below:

1. On page four we encounter the term 'fullblood' used by an Aboriginal woman at the Land Council. I recognise that the term is in use in remote Australia, though less and less in urban areas. Unfortunately, the degree of racism still inevitable throughout Australia means that the use of this term can't ever be

condoned, even in the mouth of an Aboriginal character. If it is considered essential to keep the term, and not replace it with one such as "tribal", then its effect could be minimised if the eyes of the Aboriginal woman in the following paragraph were blue, rather than brown, indicating that people of mixed descent are also undisputably Aboriginal. I am uncomfortable with the term remaining, however.

2. p111 idea of utopian sharing amongst Aboriginal family/community is not in my view an accurate version of reality. Relationships in remote communities can be fair and egalitarian, but in my experience are just as often abusive, manipulative and the cause of great hardship. There is a lot of elder abuse and financial humbug, coupled with outright theft and violence, in the remote communities I know. *The Kimberley may be different*, but I sound a note of caution about drawing a naively utopian picture of what is often a sordid and very sad state of affairs on the East coast.
3. p430 There is a reference to senior man putting "quartz" and "snakes" inside a victim – I find this information too explicit for public consumption. I would suggest "stones" rather than quartz, even though the reference is fleeting.
4. On my first reading I found the number of characters with nicknames to be a bit overwhelming. On my second reading I didn't, but of course I expected it the second time around. Maybe a few of the "characters" could have more conventional names. Otherwise there could be a slight hint of trying too hard to impart local flavour by this shortcut (which I am prepared to accept is based in reality, by the way).

Length

The manuscript, while interesting and enjoyable throughout, is clearly very long. I have made minor editorial suggestions throughout, some to do with spelling and tense, others errors of logic etc.

On a broader level, I suggest the chapter about Mysterly's upbringing be cut very significantly. Also the later chapter where Mick and Mullet clean out the septic tank doesn't seem to do much work for the book as a whole.

The writing is generally terrific. The love scenes between Annie and Mick, and the relationship between Annie and her daughter are particularly evocative. Ms Wright is to be congratulated on a fine achievement – memorable characters inhabiting a landscape where Aboriginal ideas and philosophy are made cogent to an outside audience, without privileging the white characters in unrealistic ways.

Summary

A very strong manuscript, impressive in both its understanding of Aboriginal cultural norms around knowledge, and its capacity to convey this knowledge in an aesthetically pleasing way. I thoroughly enjoyed reading it, and look forward to seeing it in print. Hopefully it will be set on some university reading lists!

[REDACTED]
Melissa Lucashenko
January 2008

Appendix 2: Manuscript Assessment, Rose Murray

READERS REPORT ON A MANUSCRIPT BY JACQUELINE WRIGHT

By Rose Murray 16 12 07

Like any other reader I bring with me a whole lot of experiences knowledge and prejudices to any new novel. As an Aboriginal woman who has always been a reader and having occasionally had my writing published it's a treat to comment on this draft. I'm isolated from the Indigenous writers' scene so these views are my own.

As my mother was removed from her family I came to the Pilbara as a young adult after living an urban Koori lifestyle in Melbourne. I had a lot to learn about my family, local history and communication. So I have been the outsider looking in and am therefore attuned to the lack of understanding and communication between Aboriginal and Non Aboriginal people in the northwest. There is much in this novel to assist in improving this. Many Non Aboriginal writers have represented us stereotypically, without any depth and been disparaging of our cultural ways. I offer the following comment within this context and with respect.

The novel reads like a complex tapestry of people's lives, disparate cultures, history, current politics, social upheaval amidst a powerful landscape. The story line of an Aboriginal child's disappearance, and people's responses thread through this colourful tale. My task was to see if northwest Aboriginal people, culture and history were portrayed accurately, sensitively and in general were events plausible.

I did wonder about the objectives of the writer. A substantial amount of social and cultural information is shared with the reader. Would it be too much for the average reader? Readers will learn about kinship groups and relationships therein, behaviour around deaths, language and its disappearance, protocols at Law time, spiritual beliefs, payback, bush tucker etc. When you include this ethnographic type detail the writer really has to ask why have I included this example? How does it add to the depth of the story? How does this add to the communication between Aboriginal people and Non Aboriginal people? It can't be a curio.

In the Pilbara we have had lots of discussion regarding the giving over of cultural knowledge to Non Indigenous people. Why would we share it? What would we share? How would we share it? These discussions underpin the cultural awareness training, Aboriginal language teaching and books / resources produced by Wangka Maya etc.

It is an important discussion to have,. The writer has decided to share some of the things she learnt from by Northwest Aboriginal people. I don't find them too intrusive as they are common things we come across when we work across communities.

The novel uses Aboriginal English quite a bit. It's spoken by people with some formal education or a little. It is important to be accurate and consistent. In my experience Aboriginal people who speak English as a second language or are Aboriginal English speakers often don't voice word endings. But very often this isn't the case in the story. The writer may want to do this for the readers comprehension but its worth raising.

Nyangumarta words are used and some of them I recognise. No doubt these words will be double checked for meaning eg wanyja = where, not how many. Ruka sometimes as ruku. Calling the language "wangka" knowing the reader will pronounce it wanker could be a bit self defeating. Is there something similar " muwarr" ?

Its great to get readers to try and get the sounds right for some words and this has been attempted throughout with "Annie" learning. I have pencilled some notes on the manuscript.

There were some wild non Aboriginal characters in the story. The unravelling of their reason for being in the northwest, their background and interaction with each other were credible. Were there too many characters to keep abreast with, maybe? But this could be a reflection on me as a disjointed reader, as I picked up and put down the story every day for a couple of hours. Having the different communities also meant the writer really has to identify where we are in the first paragraph of each chapter. The communities did seem realistic.

There were a couple of Aboriginal characters we got to know well and others less so. Kuj was intriguing. How did her Uncle really feel about his Aboriginality? Some of the Aboriginal women swore

up, when sober and in mixed company. That's not been appropriate in my own mob. But maybe Kimberley mob do? There was a scene in the beginning where a woman named Lori was a bit insensitive to the disappearance. If an old man took a child to the desert, surely older women would go too? That doesn't ring true, everyone feels for every kid without their mother and grandmother around them. Another thing that struck me was that mysteriously the grandmother didn't seem to be supported by lots of family members when she was distraught over the child. In the main my experience has been that the one who is suffering is surrounded by people and helped.

I actually got a bit wild about Annie the researcher turning up in a community without all the correct protocols being done so the Council or leaders knew what she was there for. Maybe I am naive and an optimist, I didn't think that happened any more. Surely at universities there are processes now where all research doing Indigenous work has to go through an ethics panel etc?

In the early part of the story a lawyer is asked what happened to the girl. The lawyer gives a verbal off the cuff opinion. I have known 3 lawyers really well in Hedland and there is no way they would venture an opinion in a public place. But once again, maybe I have only known the professionals. In my small town the lawyer would be quoted all around. What if the perpetrator became the client? If the man was told the story he could come for her.

I think it was a brave move to mention sexual abuse as it comes in many forms and affects all people. It was handled okay. But if you are going to include Land councils and DCD you may as well put in a sexual assault service or alcohol/drug service. This gives a fuller picture about the little bit of help that is out there.

I think the writer has shown in depth knowledge of the social setting that she has lived and explored. As a Pilbara Aboriginal person not immersed in traditional Nyangumarta culture I am not offended by the representation of the situations or people. I am sending some notes back on the manuscript on Tuesday. I am happy to discuss these points and trust this has assisted.

Appendix 3: Letter to Manuscript Assessors

Melissa Lucashenko

Rose Murray

[INSERT ADDRESS]

29 August 2007

Dear Melissa/Rose

RE: READER'S REPORT ON A MANUSCRIPT BY JACQUELINE WRIGHT

As you would be aware, Jacqueline Wright is a Doctor of Creative Arts student in the creative writing area here at Curtin. I am her doctoral supervisor and I am writing in order to invite you to carry out some particular work as a member of Jacqueline's Indigenous Reference Group. Specifically, I would like to invite you to prepare a reader's report on the creative component of Jacqueline's thesis. The novel, titled "The Telling" is currently at first draft stage.

At Curtin, a creative production doctoral thesis consists of two parts: a creative component and an exegesis (or critical essay). Both stem from a single research question. In Jacqueline's case the research question involves an investigation into the representation of Indigenous knowledges and subjectivities by non-Indigenous writers of fiction. In different ways, the novel and the essay attempt to tackle the problematic engagement which can ensue between Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultures regarding issues of representation. Jacqueline's thesis aims to make a contribution to understanding the negotiation process involved in issues of representation between non-Indigenous writers of fiction and Indigenous people and communities.

Timely consultation with members of the Indigenous Reference Group is central to Jacqueline's research proposal. The university has hence agreed to fund two reader's

reports for the novel-in-progress each from an indigenous reader. Jacqueline will use the feedback provided in these reports to revise and refine the novel, and to contribute to her reflection on the writing process in the final chapter of her critical essay.

Jacqueline expects to be able to forward the first full draft of the manuscript to you within the next two to three months. I would like to request you to produce a reader's report on the manuscript, particularly addressing the representation of Indigenous culture, people and communities. Jacqueline would also appreciate any general feedback you are able to provide. The university is able to offer a fee of \$600.00 for the production of the reader's report. We expect a detailed report of approximately two to three A4 pages in length, and request that you provide the report within six weeks of your receipt of the manuscript. Please attach an invoice for the agreed fee with your return of the manuscript and report.

If issues arise out of your report that Jacqueline and I feel warrant further discussion, we may contact you again to arrange a follow-up consultation.

I hope you will be willing to contribute your valuable time and expertise to this project. Please contact me directly via phone or email (08 9266 3255 or j.vanloon@curtin.edu.au) to confirm your acceptance of this invitation. I am also happy to answer any questions you may have either prior to or during the preparation of your report.

Yours sincerely

Dr Julienne van Loon