

Thesis
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**Psychoanalyzing Colonialism,
Colonizing Psychoanalysis:
Re-reading Aboriginality**

by

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Abstract

This study argues for the necessity of a psychoanalytic perspective in the study of colonization, while recognizing the complicity of psychoanalysis in the colonial project. My first chapter situates the Oedipal subject as a historic effect and attempts to trace some of the conditions of its emergence. In this way, I seek to call into question the universal status that Freud attributed to the Oedipal subject. From this historicized perspective, I then read Freud's *Totem and Taboo*, and its construction of the 'savage', as an effect of displacement, and in so doing, suggest a relation between the Oedipalized subject and the colonizing subject.

The following three chapters are comprised of detailed readings of specific events and texts in Australian cultural history. All of these chapters focus on Aboriginal writers, and argue that the texts they have produced can be read as challenging, in a variety of ways, the naturalized construction of the patriarchal nuclear family in the colonial context, and the Oedipalized subject that supports it. The first of these contextualizes the life and work of David Unaipon, and argues for a more positive reassessment of his work that takes into consideration modes of Oedipalized subjectification operative in the colonial domain. The following chapter focuses on Sally Morgan's *My Place*, Australia's best-selling Aboriginal autobiography, and suggests that its overwhelming popularity masks profound anxieties about the intimate and sexualized nature of colonial exploitation as manifest in the settler family home. The final chapter considers recent allegations that Mudrooroo, Australia's most well-known and prolific Aboriginal writer, is actually an African American. This chapter suggests that a re-reading of his novels, *Master of the Ghost Dreaming* and *Doctor Wooreddy's Prescription for Enduring the Ending of the World*, provide possible ways of rethinking simplistic notions of identity and their grounding in Oedipalized identifications. All three textual events act as imperatives to remember the legacy of colonialism that continues to pervade contemporary Australian culture.

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Introduction

This thesis was motivated by a sense of unease which accompanied my burgeoning interest in Aboriginal Australian literature some years ago. My subsequent examination of critical responses to Aboriginal literature opened up the vast and proliferating field of what we know of as postcolonial studies. It was some time before I realized that many of the concepts that I was thinking with drew upon psychoanalytic theory, the work of Homi Bhabha being the most well-known and difficult exemplification of this. I distinctly remember reading an article on the emergence and proliferation of Aboriginal literature, although I can no longer remember where or by whom, that described this emergence as the 'Return of the Repressed'. Even at the time, having never read Freud, I had a vague understanding that the notion of the repressed signalled the repression of things unacceptable to consciousness in the unconscious. What worried me about this formulation was its unacknowledged designation of Aboriginality to the repressed unconscious of white Australia. Aboriginal writing, in this formulation, becomes the self-consolidating other of the white Australian self.

Yet, my consequent exploration of psychoanalysis has reaffirmed, in spite of this, its importance in an analysis of colonialism. What I mean is, analyses of colonization which focus on the economic, the political, and even the ideological, do not seem to me to explain sufficiently the causes and motivations of colonialism. Is it really possible to think about colonial practices without concepts like fantasy and desire, projection and displacement? Is it possible, moreover, to challenge colonialism and its contemporary effects without putting into question the status of the subject? It is, perhaps, the most important insight of psychoanalysis that we cannot treat the subject as rational. This, in turn, suggests that the rationalist *episteme* and the colonial knowledges it produces, which locate the *cogito* as the privileged holder of truth, knowledge and being, is simultaneously open to question. To take a psychoanalytic perspective is to work with the assumption that the subject is alienated from itself, and has a variety of mechanisms for repressing that alienation. Psychoanalysis, as a comprehensive theory of subjectivity, enables us to think about the psychic and phantasmatic motivations of

colonization, a perspective which seems to me to be an important and necessary contribution to studies of colonialism. It is with this in mind that the first part of my title is 'Psychoanalyzing Colonialism'.

Freud's discussion of the instinctive inclination to aggression in *Civilization and its Discontents* is one way of thinking about colonial violence. Freud claims that people experience their neighbour not only as 'a potential helper or sexual object, but also someone who tempts them to satisfy their aggressiveness on him, to exploit his capacity for work without compensation, to use him sexually without his consent, to seize his possessions, to humiliate him, to cause him pain, to torture and to kill him'.¹ Freud suggests, in this passage, that the subject's internal alienation from itself is displaced on to intersubjective relations, and it is this suggestion that provides one way of thinking about colonial domination and subordination. Colonialism, from this perspective, can be thought of as the displaced enactment of intra-subjective fantasies of control and mastery.

The desire for mastery, however, can be extended to the production of knowledge as well. This, even more than the often uncomfortable and painful propositions of psychoanalysis, is the source of my unease. For, although I would argue for the necessity of psychoanalysis in the study of colonialism, there seems to me to be little doubt that psychoanalysis itself is complicit in the colonial project, as part of its extensive and all-encompassing epistemological apparatus. Freud's universalization of psychoanalysis ensured that he would attempt to use it to explain other cultures in evolutionary terms. This is where I find psychoanalysis at its most problematic, but also, and this is just as important, at its most symptomatic. Freud certainly took for granted some of the most fundamental assumptions of the Enlightenment, its universalism and its belief in the progress of human knowledge and reason which are, themselves, fantasies of mastery that were used to justify and facilitate colonial conquests.

¹ Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents* (1930 [1929]), in the *Penguin Freud Library*, Vol. 12, ed. Albert Dickson, trans. James Strachey (London: Penguin, 1985), p. 302. All future references to Freud, unless otherwise indicated, are from this *Penguin Freud Library* edition, and are included in parentheses in the text.

Using psychoanalysis as a conceptual tool to think about these questions is even more complicated by my argument that psychoanalysis does not only produce certain kinds of objects of psychoanalytic and anthropological knowledge, the concept of the savage being one of these, but it also, like any discursive formation, contributes to the production of a certain kind of subject, a word I use, not in its psychoanalytic sense, a sense that was barely used by Freud and only came into vogue with Lacan, but rather, as Michel Foucault did, in its double sense: 'subject to someone else by control and dependence, and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge'.²

In an article entitled 'Inventing Aborigines', the Australian historian Bob Reece points to this form of subject-constitution when he argues that '[i]n an important sense, Aborigines are both an invention and a product of European civilisation'.³ This suggests that colonization is not just a territorial project, but one that acts to constitute certain colonial subjects. Colonialism, at least on its psychic level, can be thought of as a project that seeks to reproduce in the colonies the psychic configuration that, I will argue, was a fundamental part of the impetus for colonization in the first place. This configuration can be thought of, following Freud, as the Oedipal subject. As Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari asserted in the *Anti-Oedipus*, 'Oedipus is always colonization pursued by other means, it is the interior colony'.⁴ The modes of subjectification that psychoanalysis describes and produces are thus intimately linked with the colonial project, as an effect of regimes of power/knowledge.⁵ This is, I think, in spite of its difficulties, the central insight of Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus*. Obviously, the sustained experiment that is the *Anti-Oedipus* is not easily utilized in a project of this kind, that requires careful reasoning and theoretical justification. However, this thesis does follow Deleuze and Guattari (and Freud) to the extent that it works with the assumption that desire is contingent, variable and polymorphous, that it

² Michel Foucault, 'Afterword: The Subject and Power', in *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, by Hubert L. Dreyfuss and Paul Rabinow (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1982), p. 212

³ Bob Reece, 'Inventing Aborigines', *Aboriginal History*, 11.1 (1987), 14.

⁴ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem and Helen R. Lane (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), p. 170. Future references are to this edition, and are included in parentheses in the text.

⁵ See Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*, ed. and trans. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980)

does not have an specific aim and object, and that it is not localized in the operation of the genitals. Deleuze and Guattari's reading of Freud suggests that the Oedipus complex was a radical insight, the implications of which Freud refused to acknowledge. In so doing, his insight about the socialization of desire was repressed, and the Oedipus complex and its resolution were made fundamental to so-called normal development. In this way, the patriarchal nuclear family took on a universal and necessary form. I want to stress, however, that I do not wish to privilege psychic repression over other kinds of repression. On the contrary, by historicizing psychoanalytic theory, I want to suggest that the psychic repression that Freud identified and analyzed is itself a socio-historical effect.

Anti-Oedipus also examines the relations between capitalism and psychoanalysis and, by extension, the relations of both these historical phenomena to colonialism, which is no longer conceived of as merely economic and territorial, but also as libidinal. The nuclear family is the family structure that emerged out of a capitalist political economy, and such an economy relies on and desires a specific and fixed identity. This functions to produce restricted identifications (daddy-mummy, man-woman, oppressor-oppressed) that can also be thought of as one of the conditions for racialized or colonialist identifications. This may explain my chiasmic title, where the 'colonizing' that precedes 'psychoanalysis' can be thought of as an adjective as well as a verb. This chiasmic structure signals that ambivalence that constitutes this thesis.

This thesis, then, somewhat problematically, hopes to retain psychoanalysis as a set of conceptual tools to think about colonialism, and simultaneously considers it as part of the colonial project. Like the *Anti-Oedipus*, this thesis refuses 'to play "take it or leave it"' with psychoanalysis (117). My project is not exempt from the difficulties facing any meta-study, and it is important to state that I do not see myself as occupying some kind of neutral zone untouched by the fields of study that I am analyzing. I consider myself as an effect of both colonization and psychoanalysis, and my study as being both enabled and constrained by the discourses of these, and many other, practices. The question inevitably emerges: Is it possible to use psychoanalysis to analyze psychoanalysis? For the reasons I set out below, I think that it is.

Psychoanalysis, like all sciences, disciplines and epistemologies, emerged out of a certain set of historical circumstances. In this sense, not only does psychoanalysis reflect a certain historical epoch, it simultaneously reproduces it, and the subjectivity that supports it. Freud, moreover, was not merely a product of his time, but a brilliant analyst of it, and psychoanalysis, for all its situatedness (a situatedness that Freud did not pay enough attention to) is an important conceptual tool for understanding the psychic world of the colonizing Western subject and its effects. Psychoanalysis, then, can be seen as an effect of the Enlightenment in at least two ways. First, the Enlightenment belief in the power of knowledge and rationality inevitably produced a science of the psyche, psychoanalysis as an epistemological tool. Second, the limiting of individual identifications to within the nuclear family, and the repression of alternative modes of subjectivity not assimilable to the rational *cogito*, can perhaps be thought of as producing the very symptoms that psychoanalysis, as therapeutic practice, sought to cure. As Joel Kovel has asserted: ‘The moment of psychoanalysis came when the west could not contain its own otherness within the prevailing system of rationalization.’⁶ If one of psychoanalysis’ central insights is the primary repression that for Freud constituted the Oedipus complex, its universalizing displacement, under the guise of evolutionary anthropology, on to the colonized other, can be thought about symptomatically as that which psychoanalysis seeks to understand.

It is this ambivalence within psychoanalytic discourse that can be exploited and explored in an analysis of colonialism. Even as Freud maintains a belief in the rational progress of science, he takes as his object of study that which is inaccessible to rational thought. Psychoanalysis, then, is haunted by more than just the constitutive instabilities that inhabit any form of discourse; it must also acknowledge the incomplete nature and the instability of the very knowledges it attempts to produce, inevitably disrupting its own premises. It is the disruptive potential of psychoanalysis that I am working with in this thesis. In this sense, I am less interested in clarifying my position in relation to psychoanalysis, or even in arguing for the existence or truth of certain psychoanalytic

⁶ Joel Kovel, ‘On Racism and Psychoanalysis’, in *Psychoanalysis in Contexts*, ed. Anthony Elliott and Stephen Frosh (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 205.

concepts than in activating the very uncertainties within psychoanalysis to think through possibilities that could not otherwise be conceptualized. I have no desire, or intention, to remain faithful to Freud and his legacy. Rather, I am following that train in Freud's own thinking that was speculative and contradictory, suggestive and uncertain. From this perspective, psychoanalysis can be thought of as authorizing itself and simultaneously authorizing its own de-authorization.

Finally, to assume that Freud's own adherence to a racist economy based around the notion of the savage removes the unconscious or psychic motivation from analysis would be understandable, but also, I think, misguided. Such a rejection would require the re-assumption that the rational precepts of consciousness can and will explain everything, an assumption that, I will argue, can be thought of as a motivating factor in the drive to colonize. What is perhaps by now obvious is that this thesis has an extremely ambivalent attitude to psychoanalytic theory, and this ambivalence moves, unresolved, through the entire work. The extent to which psychoanalysis is used or repudiated varies considerably, and I think of this as one of the strengths of the thesis.

In order to attempt to avoid this desire to produce an imperialistic, all-encompassing form of knowledge, this thesis, rather than being a 'grand narrative' of the intersection of colonialism and psychoanalysis is, instead, an attempt to produce detailed, yet quite speculative, re-readings of specific pockets of knowledge in the case of the colonization of Australia, and even more specifically, certain events and texts that can be seen as important watersheds in Australian cultural history in the context of Aboriginality. This does not claim to be, and cannot be, an overarching study; the work of many important theorists has not been included, and there is still a great deal of work to be done.⁷

⁷ I am thinking here in particular of Frantz Fanon, and especially *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (London: Paladin, 1970); Geza Roheim, *Australian Totemism: A Psychoanalytic Study in Anthropology* (London: 1925) and *Children of the Desert: The Western Tribes of Central Australia*, ed. Werner Muensterberger (New York: Basic Books, 1974); Ashis Nandy, *The Savage Freud and Other Essays on Possible and Retrievable Selves* (Delhi and London: Oxford University Press, 1995) and *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self Under Colonialism* (Delhi and London: Oxford University Press, 1983); George Devereux, *Ethnopsychanalysis: Psychoanalysis and Anthropology as Complementary Frames of Reference* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978); Octave Mannoni, *Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonization*, trans. Pamela Powesland (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1990); Gananath Obeyeskere, *Medusa's Hair: an Essay on Personal Symbols and*

My first chapter attempts to historicize psychoanalysis and its emergence at the zenith of modern imperialism. *Totem and Taboo: Some Points of Agreement Between the Mental Lives of Savages and Neurotics*, marks the first intersection of the newly emerging sciences, or pseudo-sciences, that we call anthropology and psychoanalysis. My reading of *Totem and Taboo* situates it in the context of the evolutionary anthropology that Freud drew upon in his analysis of the so-called savage. The Oedipus complex, in this conception, is an historic effect and this thesis tries to trace the historical, social, political and economic conditions of its emergence, although it does so in a way that is fundamentally different from Deleuze and Guattari's genealogy, and is perhaps more traditionally historical in its focus. Nonetheless, I would insert myself in the 'we' of Deleuze and Guattari's assertion that: 'We never dreamed of saying that psychoanalysis invented Oedipus. Everything points in the opposite direction: the subjects of psychoanalysis arrive already Oedipalized.'⁸

While this might seem to move away from the specificity of the Australian context that I have claimed for this project, it was, for me, a disturbing discovery to find that on the first page of Freud's first foray into anthropology, a comparison between what he calls 'savages' and 'neurotics', he states:

I shall select as the basis of this comparison the tribes which have been described by anthropologists as the most backward and miserable of savages, the aborigines of Australia, the youngest continent, in whose fauna, too, we can still observe much that is archaic and that has perished elsewhere.⁹

The Australian Aborigine, taken as Freud's prime example, is the location from which the intersection between psychoanalysis and anthropology first takes place.

The following chapters, all focusing on Aboriginal writers and texts, explore the relation between colonization and the subjects produced by and through it. All of these texts are, I will argue, disruptive interventions that produce anxiety in the Australian

Religious Experience (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981) and *The Work of Culture: Symbolic Transformation in Psychoanalysis and Anthropology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

⁸ Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, p. 121.

⁹ Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo: Some Points of Agreement Between the Mental Lives of Savages and Neurotics* (1912-13), trans. James Strachey (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1960), p. 1. Future references are to this edition, and are included in parentheses in the text.

context because they rupture the naturalized status of the patriarchal nuclear family, and the fixed subject that supports it. In so doing, they question the universalization of the Oedipus complex, and the authority of the father/colonizer at its centre.

The first of these chapters on specific Aboriginal writers deals with the life and work of David Unaipon, perhaps Australia's most important Aboriginal figure in the first two decades of this century, and the most neglected now. Unaipon rose to fame as a successfully accultured Christian Aborigine in the early 1900s. Not only was he a brilliant scientist and inventor, he was also the producer of a number of Aboriginal myths that remain only in manuscript form. Versions of these myths have since appeared, under the signature of an anthropologist, William Ramsay Smith. Unaipon's neglect can be ascribed to the way in which he is now conceived of as an Aborigine who betrayed his own people or, in Fanonian terms, as a man 'in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of [his] local cultural originality'.¹⁰ Although these arguments may or may not be the case, my chapter argues for a historicized re-reading of his work in the context of modes of objectification and subjectification of Aborigines in Australia at the time he was writing. Such a re-reading will, I hope, point to the importance of a contemporary recognition of Unaipon, and the necessity of remembering him.

The third chapter focuses on Sally Morgan's *My Place*, published in 1987, which, in marked contrast to the contemporary neglect of Unaipon, is Australia's most internationally renowned and best-selling popular autobiography.¹¹ Morgan's life narrative has been claimed as a moment of national triumph, and, as a result, has found itself dismissed by cultural critics (both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal) as a complicitous whitewash. While I think there are good reasons to be wary of the hyperbolic admiration that Morgan's story seems to inspire, this wariness has always been directed against Morgan and her text, making her fully responsible for the ways in which it has been read. Ironically, these textually-minded critics tend to reproduce

¹⁰ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (London: Paladin, 1970), p. 14.

¹¹ Sally Morgan, *My Place* (South Fremantle, WA: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 1987). Future page references are to this edition, and are included in parentheses in the text.

author-centred readings of *My Place* that turn a text that, for me, is extremely disturbing into something sentimental and uncontentious. This chapter re-reads both *My Place* and its overwhelming acceptance as concealing-revealing profound anxieties generated by its implications, implications that its critics have ignored.

The final chapter takes as its starting point, recent allegations about Mudrooroo, perhaps Australia's most well-known and prolific Aboriginal writer. In July 1996, the *Australian Magazine* published an article entitled 'Identity Crisis' calling into question his status as Aboriginal Australian, and claiming that he was, in fact, the descendent of an African American.¹² My chapter argues for a re-reading of Mudrooroo's rewritings, in the light of these allegations, particularly his 1991 novel *Master of the Ghost Dreaming*, itself an unstable reiteration of the earlier *Doctor Wooreddy's Prescription for Enduring the Ending of the World*.¹³ I hope to show the way in which Mudrooroo's fictional writings provide one way of thinking about the question of identity that is now dominating Mudrooroo criticism.

All three writers/texts subvert the naturalization of the Aboriginal subject, especially in its etymological sense, as being from the origin, which constitutes a fundamental assumption in both Freud's *Totem and Taboo* and in contemporary responses to the texts/writers in question. The Aboriginal subject, far from being 'natural' or 'authentic', is deeply implicated in authorized and authorizing colonial knowledges. It is for this reason that this thesis tries to displace a simple and valorized concept of identity, and prefers to focus on non-identitarian claims, or at least more ambivalent and complicated identifications and disidentifications.

Bringing Them Home is the recently published report prepared by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission from material gathered during the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families. The Inquiry's first term of reference was to trace 'laws, practices and policies

¹² Laurie, 'Identity Crisis', *Australian Magazine*, 20-21 July, 1996, pp. 28-32. Future page references are to this article, and are included in parentheses in the text.

¹³ Mudrooroo, *Dr Wooreddy's Prescription for Enduring the Ending of the World* (Sydney: Hyland House, 1983) and *Master of the Ghost Dreaming* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1991). Future page references are to these editions, and are included in parentheses in the text.

which resulted in the separation of Indigenous children from their families by compulsion, duress or undue influence'. In December 1997, the Federal Government's formal response did not include, in spite of the urgent wishes of Indigenous people, a statement of apology. The report, which documents 'grief and loss' as well as 'tenacity and survival'¹⁴, found that the histories traced 'were complex and pervasive. Most significantly the actions of the past resonate in the present and will continue to do so in the future'.¹⁵ These resonances operate in the work of the Aboriginal writers that I am focusing on, all of whom were effected by these policies in different ways. The 'complex and pervasive' histories traced both in this report, and in the texts I am considering, suggest that calls for a simple identification with Aboriginality are not only becoming increasingly pointless, but also increasingly politically dubious.

This thesis moves from a general argument about psychoanalysis and colonialism towards something more specific in its focus, and whether or not my approach can be applied more generally remains to be seen. Certainly, patterns of colonization differed according to different colonizers at different times. The colonization of Australia was, even in terms of modern British colonialism, quite unique in its aims and effects. As a penal colony, Australia already had an unpaid and unfree labour force out of which to establish the colony, and it was territory that early colonial administrators were primarily interested in. There were, moreover, variations in patterns of colonization in different parts of Australia, and these will be elaborated upon in the relevant chapters.

Although the early part of the thesis attempts to locate both modern colonialism and psychoanalysis in the context of the history of ideas, I am not a trained philosopher, and this thesis often moves outside of my own area of specialization. Certainly, there are a number of risks associated with this approach. Yet, the process of thinking through and writing up this thesis has convinced me of the necessity of breaking down the

¹⁴ Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 'The Inquiry', *Bringing Them Home: Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their families* [online], Available: <http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/special/rsjproject/rsjlibrary/hreoc/stolen/stolen03.html> (19 July, 1999)

¹⁵ Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, *Bringing Them Home*.

increasing compartmentalization of knowledge that marks our epistemological epoch. Such taxonomies were crucial in the production of colonial knowledges where increasing differentiation masked an anxiety about the impossibility of a space of undifferentiation, a fantasy of wholeness that both psychoanalysis and anthropology had a great deal invested in. This project both attempts to blur disciplinary boundaries, and is committed to the necessity of inter-disciplinary approaches, as a means of challenging and questioning colonial knowledges. If part of my project is to think about the potential production of alternative and resistant subjectivities under colonial conditions, this blurring of boundaries is perhaps one way of attempting such a transformation. This is not to say that such an approach can and should replace other economic, political, historical or even social analyses of colonialism; on the contrary, these are the very texts I have drawn upon in writing this thesis.

Rather, it is a different kind of response that I am attempting. The recent election of John Howard's Liberal Government in Australia, and the popularity of Pauline Hanson's One Nation Party, suggest that we need as many ways of thinking about these issues as possible because of the persistence and permutations of right-wing and racist politics. It is important to note that not only did these politicians and the parties and policies they represent come to power through appeals to a racist ideology, framed in terms of equality and nationalism, but they quite explicitly invoked that tired old formulation, 'family values'. This is part of a global re-emergence of 'family values' which, to my mind, reinforces the necessity and timely importance of an analysis of processes of Oedipalization.

It was in order to produce such Oedipalized subjects that mostly mixed-race children were taken from their mothers (generally) and put into white families and institutions, and the stated objectives of these policies were the gradual absorption of Aborigines into white society. The aim of this 'breeding out' was not only to eliminate a race of people, but also to institute a way of forgetting the invasion of Australia and the dispossession of its inhabitants. The texts and writers that I am considering in this thesis remind us of the necessity of remembering.

The term 'mixed-race' inevitably evokes the extremely complicated question of race. As Charles Shepherdson argues, 'appeals to race, as a biological concept have been subject to strenuous criticism, not only because of the history that has bound scientific definitions of race to eugenics, colonialism and the Holocaust, but also because biological definitions of race cannot be sustained even on scientific grounds'.¹⁶ In spite of this, debates continue to rage about whether human diversity is due to cultural or biological factors. One solution, especially in what might be termed cultural criticism, has been to introduce the term 'ethnicity' to replace 'race', a term that focuses on the socio-cultural rather than the biological. Many of the cultural critics whose work I examine in this thesis claim not to endorse the concept of race, yet continue to use words like 'Aborigine' or 'mixed-race' as mere discursive constructs, or representations that they only adhere to for ease of explanation.¹⁷ This is not to say that theories of the body are not always embedded in discourse, nor even that scientific accounts can provide adequate neutral descriptions of reality. Rather, I would like to suggest that we (as cultural critics) need to think about race in a more complicated way, rather than abandoning the debate to science. To say that something is embedded in prejudicial representations is not to say that it does not exist outside its representations. As Shepherdson writes:

Like sexual difference, our racial differences are also bound up with the most heavily invested symbolic values, but they cannot be regarded as the invention of a particular culture or the product of a specific historical moment. This does not mean that we can construe race or sexual difference as natural phenomena, reducible to biological facts. But it does mean that we cannot adequately conceptualize race or sexual difference if we treat them precisely like laws, theories of selfhood, or economic policies. Like sexual difference, race is not a human invention, and there is a sense in which arguments for social construction – insofar as they fail to theorize these distinctions – remain bound to a humanistic tradition in which 'man is the maker of all things'.¹⁸

¹⁶ Charles Shepherdson, 'Human Diversity and the Sexual Relation', in *The Psychoanalysis of Race*, ed. Christopher Lane (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), p. 41. Shepherdson's article explores in detail the complexity and the importance of the issues at stake in this debate.

¹⁷ This conceptual problem was brought to my attention when watching a television documentary on the Human Genome Diversity Project in May 1999. Apparently, scientists are not far from producing a weapon that could target specific racial genes, thereby eliminating the major factor in the restricted use, to date, of biological weapons. I could not help thinking what a horrifying scenario it would be to see people being mass-murdered on the basis of their race, while cultural critics continued to claim that the concept of race is a purely discursive construct.

¹⁸ Shepherdson, p. 45.

Although the aim of this thesis is not to resolve this dilemma, which is, in any case, undecidable, I do not see how the question can be resolved on either side of the nature/culture debate, and I am not going to present meaningless disclaimers for my reasons for using a term like mixed-race. This thesis hopes to retain the complexity of the question, and certainly not reduce it to the question (and politics) of the extent to which certain people are or are not Aboriginal. The conclusion to my final chapter will suggest why it is insufficient and ahistorical to reproduce these kinds of debates.

The question of Aboriginality has dominated political debates in Australia of late, and my project attempts to be a series of re-readings of this question in the light of certain texts and events. I would like to emphasize the 're-' of re-readings here in the sense that, rather than seek to find the 'truth' or absolute meanings of these texts and events, this thesis enacts repetitions. J. Hillis Miller argues that there are two ways of thinking about repetition. For ease of explanation, he defines these as the Platonic, which thinks of difference on the basis of a preestablished similitude where all repetitions are destined to be corrupted copies of the original, and the Nietzschean which thinks of similitude, or even identity, as the product of a fundamental disparity. This latter way of thinking about repetition presents the world itself as phantasmatic. It posits a world based on difference. Because this version of repetition does not assume an original, there is something ghostly about the effects of this second kind of repetition. Hillis Miller argues that this second form of repetition is dependent on and grounded in the first logical form, it is 'not the negation or opposite of the first, but its "counterpart", in a strange relation whereby the second is the subversive ghost of the first, always already present within it as a possibility which hollows it out'.¹⁹ It is from this perspective that I am thinking about the re-readings which each of my chapters enacts.

Repetition also plays a crucial role in psychoanalytic theorizing, particularly since the publication of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* in 1920. Repetition, for Freud,

¹⁹ J. Hillis Miller, *Fiction and Repetition* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982), p. 9

may serve the pleasure principle, or may be a mechanism of working through, but it may also be a manifestation of the death instinct:

The manifestations of a compulsion to repeat... exhibit to a high degree an instinctual character and, when they act in opposition to the pleasure principle, give the appearance of some 'daemonic' force at work. In the case of children's play we seemed to see that children repeat unpleasurable experiences for the additional reason that they can master a powerful impression far more thoroughly by being active than they could by merely experiencing it passively. Each fresh repetition seems to strengthen the mastery they are in search of. Nor can children have their experiences repeated often enough, and they are inexorable in their insistence that the repetition shall be an identical.²⁰

Freud speculates that repetition, in its re-enactment of sameness, may offer mastery over a state of loss and anxiety. Arrestingly, Freud uses an analogy with re-reading to differentiate the child's fixated 'compulsion to repeat' from, one supposes, the 'normally developed' adult: 'it is hardly possible to persuade an adult who has very much enjoyed reading a book to re-read it immediately.'²¹ Freud seems to be suggesting here that 're-reading' necessarily involves a re-reading of the same in all its identity, an innately conservative gesture that succumbs to stasis and fixation, a manifestation of the death drive. My re-readings hope to challenge Freud's assertion, and demonstrate the way in which re-readings can be manifestations of difference, can even unsettle, in the way that Hillis Miller suggests, the difference between identity and difference. From this perspective, re-reading is not merely a repetition of sameness but can also produce variation, innovation, even improvization, that is, difference.

Yet Freud's exploration of mastery in the face of anxiety is important to keep in mind in a project of this kind. After all, the whole point of a doctoral thesis produced within an academic institution, and in academic discourse, is to demonstrate one's mastery (most definitely in the face of anxiety), and for all its passionately held anti-colonial sentiment, it seems to me that this thesis cannot help, in some senses, but be complicit with that which it is hoping to challenge and subvert. Colonization is the

²⁰ Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), PFL 11, p. 307. See also 'Remembering, Repeating and Working Through' (1914), Vol. 12 of *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. and trans. James Strachey, 24 Vols. (London: Hogarth Press, 1937-74), pp. 145-56.

²¹ Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, p. 307.

institutional condition of my being here. The Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship scheme, of which I am a grateful recipient, was designed to bring people from the colonies, to educate them, and then return them to their homelands to reproduce this colonial educational regime. This is not to say that such designs cannot be subverted, nor that other kinds of knowledges cannot be produced along the way, but it is to suggest that such a project must proceed with caution and awareness, and perhaps, in the midst of excitement, not overstate its claims.

My discussions do not attempt to offer definitive readings from which a single meaning of the texts can be formed. Rather, they will take up the challenge posed by the texts and enter into an ongoing dialogue between the texts (and some of their possible interpretations) and their readers. The formula of Xavier Pons who claims that writing Aboriginality, 'that is to say in a mode that is acceptable both to European and to Aboriginal readers, remains a challenge'²², can be transformed into the challenge of *reading* Aboriginality as a practice that examines texts not as objects of study, but as agents of transformation, a politicized provisional practice that attempts to examine its own premises.

²² Xavier Pons, 'Writing Koori: Mudrooroo Narogin and Aboriginal Fiction', in *The Making of a Pluralist Australia—1950-1990*, ed. Werner Senn and Giovanna Capone (Berne: Peter Lang, 1992), p. 110.

Chapter 1: Situating *Totem and Taboo*

Spectres of Savagery

Sigmund Freud's *Totem and Taboo* was originally published in 4 volumes over two years (1912-13) with the somewhat less alliterative title of *Some Points of Agreement Between the Mental Lives of Savages and Neurotics*. This event marked the first convergence of the two newly emerging disciplines (and series of disciplinary procedures) that we know of as anthropology and psychoanalysis. Both disciplines, in their attempt to be all-encompassing modes of knowledge by humans about humans, reflect that historical change that Foucault outlines in his early work where human beings came to be both knowing subjects and simultaneous objects of their own knowledge.¹

Freud reasoned in *Totem and Taboo* that 'a comparison between the psychology of primitive peoples, as it is taught by social anthropology, and the psychology of neurotics, as it has been revealed by psycho-analysis, will be bound to show numerous points of agreement and will throw new light upon familiar facts in both sciences'(1). The future passive construction, however, masks the subject that is doing the binding, the subject that is throwing the light, that is, Freud himself. In this way, Freud undertakes what amounts to a collective case-study of 'the most backward and miserable of savages, the aborigines of Australia'(1).

It is difficult not to respond to Freud's hypothesis with abhorrence. Yet if psychoanalysis can be said to open up possibilities, the most productive of these is the potential of both countering and encountering such reactions with alternative questions. The instinctual and metaphysical reaction of disgust, with its logic of contamination, elimination and purification, is what I hope to call into question. This aversion can then

¹ See Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A.M. Sheridan (London: Tavistock Publications, 1972) and *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (London: Tavistock, 1970). For a clear discussion of this process of simultaneous subjectification and objectification, as well as an exploration of some of the problems of Foucault's position, see Hubert L. Dreyfuss and Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (London: Harvester Press, 1982). Future references are to these editions, and are included in parentheses in the text.

function as, and be transformed by, historicization and reconceptualization, which is what my re-reading of *Totem and Taboo* in this chapter attempts to do.

The most subversive contribution of psychoanalysis is arguably its theorization of human subjectivity that interrogates and decentres the individual's pretensions to self-knowledge and its concomitant claims to represent reason and reality. This presents a paradox: psychoanalysis staked out its epistemological claim in the realm of unknowability—the unconscious—a realm that, according to Freud, can only leave traces of its existence. Freudian psychoanalysis confronts this paradox insufficiently. While displacing the self-mastery of the subject, Freud maintains a teleological belief in the all-encompassing possibilities of science where the mastery and unity of the Cartesian *cogito* would return to a split subjectivity through the accumulation of biological knowledge. 'The deficiencies in our description would probably vanish', Freud asserts, 'if we were already in a position to replace the psychological terms by physiological or chemical ones... Biology is truly a land of unlimited possibilities'.² This is an assertion that Freud reiterated at the end of his life when he claimed that 'for the psychical field, the biological field does in fact play the part of the underlying bedrock'.³

Freud's faith in science, however, cannot detract from the radicalness of his own proposition that the subject is inevitably inhabited by an unknowable otherness. Or, to extend Freud's metaphor, the subject can no longer be said to be master of what is, in effect, a haunted house.⁴ It is within this haunted psychic configuration that I will continue to use the word 'savage' as a signifier without a referent. It is in the search for the referent that I am locating the nexus of anthropology and psychoanalysis. Such a search is, from the outset, fraught with difficulty. It presupposes the possibility of looking, of seeing. Yet the savage is that which, although it might be looked for, can

² Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, p. 334.

³ Sigmund Freud, 'Analysis Terminable and Interminable' (1938), *SE*, 23, p. 252.

⁴ See Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen, *The Freudian Subject*, trans. Catherine Porter (London: Macmillan, 1987). Future references are to this edition, and are included in parentheses in the text. Borch-Jacobsen's detailed and suggestive reading of Freud follows through the implications of Freud's concept of the unconscious to argue that the Freudian unconscious is another thinking subject, a *cogitatio*, existing within the conscious subject, but which the conscious subject has no access to: 'Perhaps the ego is not "master in its own house" in Freud's phrase; the fact remains that its house is haunted, its property inhabited by something "other"' (6).

never be seen. The savage is always a spectre, which is to say, following the *Oxford English Dictionary*'s definition, that it is nothing other than 'a phantasm of the brain'.⁵

This phantasmatic gap between looking and seeing is both exposed and masked by Freud on the opening page of *Totem and Taboo*. He argues that the savage is, in a certain sense, 'our' contemporary:

There are men still living who, as we believe, *stand very near to primitive man*, far nearer than we do, and whom we therefore regard as his direct heirs and *representatives*. Such is our view of those whom we describe as savages or half-savages; and their mental life must have a peculiar interest for us if we are right in *seeing it as a well-preserved picture* of an early stage of our own development (1; Emphasis added).

For Freud, then, the savage is spectral, and can only be perceived hauntingly through a complex series of relationships to indigenous Australians who are made to stand near to, in for (represent), and be a well-preserved image of the savagery of Europe's prior selves, savage selves who are clearly not quite there at all. In other words, in *Totem and Taboo*, Freud constitutes the Australian Aborigine as a referent for a spectral signifier.

The absence of the so-called savage was not a phenomenon unique to Freud, nor was it particularly new. As Henrika Kuklick demonstrates, phantasmatic descriptions had long been circulating in Europe about the inhabitants of places outside Europe before those inhabitants were even seen: 'Explorers expected to find extraordinarily backward peoples in the remote regions of the Antipodes, where deprived and depraved societies had been imagined from ancient times.'⁶ The absence of the object being described is also true of Rousseau's later construction of the 'noble savage' in the 'Discourse on Inequality', the contradictory significations of which are well-established.⁷ Rousseau's 'savage', moreover, was embedded within transformations in

⁵ *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, 2 Vols., 3rd ed., rev. and ed. C.T. Onions (Oxford: Clarendon, 1973), p. 2068.

⁶ Henrika Kuklick, *The Savage Within: The Social History of British Anthropology 1885-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 280. Future page references are to this edition, and are included in parentheses in the text.

⁷ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, 'A Discourse on the Origins of Inequality', in *The Social Contract and the Discourses*, rev. ed., trans. G.D.H. Cole (London: Everyman's Library, 1973), pp. 31-125, esp. pp. 52-80. For readings of Rousseau that focus on these contradictions, see George W. Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology* (New York: The Free Press, 1982), esp. Chapter 1; also Simon During, 'Rousseau's Patrimony: Primitivism, Romance and Becoming Other', in *Colonial Discourse/ Postcolonial Theory*, ed. Francis Barker, Peter Hulme, and Margaret Iverson (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1994), pp. 47-71.

Europe involving shifting relations between family members, the individual and the state, and the private and public domains. These transformations took place at a time when Europe was beginning to conceive of itself in global terms. Rousseau's temporalizing conviction that humanity had both degenerated and progressed from a state of nature to a state of culture or civilization was displaced onto a geographical plane, whereby those living outside Europe – particularly Aboriginal Australians – were thought to live in the past. Such displacement enabled the past to haunt the present in the form of 'others' who were thereby relegated to what Johannes Fabian calls an 'allochronic' discursive space.⁸

In a broadly psychoanalytic framework, it can be argued that the spectre of the savage emerged out of and was structured around an ambivalent relation with the father which was instigated by a challenge to patriarchal authority as constitutive of self-identity. It is worth merely noting, at this stage, that this is the realm of neurosis, the very psychic domain that Freud's theory posits that Aboriginal people in Australia inhabit.

I will now attempt to trace a range of historical factors that can be thought of as contributing to the emergence of the Oedipalized subject as Freud conceptualized it. Unlike Freud, however, I am locating this subject as a specific effect of an historical juncture. I will first consider changes in patterns of inheritance that were fundamental in organizing a notion of identity around the question of inheritances from the father. In so doing, I will also consider the effect these changes had on the position of women in the newly emerging patriarchal nuclear family, especially in response to shifting work practices, with the rise of industrialization, that witnessed an increasing division between the public and the private spheres. Finally, I will trace the spread not only of the technology of alphabetic literacy, but also the establishment of print technology that enabled these changes to be stabilized, disseminated and reflected upon. It was the conjunction of these factors that led not only to the constitution of what we might think

⁸ See Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983) for a discussion of the denial of co-evalness in the constitution of the anthropological object.

of as an Oedipal subject, but also to the co-incidental birth of the disciplines of psychoanalysis and anthropology that coalesced in Freud's *Totem and Taboo*. In this moment, the human being becomes both subject and object of its own knowledge.

Structures of Inheritance

Not only did Rousseau's savage represent a state of natural freedom from which civilization had degenerated, so-called savage societies were simultaneously conceived of as being structured around kinship and lineages which were considered inherently authoritarian and patriarchal. For Rousseau, and many of his contemporaries, a society was considered just in so far as it minimized the extent to which one's father's position determined one's own. The path from primitivity to civilization was, therefore, a path that moved both closer to *and* further away from both freedom *and* bondage. As Simon During has argued, the 'contradictions embedded in this dual impulse to imagine primordial society as simultaneously a ground for natural law and as patriarchal are most clearly apparent in Rousseau, for whom the relations between nature and the family remain fluid'.⁹ It was a concern with structures of inheritance that marks Rousseau's contradictory conception of the noble savage, as both free from the bonds of civilization and bound by the authority of the father, an authority that a just and civilized society would necessarily outgrow.

These contradictions can perhaps be seen as an effect of increasing tension and debate between classic patriarchy and emerging contract theory, of which Rousseau's *The Social Contract* is the best-known example. Certainly contract theory was considered a dangerous challenge to the authority of the father as the model for power in general at a time when the legal authority invested in the father was increasing:

The legal authority invested in the father as head of the household increased throughout Europe from at least the sixteenth century on, though at different rates in different regions. Ecclesiastical law which had insisted on the publicity of marriage vows since the fourteenth century... was increasingly backed up by Roman and written law which emphasised paternal and husbandly power.¹⁰

⁹ During, 'Rousseau's Patrimony', pp. 53-54.

¹⁰ During, 'Rousseau's Patrimony' p. 51.

Carole Pateman, who has analyzed these seventeenth-century debates between patriarchalists and contract theorists, explores the way in which emergent Enlightenment philosophy adhered to the ideal of the power of the sovereign giving way to the sovereign and autonomous individual:

Classic social contract theory and the broader argument that, ideally, all social relations should take a contractual form, derive from a revolutionary claim. The claim is that individuals are naturally free and equal to each other, or that individuals are born free and born equal.¹¹

In this sense, contract theory, as it was articulated by men like Rousseau, came to be seen, according to Pateman, as ‘the emancipatory doctrine *par excellence*, promising that universal freedom was the principle of the modern era’ (40). These debates relied upon conjectural histories, a term coined by Dugald Stewart in 1793, of the formation of civil society, that is, civilization—a term that came into general use towards the end of the eighteenth century, and was explicitly linked with the idea of human progress, and its cumulative achievements.¹² According to the contract theorists, a new form of political right is created through a contract that replaces paternal rule. This is the victory of reason over tyranny. In the story of the social contract, the father is killed, metaphorically, by the sons who transform the father’s patriarchal right into civil government. Social contract narratives thereby assume that modern society is post-patriarchal and that patriarchy is pre-modern.

Yet as Pateman argues of this standard interpretation of a victory of social contract theorists over the explicitly Biblical patriarchalists, the sons over the fathers, ‘the fact that the sons eagerly embrace part of the father’s inheritance goes unnoticed’ (86). Rousseau’s claim that he wants to overthrow patriarchy does not acknowledge that he is ‘more than willing to accept the father’s legacy of sex-right and to transform it and make it his own’.¹³ The original political right, in Pateman’s reading,

¹¹ Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988), p. 40. Future page references are to this edition, and are included in parentheses in the text. Pateman analyzes not only Rousseau, but the debates between Locke and Sir Robert Filmer in the 1680s and 1690s as well as the importance of Hobbes. It is significant that George Stocking argues in *Victorian Anthropology* that John Locke is a far more influential figure in the emergence of anthropology than is generally acknowledged (13).

¹² For a detailed discussion of the history of the idea of civilization; its usage in both the British and French contexts; its relation to the German notion of culture; and the impact of the French Revolution in 1792 on it, see Stocking, esp. Chapter 1.

¹³ Pateman, p. 86.

must be a man's right to have sexual access to a woman's body so that he could become a father.¹⁴ Pateman draws out the implications of the terms of the original contract to demonstrate how a sexual contract underlies the social contract, that men's freedom rests on women's subjection, and that the original contract is 'a sexual-social pact, but the story of the sexual contract has been repressed'(1). As Pateman asserts:

a great deal more than freedom is at stake. Men's domination over women, and the right of men to enjoy equal sexual access to women, is at issue in the making of the original pact. The social contract is a story of freedom; the sexual contract is a story of subjection....Civil freedom is not universal. Civil freedom is a masculine attribute and depends on patriarchal right. The sons overturn paternal rule, not merely to gain their liberty but to secure women for themselves. (2)

In other words, contractual society is far from being opposed to patriarchy; contract is the means through which modern fraternal patriarchy is constituted and it is this patriarchy that structures contemporary civil society.¹⁵ The term 'civilization' reflected modern patriarchy where impersonal contractual relations replaced the old, personal subjection of status or patriarchy:

The classic patriarchalism of the seventeenth century was the last time that masculine political creativity appeared as a paternal power or that political right was seen as father-right. Classic contract theory is another story of the masculine genesis of political life, but it is a specifically modern tale, told over the dead political body of the father. In civil society the two dimensions of political right are no longer united in the figure of the father, and sex-right is separated from political right.¹⁶

If contract theory can be conceived of as an anxious effect of the increasing centralization of primogeniture, then the pseudo-separation of the political and the domestic spheres, which continues to characterize contractual, or what we might now think of as capitalist, relations, ensures that women remain in the same position that they had under the conjectured system of classic patriarchy. In other words, as Pateman

¹⁴ As Pateman argues of Sir Robert Filmer's classically patriarchal and Biblical position: 'If Adam was to be a father, Eve had to become a mother. In other words, *sex-right or conjugal right must necessarily precede the right of fatherhood*. The genesis of political power lies in Adam's sex-right or conjugal right, not in his fatherhood. Adam's political title is granted *before* he becomes a father'(87).

¹⁵ The importance of political economy in debates about the nature of civilization is absolutely crucial, although it will not be a point of focus for this thesis. See Pateman and Stocking. For an alternative feminist perspective, see Rosalind Coward, *Patriarchal Precedents: Sexuality and Social Relations* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983).

¹⁶ Pateman, pp. 88-89.

suggests, women remain as ‘merely empty vessels for the exercise of men’s sexual and procreative power’ (87). This status is theoretically justified by arguing that women are tied to nature, subject to their biological functions, and unable to participate in the modes of reason and rationality that underpin the social contract. In spite of the contract theorists’ political/civil concern with equality and freedom, all insist that men’s right over women has a natural basis. Men pass back and forth between the realm of civil freedom, and the private subjection of women. Women, a perpetual source of disorder, must, in the words of Rousseau, ‘be subjected either to a man or to the judgements of men and they are never permitted to put themselves above these judgements’.¹⁷

According to Pateman, ‘Women are not party to the original contract through which men transform their natural freedom into the security of civil freedom. Women are the subject of the contract’ (6). The effect of this on the family structure was that the family, and the concerns of reproduction were increasingly separated from the public domain which led to the extremely narrow and restricted identifications that are characteristic of the Oedipalized subject.

These philosophical debates, and the conjectural histories that they are based on, however, are not necessarily located, as Rousseau would have us believe, in the primordial past. Rather, they can be seen as the effect of more recent historical transformations in Europe. Philip Barker argues that in north-west Europe, ‘perhaps up until the tenth century, there was no single system of inheritance and social identification; on the contrary, the situation was one of wide diversity, from those suggestive of maternal descent, to those of exclusively paternal descent’.¹⁸ According to Barker, these different systems of inheritance ‘interacted in an unorganised way, varying from region to region’ (90). However, from about the tenth century, what Barker refers to as the ‘so-called dawn of feudalism’, economic problems caused by the partitioning of lands led to the consolidation of primogeniture as the dominant system of

¹⁷ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile or On Education*, trans. A. Bloom (New York: Basic Books, 1979), p. 370. Future page references are to this edition, and are included in parentheses in the text.

¹⁸ Philip Barker, *Michel Foucault: Subversions of the Subject* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1993), p. 86. For a fuller discussion of these historical transformations, see especially chapter 3. Future page references are to this edition, and are included in parentheses in the text.

inheritance: 'Feudalism brought about two significant changes: first the end of partability for patrimonial lands, and secondly, the uniform preference for inheritance along the male line only'(88). Barker elucidates the range of strategies that were used to support these changes: 'strengthening the indissolubility of marriage, dissuading from concubinage, and encouraging the production of legitimate heirs from one socially sanctioned conjugal unit'(88). The church intervened to support these aims through the legitimization, and regulation of relationships, which led to the widespread restructuring of the family unit towards that of a patriarchal nuclear family:

The introduction of monogamy changed the structure of the family and the descent of property, at least on the highest levels of society. The conjugal family, consisting of husband, wife and children, emerged as the dominant economic unit. Concubines did not have economic rights and children born out of wedlock were barred from inheritance when there were legitimate offspring.¹⁹

Rousseau's argument, where the history of the family comes to be synonymous with the history of society, enables him to claim that 'the oldest of all societies, and the only natural one, is that of the family.'²⁰ What I have tried to suggest is that the nuclear family structure is an effect of more recent historical changes.

These changes had an number of significant effects, perhaps the most important of which, from my perspective, is to anchor individuals geographically, genealogically and socially; in others words, to enable the fixing of secure identities through a structure of patrilinear heritage. A further effect, as Barker also notes, was 'an intensive and excessive investment in the purity of procreative blood, which was reinforced by the conscious strategy of lineage building'(93):

Legitimate lineage now became more important, and the blood of the mother herself must now be maintained in an unadulterated state and directed towards the primary object of ensuring the legitimacy of male succession. To this end, a woman's body was constructed as the container of this pure blood, awaiting the introduction of seed for the production of male heirs. (93)

The extension and effects of such investments can be seen in Rousseau's declaration, in *Emile*, that an unfaithful wife 'dissolves the family and breaks all the bonds of nature. In

¹⁹ Cited in Barker, p. 88.

²⁰ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968), bk 1, p. 50.

giving the man children which are not his, she betrays both. She joins perfidy to infidelity. I have difficulty in seeing what disorders and crimes do not flow from this one'(361).

Such investments inevitably led to the monitoring, regulation and surveillance of sexual activity, as well as concomitant anxieties about sexual pleasure that perhaps contributed to the institution of private confession as the annual practice of all Christians after the fourth Lateran Council of 1215. This led to the creation of a dialogue with the self that focused specifically on the question of sexual pleasure. Like the psychoanalytic dialogue, of which the Christian confession can be seen as a precursor, the position of the priest is not conceived of as one side of the dialogue but is 'a witness to it and ultimate arbiter of its meaning.'²¹

Accompanying and enabling these political changes and personal dialogues in medieval Europe was an increase in alphabetic literacy and the interiorization of the technology of writing, a technology that played a significant part in the transformation of consciousness that is associated with the Modern Age. As Walter Ong has argued, the introduction of the technology of alphabetic literacy fundamentally restructures the way human beings think:

Many of the features we have taken for granted in thought and expression in literature, philosophy and science, and even in oral discourse among literates, are not directly native to human existence as such but have come into being because of the resources which the technology of writing makes available to human consciousness. We have to revise our understanding of human identity.²²

Although Ong acknowledges that all thought is, to some degree, analytic, he argues that the emergence of alphabetic writing transformed modes of thought providing the conditions for extended abstract analysis and reasoning, classificatory and explanatory

²¹ Barker, p. 96.

²² Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London and New York: Methuen, 1982), p. 1. Future page references are to this edition, and are included in parentheses in the text. Ong presents some incredible statistics to support his argument for the need to rethink conceptions of what it means to be human, conceptions, he argues, that are the direct result of the technology of writing: 'Indeed, language is so overwhelmingly oral that of all the many thousands of languages – possibly tens of thousands – spoken in the course of human history only around 106 have ever been committed to writing to a degree sufficient to have produced literature, and most have never been written at all'(7).

examination, definitions, and categorizations.²³ Ong's argument suggests that alphabetic writing may well emerge as one of the conditions for that change in historical consciousness that is so fundamental to my argument, where humanity becomes both subject and object of its own knowledge. Ong makes explicit the conditions for personal disengagement or distancing that are an effect of writing. Because of the slowness of the process of writing, moreover, and the isolation of the writer, the emergence of alphabetic literacy fostered introspection: 'By separating the knower from the known, writing makes possible increasingly articulate introspectivity, opening the psyche as never before to the external objective world quite distinct from itself but also to the interior self against whom the objective world is set' (105). Given this intersection of confessional practices and literacy, it is not surprising that it is during this period that the first modern autobiographies start to be produced, an historical event that I will discuss in the following chapter. Suffice to say, the conditions for such an autobiographical self are being established during this period of European history.

Of course, alphabetic writing predates medieval times, and contemporary conceptions of analysis and reason date back to ancient times.²⁴ The fundamental difference, however, between ancient and modern alphabetic literacy may well lie in the centrality of the biblical text ('the ancient Greeks and Romans had no sacred texts, and their religions are virtually empty of formal theology'),²⁵ and the relation of self-reflective technologies, that is, both writing and confessional practices, to the systems of

²³ I am using the word 'writing' here in its commonly accepted sense, and not in the broader sense in which Jacques Derrida has applied it. Although Ong refers to primary oral cultures, I prefer to think in terms of different kinds of textuality. The kind of writing I am referring to when I speak of alphabetic writing is in the Saussurean sense of a one-to-one correspondence between visual symbols and units of sound, which is why I am emphasizing alphabetic languages. This is not to dismiss Derrida's insights about the structure of *différance*, insights that I have drawn upon in the writing of this thesis, nor is it to argue that so-called oral cultures have unmediated access to consciousness. It is to suggest that Derrida's insights are necessarily located, as Derrida is well aware, within the tradition of Western metaphysics. It is also to suggest that different technologies of textualization produce different modes of thinking. See, Jacques Derrida *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976); *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978) and *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnson (London: The Athlone Press, 1981). I have found the most interesting discussion of Derrida's work to be in Geoffrey Bennington's 'Derridabase' in *Jacques Derrida*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington (Chicago and London: University of Chicago press, 1993).

²⁴ The first known written culture is the Sumerians in Mesopotamia which developed from around 3500BC, although Ong argues that the introduction, in Ancient Greek, of an alphabet complete with vowels, by analyzing sound more abstractly into purely spatial components, was crucial in so far as it marked the 'nearly total transformation of word from sound to sight'. Ong, p. 90.

²⁵ Ong, p. 157.

primogeniture that I have outlined. It was this combination of technologies and socio-political changes that enabled the specifically modern technique of genealogy.

These transformations were even more established by the seventeenth-century when print technology emerged allowing for the reproducibility and widespread circulation and dissemination of ideas, as well as the internalization of transformations in consciousness brought about the spread of alphabetic literacy. If, as Ong argues, alphabetic literacy facilitates categorical thought, sequential thinking and a far greater concern with the past and the future, then encounters with radically different cultures from the medieval period onwards could be readily defined in temporally progressive classificatory terms, out of which racial theory may well have emerged.

By the time debates about the nature of civil society emerged in the late seventeenth-century, these changes were well-established. Central to the debates about civil society was the regulation of sexuality. The increasing faith in reason, as enabling social progress, was accompanied by a concomitant anxiety about sexuality, particularly women's sexuality. Sexuality, then, came to be seen as the antithesis of reason, and, because women's sexuality jeopardized the very terms of civil society, in so far as it destabilized the possibility of legitimate inheritance, it came to be thought of as the manifestation of irrationality and instinctuality. Rousseau's conjectured movement is not only a movement from the patriarchal authority of nature to the civil society of culture, nor just the movement from unreason to reason, but also the point at which culture controls and regulates both external nature and nature within, that is, the instincts. This is the point, moreover, at which culture, through modes of reason and knowing, strives to explain nature scientifically. That which modes of knowing cannot readily explain is categorized as irrational, as the antithesis of the rational, and that which the rational had the responsibility of controlling.

As we have seen, women had already been excluded on the basis of their irrational natures. The subjection of colonial cultures took a different form. Because so-called savages were considered naturally primitive, in the sense of temporally prior, they were also considered inherently irrational and at the whim of their instinctive sexualities. In Stocking's words: 'Just as the moral character of primitive man was

premised on a direct, unmediated expression of internal passional character, so was the intellectual character of primitive man premised on a direct, unmediated apprehension of external nature' (225). It was this which justified the incorporation and supercession of the savage, and enabled the emergence of a science dedicated to understanding and thereby regulating the savage. The savage, moreover, did not only come to be seen as the ghost of the father past. The savage, considered undeveloped and in need of benevolent regulation, was also perceived of as more child-like as well, a contradictory status that is reproduced in psychoanalytic formulations. The savage, then, is both father and child of the European post-Enlightenment man.

What I am trying to suggest is that a range of intersecting socio-political changes can be thought of as beginning to constitute the conditions for what might be called an Oedipal subject. As Barker notes, under a system of primogeniture, inheritance became the central locus of disputes between fathers and sons: 'There is nothing unconscious about this rebellion: to kill the father is an integral part of claiming an inheritance speedily from the moment of coming of age' (88). This, combined with emerging discourses of reason, one of the central functions of which was to regulate sexuality, and the interiorization of modes of consciousness enabled by literacy which, Ong argues is 'a particularly pre-emptive and imperialist activity that tends to assimilate other things to itself' (12), combined to constitute the Oedipal subject as, necessarily, a colonizing subject. Within the emerging nuclear family, moreover, identification has become restricted to such an extent that it is limited to the father and the mother, the prohibitor and the prohibited which can be readily transferred into the oppressor and the oppressed, a dichotomous structure that maps on to the emerging colonial structure.

The Birth of Anthropology

These factors, among others, converged in the discipline of anthropology at the end of the nineteenth-century.²⁶ Although the first wave of debates around patriarchy

²⁶ I have drawn upon a number of overviews of this period of intellectual history in order to write this chapter, the most important and useful of which have been Peter Bowler, *The Invention of Progress: The Victorians and the Past* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989); L.R. Hiatt, *Arguments About Aborigines: Australia and the Evolution of Social Anthropology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Adam Kuper, *The Invention of Primitive: Transformations of an Illusion* (London and New York:

occurred at the end of the seventeenth century, a second wave took place almost two centuries later which had a much more direct connection to the emergence of anthropology. Although peripheral to emerging mainstream anthropology, Henry Maine's *Ancient Law*, published in 1861, established the method of comparative law, and characterized the transformation of the patriarchal family, and by extension, social organization, as being 'from Status to Contract'.²⁷ Maine was as much concerned with the historical study of property as with the study of the patriarchal family as political organization.

In Britain, just prior to the publication of *Ancient Law*, the study of ethnology, represented most coherently by James Prichard's *Researches into the Physical History of Mankind* (1813), became, 'the most general framework for the study of the linguistic, physical and cultural characteristics of dark-skinned, non-European, "uncivilized" peoples' (47). Ethnology was concerned with cultural and linguistic practices, but when the Enlightenment tendency to make humanity subject to natural laws interacted with the emerging bio-racial science of the nineteenth century, natural laws were suddenly rendered biological.²⁸ Conjectural histories became scientific hypotheses. The cultural and linguistic focus of early ethnologists turned into a biological and anatomical focus. As Nancy Stepan has argued in *The Idea of Race*, 'a shift had occurred in which culture and the social behaviour of man became epiphenomena of biology'.²⁹ The discipline of natural history, it could be argued, emerged out of the field of natural justice, and was

Routledge, 1988); Russell McGregor, *Imagined Destinies: Aboriginal Australians and the Doomed Race Theory, 1880-1938* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1997); Nancy Stepan, *The Idea of Race in Science: Great Britain 1800-1960* (London: Macmillan, 1982); George W. Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology* (New York: The Free Press, 1987); Robert Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Race and Culture* (London: Routledge, 1995). Future references are to these editions, and are included in parentheses in the text.

²⁷ Henry Maine, *Ancient Law: its connection with the early history of society and its relation with modern ideas* (London: John Murray, 1861), p. 100. 'Ancient', in this context, refers to Roman law rather than a conjectured prehistory, which was, according to Maine, non-historical, unverifiable and amounted to guessing. According to Stocking, Maine was keen to differentiate his work from 'the school of so-called prehistoric inquiry' (126). For a discussion of Maine's ideas, and their relation to evolutionary anthropology, see Stocking, esp. 117-28. For a discussion of Maine's theories in the context of feminism, see Coward, esp. Chapter 2.

²⁸ One of the central debates in emerging racial theory was the question of whether inhabitants of places like Australia constituted another species, as the polygenetists argued, or whether all races of the earth constituted a single species. The terms of this debate were partly set by the theological question of, and challenge to, Biblical time. See Stocking and Young, esp. Chapter 1.

²⁹ Stepan, *The Idea of Race in Science*, p. 45-46.

concerned with structuring the relationship to the father, and inheritances from him, within a biologicistic framework.

This desire led to the solidification of the savage, as Europe's prior self inhabiting places outside Europe, with the emergence of anthropology as a discipline that made claims to scientificity in the 1860s and 1870s. Although the first published use of the word 'anthropology' was in 1805 in the *Edinburgh Review*, by the late nineteenth-century anthropology had become an academic discipline that had achieved considerable credibility with the first university post in Britain being created for Edward Burnett Tylor in 1884. This was the same year that the British Association for the Advancement of Science conceded that the field of anthropology was entitled to a Section of its own (Section H) at its annual meeting. This was some thirteen years after the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, founded in 1871 as the Anthropological Institute, strove to assure the status of anthropology as a profession.

In her history of British Anthropology, *The Savage Within*, Henrika Kuklick locates the emergence of anthropology as partly an effect of the widespread concern with the issue of inheritance, which was central to the ideology of meritocracy. In this sense, the early contract theorists can be thought of as a precondition for anthropological concerns. According to Kuklick, the increasing professionalization of anthropology was not an isolated phenomenon, but reflected the restructuring of the British class system and the rise of the middle classes as a result of the diffusion of meritocratic values, that is, 'the belief that an individual's wealth, status and power should reflect the worth of their achievements rather than the social standing of their parents' (27). Anthropology is thereby linked to middle class values, rather than aristocratic ones, and is firmly associated with the idea of human productivity, that is, work. And productivity, like reason, was seen as an indicator of social progress.

One of the main transformations that attended this restructuring was a sharp rise in attendance at universities, those institutionalized centres of reason. As Kuklick has demonstrated, in the national consciousness, 'middle-class identity came to be denoted by a range of traits, but two inter-related components of middle-class status assumed great significance during the nineteenth century: specialized expertise as a property of

respected rank, and formal credentials as the hallmark of expertise'(35-6). These changes, of which anthropologists were among the beneficiaries, were then interpreted by anthropologists, who took social structures as part of their object of study, as an indicator, not of an historical shift, but of the truth of the general laws of social progress and the inevitability of historical development. It was in the accumulation of knowledge, it was claimed, that the possibility of the perfectability of human societies could be realized. Anthropologists, as producers of scientific knowledge about human societies, situated themselves at the pinnacle of this historical development. In this way, not only women and savages could be accounted for in terms of knowledge, but so too, increasingly, could the working classes, who also became objects of anthropological analysis. In this scenario, as Stocking notes, the mechanisms of upward mobility were conceived of as the mechanisms of civilized progress.³⁰

So not only did anthropology emerge out of anxieties about inheritance, framed in terms of a concern with meritocracy, it made the question of inheritance, as integral to the question of progress, its object of study. Given the centrality of the question of inheritance, it is hardly surprising that so many of the early contributors to the amorphous discipline of anthropology were lawyers, nor that the issues in anthropology that were conceived of as the great abiding issues of humanity were actually concerns of then contemporary legality—the development of law, the family, private property and the state.

To make the leap from the cultural to the natural, or the legal and social to the biological, anthropology looked to Charles Darwin's evolutionary thesis posited in *The Origin of Species* published in 1859. Darwin himself had drawn upon a range of theorists of progress, including Thomas Huxley, Herbert Spencer and Alfred Russell Wallace to establish his argument.³¹ Although Darwin's theory emphasized variations which implied not the perfectability of progress but the unpredictability of process, the

³⁰ See Kuklick for a detailed discussion of this process; also Stocking, esp. Chapter 6.

³¹ See Stocking, esp. Chapters 3, 4 and 5 for a discussion of these three figures and their influence on Darwin. Spencer's role is particularly important here: 'when the systematic study of Non-European peoples and the systematic study of the development of civilization... were integrated after 1860, it was in the context of Spencer's evolutionary associationism'(142).

idea of progressive development was sometimes explicit: 'Hence we may look with some confidence to a secure future of... appreciable length. And as natural selection works solely by and for the good of each being, all corporeal and mental endowments will tend to progress toward perfection'.³² Such appeals to progress meant that evolution would become closely tied to the problem of 'race' and the concomitant question of savage and civilized societies, and Darwin's writings occasionally expressed an ambiguous racialism. In *The Descent of Man*, for example, Darwin claims that at 'the present day civilized nations are everywhere supplanting barbarous nations'.³³

Just as the earlier socio-legal models had been concerned with the question of structures of inheritance, so too were the natural science models. The inheritance of acquired characteristics was an integral aspect of Darwin's hypothesis. Such a idea was not new, and is often associated with Lamarck who was writing some fifty years before the publication of *The Origin of Species*. However, Lucille Ritvo, in *Darwin's Influence on Freud*, claims that the theory of the inheritance of acquired characteristics 'did not originate with Lamarck. It is an age-old folk belief found in the Old Testament and Greek mythology'.³⁴ Darwin's hypothesis differed from its previous incarnations in so far as, for Darwin, natural selection was a process of conflict and struggle, that happened gradually rather than in the leaps posited by Lamarck. But Darwin differs most from Lamarck around the question of the causes of evolution. For Lamarck, evolution happened as an act of will. It is the adaptation of the organism to its environment through its own efforts that distinguishes Lamarck's theory from Darwin's natural selection.

Darwin had suggested that self-contained island communities isolated from Europe were particularly instructive models for understanding processes of evolution. It was for this reason that, from the very early days of the colony, Australia was

³² Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species* (1859), ed. Gillian Beer (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 395.

³³ Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex* (London: John Murray, 1901) p. 283.

³⁴ Lucille B. Ritvo, *Darwin's Influence on Freud: A Tale of Two Sciences*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990), p. 31. Ritvo's fascinating study analyzes in detail the differences between Darwin and Lamarck and the popularization of Darwin in German by Haeckel, and traces this through the work of Freud. See also Stocking and McGregor.

considered a crucial anthropological laboratory. Freud suggests as much in his description of Australia on the first page of *Totem and Taboo*: 'the youngest continent, in whose fauna, too, we can observe much that is archaic and has perished elsewhere' (1). The contradictions surrounding Australia, contradictions inherent in the concept of progress, are again revealed here. Australia was both the 'youngest' and simultaneously the most 'archaic', just as Aboriginal Australians were situated as both fathers and sons of the European male. Australia occupied this anthropologically privileged position, even before any detailed ethnographic descriptions were produced in Australia, so the descriptions of Aboriginal 'savages' that Freud quite explicitly based his psychoanalytic assertions upon were therefore haunted by absence.

Island Communities

One way of thinking about this absence is perhaps through the suggestion that Britain also fits Darwin's description—an island community separated from Europe. The post-Enlightenment unity that is often attributed to the United Kingdom, and the discourses of individual sovereignty that accompanied post-Enlightenment thought in Britain, were complicated by the very term 'United Kingdom' with its significations of a heterogeneous mixture of cultural identities brought together under the inherited sovereignty of the crown. Certainly Britain's empire-building phase necessitated a forced internal cohesion, a cohesion that is presently being renegotiated during the establishment of the Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly. The sovereignty of the individual, moreover, so valued by Enlightenment thought is further complicated by the ceding of sovereignty on the part of Scotland as perhaps a condition of the Scottish Enlightenment.³⁵ Robert Young discusses these complexities when he argues that the unity attributed to Britain, or even England as its centre, is founded on a sense of lack:

We shall see that even what is often considered a founding text of English culture, Matthew Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy* (1869), is predicated on the fact that English culture is lacking, lacks something, and acts out an inner dissonance that constitutes its secret riven self.³⁶

³⁵ See Andrew S. Skinner, 'Introduction', in *The Origins and Nature of the Scottish Enlightenment*, ed. R.H. Campbell and Andrew S. Skinner (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1982), pp. 1-6.

³⁶ Young, *Colonial Desire*, p. 3.

Young argues that it was ‘above all in France that civility had evolved into the idea of “civilization” in its dominant Enlightenment sense of the achieved but still progressive secular development of modern society’(32), and that, in Britain, ‘French progressive ideas of civilization had impact in the city most closely affiliated to Parisian intellectual life: Edinburgh’(34). It could also be suggested that it was more than just Scotland’s relationship to France that led to the impact of ideas of civilization on Scotland. After all, Scotland itself, and particularly the Highlands, were subject to the same oppositional metaphorical descriptions as Australian Aborigines. In British colonialist historiography, pre-Union Scotland was associated with an authoritarian darkness and savagery before the emergence of post-Union, post-Enlightenment knowledge where the intellectual changes following the Union of parliaments were described as an ‘Army of Light’.³⁷ Unsurprisingly, this basking in the newly-arrived light of autonomy and reason was accompanied by colonial expansion. In the light of this, it is significant that the key Scottish intellectuals from the post-Enlightenment that Freud draws upon in the opening page of *Totem and Taboo* to refer to ‘the tribes which have been described by anthropologists as the most backward and miserable of savages’(1) would be so influential in reproducing and projecting forms of knowledge, previously directed towards their own recent past, on to Australian Aborigines.

Anthropological Investigations

E.B. Tylor, the first professor of anthropology in Britain, and sometimes considered the ‘father’ of anthropology, published *Researches into the Early History of Mankind and the Development of Civilization* (1865), which was, according to Stocking, ‘a methodological exercise—an attempt to see how far a study of cultural similarities might carry one toward reconstructing the actual early history of mankind’.³⁸ This work was both ethnographic and evolutionary. It was followed by

³⁷ Craig Beveridge and Ronald Turnbull, *The Eclipse of Scottish Culture* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1989), p. 49.

³⁸ Stocking, p. 158. For an elaboration of Tylor’s work, see Stocking, pp. 156-69.

Primitive Culture in 1871 which was concerned with the scientific study of ‘the world long evolution of civilization’.³⁹

Tylor’s contribution was to bring together technology, language, myth and belief, all pre-existing areas of study in the work of Max Müller, John Lubbock, Auguste Comte and James Prichard, to form a single entity—Culture or civilization.⁴⁰ The idea of culture was linked to a theory of primitive religion or animism, the belief that natural species and objects had souls that should be worshipped. The concerns of *Primitive Culture* can be seen from its very first line: ‘Culture or Civilization, taken in its wide ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capacities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.’⁴¹ With the publication of Darwin’s *The Descent of Man* in the same year as *Primitive Culture*, anthropologists increasingly came to apply biological evolutionary theory to the socio-cultural sphere.

Perhaps the other most significant early British anthropologist, particularly for his ‘doctrine of survivals’, which claimed that surviving forms or relics of the past could help to reconstruct the course of man’s development, was John Ferguson McLennan. McLennan, from Inverness, would later recall his childhood surrounded by people whose lives were full of the violence and cruelty of ‘untutored savages’.⁴² McLennan’s work is particularly important in early anthropology and, according to Stocking, McLennan’s article on ‘The Early History of Man’ is:

the best single summary view of the sociocultural evolutionary position as it emerged in the mid-1860s. McLennan dealt with the problem under three headings: ‘The Antiquity of Man,’ in which he attacked the biblical chronology; ‘The Primitive State,’ in which he argued against degeneration and for progress; and ‘The Method of Studying Early History,’ in which he explicated the comparative method and the doctrine of survivals. Taken together, these three headings provide a schematic summary of the emergence of

³⁹ E. B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Language, Art and Custom*, 2 Vols. (London: John Murray, 1891), Vol. 2, p. 443.

⁴⁰ For a discussion of Müller’s comparative philology, and interest in language and mythology, as well as the relation between him and Tylor, see Stocking, esp. pp. 61-62. See Stocking also, pp. 150-56, for a discussion of the importance of Lubbock and his *Prehistoric Times: as Illustrated by Ancient Remains, and the Manners and Customs of Modern Savages* (1865), and *The Origin of Civilization* (1870). Lubbock was particularly committed to a vision of socio-cultural evolution. Stocking briefly discusses Comte, pp. 27-9, the influence of whom can be seen in Freud’s stadial theory.

⁴¹ Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, Vol. 1, p. 1.

⁴² Cited in Stocking, p. 164.

sociocultural evolutionism, both substantively and chronologically.
(169)

McLennan later published perhaps his most famous work, *Primitive Marriage*, in 1865, which:

shows evidences that its argument was conditioned by the contemporary concern with problems of human sexuality and by the processes of social change affecting the institution of human marriage. Although McLennan offered no explicit definition of marriage, and showed a certain relativity in the recognition of its different 'species,' it is perfectly clear that 'marriage proper' meant proper Victorian marriage. Its purpose was to control human (and especially female) sexuality, so that there might be 'certainty of male parentage.' Its critical diagnostic features were 'the appropriation of women to particular men' and the 'conception of conjugal fidelity'.⁴³

In this sense, anthropology extended the anxieties of the earlier debates previously discussed, about 'conjugal fidelity', and McLennan reproduced the idea of women as both irrational and sexual, in other words, instinctual. Certainly, his conception of an early stage of promiscuity, followed by a stage of female kinship, reflected more anxieties in his own society, because, as Stocking notes, his ethnographic evidence for a stage of promiscuity was 'provided in a single ethnographic footnote' (202). In this way, the "“grosser copartneries” of Victorian prostitution were an obvious model for primitive polyandrous marriage' (202). For McLennan, just as for Rousseau before him (although he would not have expressed it in such explicitly evolutionary terms), the evolution upward from promiscuity and polyandry was the evolution towards the culmination of civilization in the mid-Victorian patriarchal nuclear family, and the monogamous sexual propriety that governed it. As McLennan suggested elsewhere, once the marriage system allowed a man to be certain of his parenthood of specific children, 'nothing but the effect of custom' would prevent the system of descent along the female line from dying out: 'Born to him in his own house; by blood and circumstance the nearest and dearest to him; all his natural feelings would prompt him to leave them his wealth.'⁴⁴

For the emerging field of anthropology, as for their philosophical forefathers, it is reason, science and knowledge that establish civilization, as exemplified by the

⁴³ Stocking, pp. 201-02.

⁴⁴ Cited in Stocking, p. 203.

ability to confirm with certainty the connection between conception and paternity. Yet the certainty that McLennan and others claimed that marriage provided regarding paternity is, obviously, a certainty constantly haunted by doubt. Reason, then, as it has been conceived since even before Descartes and the assertion of the *cogito*, is constantly threatened by doubt, calling into question the very boundary between reason and unreason.⁴⁵ Reason, in the context of the question of paternity, can be seen as a technique for mastering that which lies outside its domain, a technique for reinstating a surety of identity and legitimacy that female sexuality can always call into doubt.⁴⁶

McLennan, through his interest in 'primitive marriage' tried to link animism and exogamy (a term coined by McLennan to refer to marriage outside the group), and did so through the idea of totemism in 'The Worship of Animals and Plants' written in 1869-70.⁴⁷ McLennan took Tylor's animistic thesis and added a sociological dimension. According to McLennan, totemism was the appropriation of a special fetish to what he termed a tribe, and the hereditary transmission of this totem through the mother. Most of McLennan's paper contained illustrations of totemism. According to McLennan, tribes in the totem stage believed themselves to be descended from some animal or plant which was their 'symbol or emblem' and 'religiously regarded' or 'taboo', recognized kinship through the mother, and followed 'exogamy as their marriage law'.⁴⁸ Although McLennan had given Australia a privileged place in his theory of totemism, he could only cite Sir George Grey's *Journals of Two Expeditions of Discovery in North-Western*

⁴⁵ See René Descartes, 'First Meditation: About the Things we may Doubt', in *Discourse on Method and the Meditations*, trans. F.E. Sutcliffe (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1968), pp. 95-101. For the debate between Foucault and Derrida on the question of doubt and its relation to reason in this 'First Meditation', see Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, trans. by Richard Howard (New York: Pantheon, 1965). See also Derrida's response 'Cogito and the History of Madness' in *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1990) pp. 31-63. I say 'even before Descartes' because it has been argued, most forcefully by Hans Blumenberg, that, although Descartes claims to be inaugurating methodological doubt, his own work attempts to conceal the traces of the history of methodological scepticism that pervaded medieval philosophy. According to Blumenberg, 'Descartes painstakingly effaced and disavowed the traces of his historical background in order to constitute the myth of the radical beginning of reason.' Hans Blumenberg, *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, trans. Robert M. Wallace (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1983), p. 185. See also Barker, esp. pp. 160-72.

⁴⁶ Arrestingly, the question of whether Aboriginal people prior to invasion were aware of the connection between conception and paternity remains unresolved in contemporary anthropology. Hiatt refers to this issue as 'one of the agonistic evergreens of twentieth century anthropology. Why it had so much life in it is still not understood'(122).

⁴⁷ For a more detailed discussion of McLennan's ideas and their importance, see Stocking, pp. 164-69.

⁴⁸ Cited in Stocking, p. 297.

Australia published in 1841. The only mention of anything that might be related to the idea of totemism at all was a reference to a ‘kobong’ which Grey defined as an animal or vegetable crest, and commented: ‘A certain mysterious connection exists between a family and its kobong so that a member of the family will never kill an animal of the species to which the kobong belongs.’⁴⁹ From this ‘mysterious connection’, McLennan’s theory of totemism was born.

William Robertson Smith, another Scot and a founding member of the Edinburgh Evening Club, used McLennan’s work to apply McLennan’s theories of totemism to the Old Testament. This perhaps influenced Freud’s second ‘psychohistory’, *Moses and Monotheism*, in which Freud openly defended his admiration of Robertson Smith, whom he calls ‘a man of genius’, ‘in spite of the fact that more recent ethnologists have unanimously rejected [his] hypotheses’.⁵⁰ In 1883, Robertson Smith became a reader in Arabic at Cambridge and it was here that he met his most important disciple and fellow Scot—James George Frazer.⁵¹ In 1885, Robertson Smith asked Frazer to write the entry on ‘Totemism’ for the T volume of *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, a 3-page entry that turned into a 13-volume book, a narrative which can be thought of as representing Frazer’s all-consuming methodology which stands out as exemplary of the epistemological all-inclusiveness that characterized the Western faith in the accumulation of knowledge.⁵²

⁴⁹ Sir George Grey, *Journals of two Expeditions of Discovery in North-Western Australia*, 2 Vols. (London: Boone, 1841), Vol. 2, p. 226. As we will discover, Grey can be seen as an important precursor to the later anthropologist/administrators, like Baldwin Spencer. Stocking describes in detail the conditions under which Grey’s expedition took place: ‘In 1836 Grey proposed to the Colonial Secretary and the Royal Geographical Society an exploration of northwestern Australia, hoping to open the interior for settlement... While writing up his material in England, Grey apparently came across a copy of Albert Gallatin’s Synopsis of American Indian tribes that Prichard had presented to the library of the Royal Geographical Society; in it Grey found descriptions of matrilineal clans and “totams” that seemed remarkably similar [to the kobong]. But although he thereby juxtaposed for comparison social phenomena that were to preoccupy anthropologists on into the twentieth century, and in fact noted that “civilized nations, in their heraldic bearings,” preserved “traces of the same custom,” Grey was far from interpreting exogamous matrilineal kinship, totem, and tabu in social evolutionary terms’ (82-83). Grey’s interpretations, it should be noted, were strictly theological.

⁵⁰ Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, PFL 13, p. 380. It is difficult, in retrospect, to conceive of just how disruptive Robertson-Smith’s theories were. In 1878 he answered charges of heresy before the Church Assembly and in May 1880 he was cautioned. In June 1880, he published his ‘Animal Tribes in the Old Testament’, and he was removed from his Professorship in May 1881.

⁵¹ See Robert Ackerman, *J.G. Frazer: His Life and Work* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987). This biography not only examines Frazer’s work in depth, but also traces the significance of his friendship with Robertson-Smith, and others, in Frazer’s career.

⁵² See Ackerman, p. 57, for a brief discussion of the ‘uncontrollable swelling’ of Frazer’s essay on Taboo.

This reached its apex in the publication of *The Golden Bough* in 1890, which was an astounding popular success.

Frazer's Tylorian approach 'sifted the arguments in every branch of the new discipline and asserted an orthodoxy'.⁵³ This approach assumed that the socio-cultural sphere is governed by laws that science can discover through the use of empirical reasoning. By the last decade of the nineteenth century, almost all the new specialists would have agreed that most primitive societies were structured around kinship relations, organized on the basis of descent groups which were exogamous and related by a series of exchange marriages. Furthermore, part of this orthodoxy entailed the odd belief, first postulated by Morgan, although drawing upon McLennan's Doctrine of Survivals, that, like extinct species, these primeval institutions were preserved in fossil form in ceremonies and kinship terminologies bearing witness to long dead practices.⁵⁴ Contemporary Aborigines thus became objects of study, less for what they were at the time of investigation, than for what they could tell investigators about the investigators themselves. Rather than thinking about Aboriginal societies as different, or colonial contact as an encounter with alterity, Aborigines were incorporated into a European narrative of identity and sameness that enabled and justified their supercession. Given this, it could be argued that one of the primary debates in anthropology, which was how exogamous relations were structured, reflects more the concerns of nineteenth-century Europe, in particular its anxiety about incestuous relations set in motion by structures of inheritance, than the kinship structures of Aboriginal communities. After all, primogeniture, which led to the increasing dominance and normalization in Europe of the patriarchal family with sexual surveillance at its heart, was also concerned with keeping money and property within families. What I am suggesting is that the concern with exogamy reflects the late nineteenth-century European concern about how to retain

⁵³ Kuper, p. 6.

⁵⁴ Morgan first published this hypothesis in *Systems of Consanguinity and Affinity of the Human Family* in 1871. For a discussion of Morgan's position, and the subsequent debate between Morgan and McLennan, see Hiatt, esp. Chapter 2. See also the final chapter of Stocking. Morgan, also a lawyer, published *Ancient Society: or Researches in the Lines of Human Progress from Savagery, through Barbarism to Civilization* in 1877. Morgan's ideas about kinship terminology had a profound impact upon successive anthropologists as well as being a major influence on Engels. Although interested in Morgan, Freud drew more heavily upon the work of Robertson-Smith, McLennan and Frazer for his argument in *Totem and Taboo*.

with exogamy reflects the late nineteenth-century European concern about how to retain money and property within a family while ensuring that marriages were not too closely consanguineous.⁵⁵

At the end of the nineteenth century, two great anthropological studies of Australia were undertaken. The first, which took place in the 1870s, was the work of the missionary, Lorimer Fison, and the explorer and police magistrate, Alfred Howitt. Fison, who had been in correspondence with Lewis Henry Morgan, was eager to validate, in spite of the shortage of ethnographic examples, Morgan's theories of descent and exogamy. Fison's aim revealed the overdeterminations that his research was motivated by:

The chief object of this memoir is to trace the formation of exogamous intermarrying divisions which have been found among so many savage and barbaric tribes of the present day, and to show what the honourable Lewis H. Morgan calls the Punaluan family, with the Turanian system of kinship, logically results from them. The Australian classes are especially valuable for this purpose, because they give us what seem to be the earliest stages of development.⁵⁶

Fison, in a letter to Morgan, claimed that the laws of Turanian descent (descent through males) could be demonstrated from Australian materials by steps 'as conclusive as any one of Euclid's demonstrations, if we can only establish three preliminary propositions'.⁵⁷ These were that marriage united groups; that each group was exogamous; and, the proposition most crucial to Morgan's argument, that kinship terminology identified these groups. The geometric eloquence of Morgan's model, however, depended on the evidence of the kinship terminology. This was not to be as simple as Fison had suggested, and Fison himself pointed to the difficulty he had relating these spectral models to the indigenous communities that were functioning as a referent for the European idea of the savage: 'When asked to define the relationship in which he stands to other persons, [the Australian Aborigine] frequently takes into

⁵⁵ This anxiety is most reflected in the controversy in mid-Victorian Britain about marriage to a deceased wife's sister. The issue was constantly before parliament from the 1840s onwards and the Prohibited Degrees of Marriage Act was not passed until 1907.

⁵⁶ Lorimer Fison and A.W. Howitt, *Kamilaroi and Kurnai: Group Marriage and Relationship and Marriage by Elopement, drawn chiefly from the usage of the Australian Aborigines, also the Kurnai tribe: Their Customs in Peace and War* (Melbourne: George Robertson, 1880), p. 23.

⁵⁷ Cited in Kuper, p. 95.

terms of kinship. After years of inquiry into this matter, the humiliating confession must be made that I am hopelessly puzzled.’⁵⁸

This ‘humiliating confession’ suggests the discursive nature of these cultural confrontations, and the extent to which the models repressed the encounter between ethnographers and Australian Aboriginal communities as a cross-cultural and cross-linguistic encounter with difference that Western models quickly recuperate into themselves. Furthermore, these models were the site from which anthropological knowledge was produced. That the Aborigines Fison approached often gave ‘words that are not specific terms of kinship’ also suggests that the value the models placed on kinship terminology, and the value placed on it by Aboriginal communities were incommensurate. In spite of the conflicting and contradictory data provided by Howitt, and the field-work divergences from the model, ‘Fison’s model, rather than Howitt’s ethnography, was the leading influence on the next generation of Australian studies’.⁵⁹

The second major anthropological expedition, undertaken in the 1890s, was directed by Frazer himself and was motivated to explore totemism. The expedition was undertaken by Baldwin Spencer, chair of biology at Melbourne University who had arrived in Australia from Oxford in 1887, and Frank Gillen who was the postmaster at Alice Springs and an amateur ethnographer. Spencer’s career demonstrates the way in which the discipline of anthropology was closely connected to and often worked in the service of colonial administration.⁶⁰ In 1912, after establishing his reputation as an anthropologist, he took up the duties of Special Commissioner and Chief Protector of Aborigines in the Northern Territory, and had been involved in the drafting of the Aborigines Ordinance of 1911. Spencer, about whom I will go into more detail in the next chapter, during his time as an administrator, advocated increasing control and surveillance over every aspect of Aboriginal people’s lives. The alleged divide between the realm of pure and disinterested reason and that of practicality and administration is

⁵⁸ Fison and Howitt, p. 59.

⁵⁹ Kuper, p. 98.

⁶⁰ See Talal Asad, ‘Introduction’, in *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter*, ed. Asad (London: Ithaca Press, 1973), pp. 9-19. Most of the essays in this collection deal with the relationship between anthropology and colonialism. See also Stocking, esp. pp 81-87; and McGregor, pp. 71-99.

ruptured in the life of Spencer, and Sir George Grey before him, to be no more than a myth, a myth that, even today, discourses of reason continue to reproduce. It is in the life and work of Baldwin Spencer that the intersection between epistemological and administrative forms of regulation are, in the Australian context, at their most exemplary. It is in the photographic work of Spencer, moreover, as a part of his administrative work, that the connection between processes of civilization, and the Oedipalizing of Aboriginal subjects around the patriarchal nuclear family are clearly demonstrated (see Appendix 1).

Spencer had come to the attention of Frazer via a letter which contained Spencer's observation that some Arunta tribesmen, from Central Australia, had eaten their totem in a ceremony called an 'intichiuma'. This captured Frazer's interest because in *The Religion of the Semites*, his friend, Robertson-Smith, had claimed that in primitive times, totemic tribes sometimes ate their totem animal, which was otherwise considered taboo, as a sacrament. Robertson-Smith's problem had been, as is often the case, finding evidence. 'Hence his excitement as Spencer's casual mention of the consumption of the totem animal by the Arunta tribesmen. Best of all, theoretically speaking, was that the observation was made among the Arunta because of all the Aborigines they had probably been least affected by outside influence.'⁶¹

This instance, described by Spencer, remained the only evidence of Robertson-Smith's theory and was thus given pride of place in all reports of totemism, although, again, whether it occupied the same place in the Arunta community is another question altogether. This reveals the way in which anthropology privileges objects of discourse for the sake of its own epistemological narratives. Certainly, Frazer welcomed the 'discovery' as:

a very striking proof of the sagacity of my brilliant friend, whose rapid genius had outstripped our slower methods and anticipated what it was reserved for subsequent research positively to ascertain. Thus from being little more than an ingenious hypothesis the totem sacrament has become, at least in my opinion, a well-authenticated fact.⁶²

⁶¹ Ackerman, p. 154. For an informed discussion of the significance of the intichiuma, see esp. chapter 9.

⁶² James. G. Frazer, 'Preface to the Second Edition', *The Golden Bough: A Study in Comparative Religions* (London: Macmillan 1900), p. xix.

From here, a close working relationship was born between Spencer and Frazer. Spencer explained Howitt's failure to report on the religious aspects of totemism, writing to Frazer that 'in those days with no work such as yours and Tylor's to guide him there was little to show him what *to look for* in this line ..'.⁶³ Fieldwork is determined by pre-existing anthropological models that predetermine both the way in which information gleaned in the field will be interpreted, and what information is even considered worth collecting for interpretation. while simultaneously masking the status of anthropology's empirical descriptions as interpretation.

Freud's *Totem and Taboo*

Although much of this anthropological work was already being called into question by 1910, it was from within this arena, and in particular from anthropological assertions about the significance of the 'intichiuma', that Freud, in *Totem and Taboo*, assembled and authorized his own psychoanalytic interpretations of the models of anthropology provided by the Scottish triumvirate of Robertson-Smith, McLennan and Frazer. Frazer's *Totemism and Exogamy*, which took an evolutionistic approach to totemism and argued, among other things, that its origin lay in the ignorance of the role of the father in procreation, was particularly influential.⁶⁴ Patrilineal transmission of the Totem was a later development and, according to Frazer, indicative of evolutionary progress.⁶⁵

Behind these anthropological models, then, were the evolutionary assumptions of Darwin, whose theory of the centrality of conflict in the process of natural selection, which also included sexual selection, was reiterated by Freud, although on an intra-subjective level where the adaptive ego mediates the conflict between the instinctual id and the authoritarian super-ego. Similarly, Freud took Darwin's biological hypothesis of

⁶³ Baldwin Spencer, *Spencer's Scientific Correspondence with Sir J.G. Frazer*, ed. R.R. Marett and T.K. Penniman (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1932), p. 79. Emphasis added.

⁶⁴ It is interesting to speculate as to why Freud's Oedipus complex continues to be so influential, when the anthropology that it drew upon for its authority has been largely undermined. For a discussion of the importance of *Totemism and Exogamy*, and its influence on Freud, see Ackerman, esp. chapter 12.

⁶⁵ In a footnote, Robert Ackerman describes Frazer's response to receiving a copy of *Totem and Taboo* from Freud: 'I have got a new book *Totemism and Taboo* [sic], the translation of a book by a German or Austrian psychologist, who borrows most of his facts from me and tries to explain them by mental processes, especially the dreams of the insane! Not a hopeful procedure, it seems to me, though he seems to have a great vogue with some people'(n.333-34).

the inheritance of acquired characteristics and applied it to the psychic realm. It is not surprising that Freud would consider his own epistemological revolution as important as Darwin's, nor that Ernest Jones, a Welsh psychoanalyst and close friend of Freud's who had introduced him to the work of British anthropology, would 'bestow' on Freud 'the title of the Darwin of the mind'.⁶⁶

Like Spencer's approach, Freud's study was overdetermined by his pre-existing psychoanalytic models, and it is more than fortuitous that he would use exactly the same phrase as Spencer, an oft-repeated phrase in the Freudian *oeuvre*, to justify his theoretical approach, which also enacts the same denial of interpretation: 'We can start an inquiry as to whether some of the hypotheses which we have carried over from neuroses to taboo or some of the results to which that procedure has led us may not be directly verifiable in the phenomena of taboo. But we must decide what we are *to look for*.'⁶⁷

From this decision came Freud's most famous and controversial hypothesis in *Totem and Taboo*, the concept of the primal horde, which emerged from a combination of these anthropological models and the work of both Darwin and J. Atkinson's *Primal Law*. In *The Descent of Man*, Darwin posited the idea that early man lived in small communities each with a jealously guarded wife (or wives). When a young male matured he would be engaged in contest by the dominant male—either the old male was killed or the young expelled. Atkinson speculated that, in what he terms 'cyclopean society', mothers would have eventually rebelled against the expulsion of their sons who would have been allowed to stay with the prohibition on incest being instituted to guarantee the old male's sexual monopoly of his spouses. Freud combined and extended these hypotheses, positing a 'primal horde' dominated by a powerful father who possessed all the available women. In rage and frustration, his sons, who united 'had the

⁶⁶ Ernest Jones, *Sigmund Freud: His Life and Work*, 3 Vols. (London: The Hogarth Press, 1957), Vol. 3, p. 326. Future references are to this edition, and are included in parentheses in the text. For an extremely detailed and well-researched analysis of Darwin's influence on Freud, see Lucille B. Ritvo, *Darwin's Influence on Freud: A Tale of Two Sciences* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990).

⁶⁷ Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, p. 35; Emphasis added

courage to do and succeeded in doing what would have been impossible for them individually' (141), joined together and killed him.

According to Freud, after the primal murder, a 'fair amount of the power liberated by the removal of the father passed over to the women; there came a period of matriarchy'.⁶⁸ Freud does not elaborate on this period of matriarchal authority except to claim that 'a considerable time elapsed during which the brothers disputed with one another for their father's heritage, which each of them wanted for himself alone'.⁶⁹ The overthrow of the matriarchy comes about because of what Freud refers to, enigmatically, as 'deferred obedience' which, with the ambivalent structure of the instincts, encouraged 'a filial sense of guilt' in the post-parricide world⁷⁰: 'they hated their father, who presented such a formidable opposition to their craving for power and their sexual desires; but they loved and admired him too'.⁷¹ It is from this 'deferred obedience' that Totemic religion arose.

In a movement that Freud refers to in *Moses and Monotheism* 'as a great step forward' (350), matriarchy 'was succeeded by the re-establishment of a patriarchal order' (327). In this way, paternal authority was reinstated, although 'the head of the family... was not by any means so absolute as the father of the primal horde had been'.⁷² As a result, the family structure emerged which was 'a restoration of the former primal horde and it gave back to fathers a large portion of their former rights'.⁷³ Freud further argues, again without elaborating, that it 'is likely that the mother-goddesses originated at this time of the curtailment of the matriarchy, as a compensation for the slight upon the mothers'.⁷⁴

To prevent a repetition of the primal situation, the brothers, under the shadow of the totem, imposed certain structuring rules on themselves, to regulate and restrict their relations and desires. They therefore instituted three laws. One was against parricide, or

⁶⁸ Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, p. 326.

⁶⁹ Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, p. 325.

⁷⁰ Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, p. 145.

⁷¹ Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, p. 143.

⁷² Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, p. 382.

⁷³ Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, p. 149.

⁷⁴ Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, p. 327.

the killing of the totem: 'the first form of the father-surrogate'.⁷⁵ The second was the prohibition of incest which institutes exogamy as an orderly system of marriage, which involved, according to Freud in *Moses and Monotheism*, 'the renunciation of the passionately desired mothers and sisters in the horde'.⁷⁶

In *Totem and Taboo*, however, Freud does not specify the relation and, instead, argues that the sons 'resign[ed] their claim to the women who had now been set free'(143). Yet, this seems to contradict the third law, a law only made explicit in *Moses and Monotheism*. The third law, often neglected by commentators, was set up in order to maintain this new state of affairs. After all, although 'the brothers had banded together in order to overcome their father, they were all one another's rivals in regard to the women'.⁷⁷ This third law, then, granted 'equal rights to all members of the fraternal alliance – that is, restricting the inclination to violent rivalry among them'.⁷⁸ Although Freud does not state this explicitly, because the third law was about restricting rivalry, this does suggest that, under this law, the right to possess women ceases to be one man's right and becomes every man's right. In Freud's words in *Totem and Taboo*, 'the brothers were declaring that no one of them must be treated by another as their father was treated by them all jointly'(146).

The mechanism through which these laws were enforced was the incorporation of authority internally. It was the son's ambivalence that 'set up the super-ego by identification with the father; it gave that agency the father's power'.⁷⁹ As with the development of the individual's superego, what had been an external authority became incorporated internally as a sense of legislative guilt.⁸⁰ Conscience, then, develops simultaneously with consciousness—the two are inextricable.⁸¹ According to Freud, this

⁷⁵ Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, p. 148.

⁷⁶ Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, pp. 366-67.

⁷⁷ Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, p. 146.

⁷⁸ Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, p. 367.

⁷⁹ Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, p. 325.

⁸⁰ This echoes Francis Galton, cousin of Charles Darwin and anthropologist in his own right, in *Inquiries in Human Faculty* (1883). Galton argues that 'inherited conscience' can be seen as the 'organized result of social experiences of many generations.' Cited in Kuklick, p. 82.

⁸¹ 'For what is "conscience"? On the evidence of language it is related to that of which one is "most certainly conscious". Indeed, in some languages the words for "conscience" and "consciousness" can scarcely be distinguished.' *Totem and Taboo*, p. 68.

Oedipal moment, the moment that creates and destroys, the moment that others the self, also marks the beginnings of civilization through a fraternal pact.⁸²

Although drawing on anthropological authority, Freud's account can be seen as being part of the social contract tradition about the overthrow of the father's authority, although the death, in Freud's account, is not merely metaphorical. Similarly, in *Totem and Taboo*, Freud makes explicit, in a way that the earlier contract theorists did not, that, for the primal sons, access to women was 'their chief motive in despatching their father' (144). Significantly, in *Moses and Monotheism*, Freud refers to this establishment of a civil community where women are shared between men as 'a sort of social contract' (325).

Freud's vision is remarkably similar to that of Rousseau, a vision that he elaborates on in *Civilization and its Discontents*. Freud argues that subsequent to this fraternal pact, 'the work of civilization has become increasingly the business of men, it confronts them with ever more difficult tasks and compels them to carry out instinctual sublimations of which women are little capable' (293). In an account that echoes Rousseau's extremely contradictory view of women, it is women's natures that prevent them from being part of the contract, even if it was for the right to women that the contract came about in the first place. Although the claim is that women and their bodies must be controlled if the social order is to be established, the story of the primal horde seems to suggest that it is male sexual desire that needs to be regulated, rather than monopolized, for so-called civilization to come about. It is little wonder, then, that women, 'forced into the background by the claims of civilization', would adopt 'a hostile attitude towards it'.⁸³

The primal horde story is not only significant for the role it assigns to women, but also because it is a story of identification with the father through incorporation of the father's place. This is a story that, once Australian Aborigines are located as evolutionary forefathers, turns into the story of colonization. The role of cannibalization, in this scenario, is crucial here, as is the matter-of-factness with which

⁸² See *Civilization and its Discontents*, p. 329.

⁸³ Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, p. 293.

it is asserted. As Freud states: 'Cannibal savages as they were, it goes without saying that they devoured their victim'.⁸⁴ Freud suggests, in *Moses and Monotheism*, that we can 'understand the cannibalistic act as an attempt to ensure identification with him by incorporating a piece of him'(325). Hence the importance for Freud of Robertson Smith and the 'intichiuma' ceremony. As Borch-Jacobsen argues of this struggle for subjectivity: 'What is at stake in this struggle is now quite clear: the acquisition of an identity. Desire culminates in a murder and a cannibalistic sacrificial meal because it is directed towards the acquisition of an identity by means of the assimilation of the other.'⁸⁵

On the subject of *Totem and Taboo*, psychoanalysis in general has maintained a somewhat embarrassed, one might even say repressed, silence. This silence, like all forms of denial, engenders its own series of neuroses. It is the hypothesis of the primal horde which provides Freud, and psychoanalysis, with an historical grounding for the universal Oedipus complex which is, in psychoanalytic thought, a touchstone of orthodoxy. On the one hand, without the primal horde, there is no Oedipus complex; on the other, the hypothesis of the primal horde can be seen as phantasmatic extension and effect of the historically-situated Oedipus complex. And it is through the Oedipus complex that Freud addresses psychoanalysis' most fundamental question: how does the specifically Oedipal ordering of desire come about? The primal horde supplies the answer through an historical event.

Freud, in *Moses and Monotheism*, uses his hypothesis to assert the ontological status of phylogenesis: 'The behaviour of neurotic children towards their parents in the Oedipus and castration complex abounds in... reactions, which seem unjustifiable in the individual case and only become intelligible phylogenetically—by their connection with the experience of earlier generations'(344). The guilty memory of the murder of the primal father has 'left indestructible traces upon the history of human descent'.⁸⁶ These

⁸⁴ Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, p. 142.

⁸⁵ Borch-Jacobsen, *The Freudian Subject*, p. 190. Borch-Jacobsen suggests that it is not that the son wants to replace the father because of a desire for his mother, but rather the reverse, that the son desires the mother because he desires to be in the place of, that is, identify with, the father. Significantly, this reflects the order of events in Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*.

⁸⁶ Freud, 'Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego', *PFL* 12, p. 154.

'indestructible traces' continue to haunt humanity, all of whom, according to Freud, are bearers of this transmitted and inherited act, and exist only residually and indeterminately in relation to the subject. These traces can never disappear, yet they are marked with an absence that produces ghostly neuroses. Psychoanalysis returns to the question of inheritance. The effects of the traces of this pseudo-historical event, which are not only other from themselves, but also constitute the psyche as other, are that which we all, apparently, inherit.

Well, not quite all of us. Women's relationship to this inheritance is, as I have tried to indicate, deeply problematic. The relation of women to these traces, who had no involvement in the primal murder, but who were, indeed, the objects of desire murdered over, remains extremely uncertain. So too does Freud's account of the Oedipus complex as it is manifested in women which, he claims, is 'certainly incomplete and fragmentary and does not always sound friendly.'⁸⁷ Although *Totem and Taboo* provides no parallel primal story of women's sexual development, Freud's strange account of individual sexual development in 'Femininity' ends with the following claim: 'What I have been telling you may be described as the pre-history of women'(164).

Yet, surely, for sons to murder fathers, women need to have become mothers. Pateman's reading of *Totem and Taboo* provides just such a reading of a possible 'pre-history', playing with Freud's idea of the 'primal scene' as elaborated in 'From the History of an Infantile Neurosis', where the analysis of the wolf man's primal scene is a recollection and reinterpretation, as a child, of parental sexual intercourse which,

⁸⁷ Freud, 'Femininity', *PFL* 2, p. 169. Future references are to this edition, and are included in parentheses in the text. In 'Femininity', Freud argues that 'a comparison with what happens with boys tells us that the development of a little girl into a normal woman is more difficult and more complicated, since it includes two extra tasks, to which there is nothing corresponding in the development of a man'(150). 'In the course of time... a girl has to change her erotogenic zone and her object – both of which a boy retains'(152). Freud is here referring to the movement from the clitoral to the vaginal, and from the mother to the father. Freud's way of incorporating women into the Oedipal story is by thinking of the young girl as a young boy: 'We are now obliged to recognize that the little girl is a little man'(151). In other words, it would seem, both the primal sons and daughters desired the primal mothers, although Freud does not and cannot say this because this would involve women in the formation of the fraternal pact, an involvement that the nature of the pact necessarily precludes. Once again, Freud's position is overdetermined by his assertion that if we knew what *to look for*, we would see the truth of his assertions: 'Enough can be seen in the children if one knows how to look'(154).

according to Freud, 'cannot fail to produce the impression of being a sadistic act'.⁸⁸

According to Freud, the wolf man misinterprets normal, consensual sexual activity.

As Pateman notes, Freud's analysis and interpretation depend on the assumption that consent can be clearly distinguished from enforced submission, although in most legal jurisdictions, especially at the time Freud was writing, the marriage contract gives the husband sexual access to his wife's body whether or not she has consented. As Pateman suggests: 'The young wolf man may have accurately interpreted what he saw; we can never know' (106). For Freud, moreover, the wolf man's recollection is a primal phantasy, the phylogenetic inheritance from pre-history, producing a very different pre-history for women from the one Freud produces in 'Femininity'.

It is important merely to note at this stage, and I will expand on this point in more detail in the next chapter, that although Freud is ostensibly committed to historical process, the Oedipus complex is not an effect of such a process, it instigates it. *Totem and Taboo* claims to explain the history of the Oedipus complex, when it actually presupposes it. In this way, Freud tries to banish the history that produced the subject that produces history, holding out for the promise of the certainty of truth and identity, a certainty that systems of primogeniture have a large investment in, and a certainty that Freud looks to a scientific *Weltanschauung* to provide.⁸⁹ The primal horde narrative returns to the origin in order to understand, explain and, most significantly, control and validate the present, a present, I have argued, where sons are anxious about both the power of fathers, and access to sex. It is this return to the origin, this narration of the founding moment of the law, culture, language and the split psyche, that enables its universal application, constituting a subject that Julia Borossa refers to as the 'Universal *Homo Psychoanalyticus*'.⁹⁰

In this way, other cultures are constructed as sharing this inheritance. Such a narrative cannot admit of the possibility of other kinds of subjects, because the modern

⁸⁸ Freud, 'From the History of an Infantile Neurosis', *SE*, 17, p. 45.

⁸⁹ 'Psychoanalysis... is a part of science and can adhere to the scientific *Weltanschauung*.' Freud, 'The Question of a *Weltanschauung*' (1933 [1932]), *PFL* 2, p. 219.

⁹⁰ Julia Borossa, 'The Migration of Psychoanalysis and the Psychoanalyst as Migrant', *Oxford Literary Review*, 19 (1997), p. 81.

Western subject is conceived of as the effect of the unfolding of history from an originary point, a point that Aboriginal Australians are temporally closer to, which allows for their supercession.⁹¹ In this way, the possibility of interpreting the neurosis that we call the Oedipus complex as an effect of civilization is foreclosed, because it is attributed to that which pre-existed civilization, that is, the primitive. An effect of civilization is thereby constructed as its cause. Likewise, the effect of a certain notion of history, or historical progress, is made into the cause of history.

Freud's hypothesis of the Oedipus complex thereby forecloses the possibility of alternative non-Oedipalized subjects, and such foreclosure necessitates the effective denial of the possibility of other types of familial or socio-cultural arrangements.⁹² The Oedipus complex is always centred around the patriarchal and nuclear family, a family that is, as it was in the work of Rousseau, strongly naturalized. As Freud asserts in *Civilization and its Discontents*:

Whether one has killed one's father or has abstained from doing so is not really the decisive thing. One is bound to feel guilty in either case... This conflict is set going as soon as men are faced with the task of living together. So long as the community assumes no other form than the family, the conflict is bound to express itself in the Oedipus complex, to establish the conscience and create the first sense of guilt. (324-25)

Certainly, the monogamous nuclear family was identified as one of the most important achievements of evolutionary advance, and the regulation and surveillance of sexual relations, as an effect of transformations towards primogeniture, came to be seen as equivalent to civilization, with sexuality (or the pleasure principle) being quite overtly linked to irrationality. An effect of this was the commonly held view, a view that Freud shared, that not only were savages irrational, they were highly instinctual, especially in the realm of sexuality, and that, as a result, Aboriginal cultures must necessarily not be aware of the connection between conception and paternity.⁹³

⁹¹ The theoretical implications of this kind of universalizing can be seen at its most detailed and reductive in Allen Johnson and Douglass Price-Williams, *Oedipus Ubiquitous: The Family Complex in World Literature* (California: Stanford UP, 1996)

⁹² For feminist discussions of the role of the family in anthropological theorizing, see Pateman and Coward.

⁹³ Cf. Frantz Fanon: 'The civilized white man retains an irrational longing for unusual eras of sexual licence, of orgiastic scenes, of unpunished rapes, of unrepressed instinct... Projecting his own desires on to the Negro, the white man behaves "as if" the Negro really had them.' *Black Skin, White Masks*, p. 117.

Freud shares these assumptions in *Totem and Taboo* and draws, for his authority, on the work of anthropology, taking the status of ‘recorded facts’ for granted: ‘If we submit the recorded facts to analysis, as though they formed part of the symptoms presented by a neurosis, our starting point must be the excessive apprehensiveness and solicitude which is put forward as the reason for the taboo ceremonials’(48-9). The ‘recorded facts’ that Freud refers to, however, emerged out of anthropological knowledge, knowledge that I have tried to argue is itself symptomatic of neurosis, that is, the effect, partly, of an ambivalent relation to the father. This ambivalence was contained through its institutionalization in European discourses of legality and anthropology where, in a manoeuvre characteristic of neurosis, according to Freud, it was projected on to another object—the savage. What I am suggesting is that the postulates themselves, ‘the recorded facts’, can be thought about as symptomatic.

The Work of Distortion

Freud, in spite of himself, problematizes the whole project of *Totem and Taboo* and the possibility that ‘the recorded facts’ will provide solutions in a footnote on the second page:

Not only, however, is the *theory* of totemism a matter of dispute; the facts themselves are scarcely capable of being expressed in general terms... There is scarcely a statement that does not call for exceptions and contradictions. But it must not be forgotten that even the most primitive and conservative races are in some sense *ancient* races and have a long past history behind them during which their original conditions of life have been subject to much development and distortion. So it comes about that in those races in which totemism exists to-day, we may find it in various stages of decay and disintegration or in the process of transition to other social and religious institutions, or again in a stationary condition which may differ greatly from the original one. The difficulty in this last case is to decide whether we should regard the present state of things as a true picture of the significant features of the past or as a secondary distortion of them. (2n)

This is the kind of detail that psychoanalysis cannot afford to ignore. This footnote, which we can think of quite literally as a textual parapraxis, has all the hallmarks of the process of dream interpretation. It suggests, moreover, that the anthropological texts that he cites are perhaps characterized by the form of thinking peculiar to dreams and neuroses. Freud calls the raw material of dream its ‘latent content’. The dream,

however, is the product of the transformation of these materials, known as the ‘dream-work’. Freud lists the four techniques by which the psychic apparatus distorts the dream-thoughts (latent content) to produce the dream: condensation, displacement, considerations of representability and secondary revision. The dream which is produced by this labour, the dream we actually remember, is termed by Freud the ‘manifest content’. The stage of the dreamwork known as ‘secondary revision’ or ‘elaboration’ consists in the reorganization of the dream so as to present it in the form of a relatively consistent and comprehensible narrative. Secondary revision systemizes the dream, fills in its gaps and smoothes over its contradictions.

The difficulty Freud expressed in this footnote is whether to examine the anthropological texts, and the savage that they posit, as a ‘true picture’, or are they, like the ‘manifest content’ of dreams, a distortion complete with a secondary elaboration that both systematizes and narrativizes.⁹⁴ We would do well to remind ourselves, with Freud, that such distortion is extremely plausible where the textual search for origins is concerned. In *Moses and Monotheism*, the book that Freud describes as an extension of the project begun in *Totem and Taboo*, he asserts that the textual search for Moses undertaken by Jewish scholarship is characterized by just such distortion. Freud uses the word ‘distortion’ (*Entstellung*) with ‘the double meaning to which it has a claim but of which today it makes no use. It should mean not only “to change the appearance of something” but also “to put in another place, to displace”’.⁹⁵

With this in mind, it is possible to suggest that the textual search for the savage as a point of origin as it is found in anthropological discourse, and in Freud’s own *Totem and Taboo*, is also characterized by this distortive movement that camouflages its distortion with a representational facade. As we have seen, on the page before this telling footnote, Australian Aborigines were interpreted as a representation and faithful reproduction (“well-preserved image”) of the primal savage as a prior object. Yet we can rethink this, using Freud (in a way, perhaps, he would not entirely approve of),

⁹⁴ This is a question that Tylor also asked, with reference to the Tasmanians, in 1893. He wondered whether any contemporary tribe could stand as ‘living representatives of the early Stone Age’. Cited in Stocking, p. 176.

⁹⁵ Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, p. 283.

through the constitutive possibilities of interpretation as distorting gesture. Or, as Samuel Weber has argued, interpretation, as a movement of distortion, ‘must be conceived not as a more or less faithful reproduction or re-presentation of an antecedent, self-identical object, meaning or “presence,” but as a process of repetition and dislocation’.⁹⁶

Freud argues in *Moses and Monotheism*, that ‘in many instances of textual distortion, we may nevertheless count upon finding what has been suppressed and disavowed, hidden away somewhere else, though changed and torn from its context. Only it will not always be easy to recognise it’ (283). If this is the case, and I am not sure that it is, one might ask what could be so unpleasant to the Western psyche that Aboriginal Australians are marked represented in this way?

In *Totem and Taboo*, Freud claims that he has ‘arrived at the point of regarding a child’s relation to his parents, dominated as it is by incestuous longings, as the nuclear complex of neurosis’ (17). For the time being, it will suffice to say that, for Freud, neurosis is always a site of displacement and Aboriginal Australians can thereby be thought of as one of the sites that this modern, Western, Oedipal neurotic anxiety has been displaced on to. It is in this sense that we can begin to speak of the spectre of the savage as a symptom of a neurosis that not only inhabits Freud and his text, but the whole anthropological and broad epistemological discursive space that the savage inhabits. This neurosis, inherently colonizing, requiring as it does the incorporation of the other, is an historical effect of what is termed civilization. Yet, in a profoundly ahistorical manoeuvre, it is displaced on to that which pre-existed civilization.

Savage Jews – Moses and Monotheism

It was not just the pre-Union Scot and the Australian Aborigine that were placed within the discursive universe of the savage other. The Jew, also, as object of knowledge and exemplar of racial difference, occupied this place. In Austria, as in many other places at the turn of the century, institutionalized anti-Semitism was prevalent,

⁹⁶ Samuel Weber, *Institution and Interpretation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), p. 80.

and Freud, as a Jew, may have perhaps expressed and repressed his emotional ambivalence towards the religion of his father in a particularly acute manner.⁹⁷

Biological science, as we have seen, had a strong racial component with the biology of race constituting a vital part of the arguments of biological and medical science. The Jews served as an example in discussions on the role of racial difference and, as Sander Gilman has shown in his prodigiously researched work in the field, racial models of the Jews were 'found not only in the "crackpot" pamphlet literature of the time; they are present in virtually all discussions of pathology published in 1880-1930'.⁹⁸ While Freud was practising and theorizing his 'science' of psychoanalysis, the Jew was also an object of scientific knowledge. As Gilman claims, this placed a Jewish scientist like Freud in an ambiguous position: 'Sigmund Freud, like any other Jewish scientist at the turn of the century, was faced with the double bind of the Jewish medical scientist: both physician and prospective patient, both scientist and Jew, both the observer and the observed.'⁹⁹

Gilman argues convincingly that Freud's 'sense of inferiority' that resulted from this 'was not dismissed from Freud's system, but rather transferred to another object, the woman'.¹⁰⁰ Gilman's own fairly straight-forward argument, however, is problematized by the elision of race and gender. While not directly opposing Gilman's position, I would argue that the figure of the Australian Aborigine also occupies an ambiguous position in Freud's work, and is a telling absence in Gilman's. Gilman makes four brief references to *Totem and Taboo* in *Freud, Race and Gender* and relates these to his broader argument on how anti-Semitism functions within racial categorizations. Although he claims that Freud is 'haunted' by his own 'suppressed

⁹⁷ I am not the first to suggest that Freud's Jewishness may have influenced psychoanalysis as a system of thought, and there is a long history of interpretation of Freud's Moses in this vein. However, I would like to differentiate my position, and this will become clearer, from those readings of Freud and psychoanalysis that situate it as nothing other than a self-referential expression of Freud's own consciousness (or unconsciousness). Mary Balmany's *Psychoanalyzing Psychoanalysis*, trans. by Ned Lukacher (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1982), is exemplary of this approach.

⁹⁸ Sander Gilman, *Freud, Race and Gender* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1993), p. 5. Future references are to this edition, and are included in parentheses in the text. See also *The Jew's Body*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1991); *Jewish Self-Hatred* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986); and *The Case of Sigmund Freud: Medicine and Identity at the Fin de Siècle* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993)

⁹⁹ Gilman, *Freud, Race and Gender*, p. 12.

¹⁰⁰ Gilman, *Freud, Race and Gender*, p. 23.

claims that Freud is 'haunted' by his own 'suppressed discourse of anti-Semitism'¹⁰¹ as articulated through his phylogenetic model, Gilman makes no reference to the possible displacement of this on to Australia's indigenous people through the category of the savage, the very point of origin, in Freudian terms, from which emotional ambivalence has evolved. Yet the ambivalence that Freud attributes to the savage in his relations with the taboo can also be read as being characteristic of Freud's relation to his own Judaism. It is in the light of this ambivalence, 'suppressed anti-Semitism' being too unproblematic a term, that we can read Freud's internalization of this conception of the Jew as exemplary in his return to the project initiated by *Totem and Taboo* and his second extended quasi-anthropological meditation on his phylogenetic hypothesis, *Moses and Monotheism*, where he re-asserts his belief in *Totem and Taboo*: 'anyone who is inclined to pronounce our construction of primaeval history purely imaginary would be gravely underestimating the wealth and evidential value of the material contained in it... There is nothing wholly fabricated in our construction, nothing which could not be supported on solid foundations'(328).

Moses and Monotheism is marked by a profound ambivalence and Freud often asserted his dissatisfaction with it.¹⁰² In Part II of the Third Essay, Freud wrote: 'I determined to give it up but it tormented me like an unlaidd ghost'(349). What this ghost might be, why it was a source of torment, and how it might relate to the spectre of savagery in *Totem and Taboo* are questions that I now hope to explore. *Moses and Monotheism* is comprised of three essays, the first two published in 1937, and the third in 1938. The first draft of the book carried the title, 'The Man Moses, an historical novel'. These essays had been written earlier but in the Vienna of the 1930s Freud, who was being protected by the Catholic Church, 'was afraid that the publication of my work would result in the loss of that protection'.¹⁰³ It was the German invasion of Austria, and Freud's 'certainty that I should now be persecuted not only for my line of thought

¹⁰¹ Gilman, *Freud, Race and Gender*, p. 24.

¹⁰² See the 'Editor's Note' to *Moses and Monotheism*, PFL 13, pp. 239-41; see also Jones, Vol. 3, pp. 231-2 and 240.

¹⁰³ Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, p.298.

the publication of *Moses and Monotheism*. In short, *Moses and Monotheism* argues that Moses, the founder of Judaism, was actually an Egyptian follower of Akhenaten, the first monotheistic pharaoh. The people whom we now refer to as the Jews whom Moses led on their Exodus, in a repeat performance of the primal parricide, turned against his tyranny and murdered him. Or, as Freud puts it, ‘the *savage* semites took fate into their own hands and rid themselves of their tyrant’.¹⁰⁵

We can interpret Freud’s use of the spectral signifier—‘savage’—in the light of his own argument about the textual search for Moses, the father and law-maker of Judaism. Not only was Freud’s search characterized by the double meaning of ‘distortion’ (to change the appearance of something, and also to displace), but ‘almost everywhere noticeable gaps, disturbing repetitions and obvious contradictions have come about—indications which reveal to us that which it was not intended to communicate.’¹⁰⁶

In order to participate in this necessarily distortive interpretative process, I will turn once again to the text that engendered *Moses and Monotheism*, that is, *Totem and Taboo*, which could be called its father, so to speak. Freud harks back to *Totem and Taboo* periodically in *Moses and Monotheism*, ambivalently, as a son might to a father. This turning of mine, however, is only a pretext from which to explore another pretext—the second preface to the Hebrew edition of *Totem and Taboo*. This pre-text is explicitly addressed to the very sons of Moses whose ancestors committed the second parricide.

The preface to the Hebrew edition inserts itself between the text of *Totem and Taboo* and its specific audience. It also inserts itself between the text and the first preface written by Freud in 1913. The Hebrew preface, written some twenty years later, institutes a temporal displacement of the two texts it resides between. At around the same time, Freud was also writing (and being haunted by) his book on the origins of Judaism, and the preface thereby stands in a complex relation of deferral to both of Freud’s major speculative anthropological studies on the origin of religion. This preface

¹⁰⁵ Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, p. 288; Emphasis added.

¹⁰⁶ Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, p. 283.

then is a distorting movement, and it announces the impossibility of the text being identical with itself as an originary point; *Totem and Taboo* is reconstituted through this movement as something other than *Totem and Taboo*. This preface calls into question the origin that it gestures towards, not only the text of *Totem and Taboo*, but the very origin that the text *Totem and Taboo* was seeking to uncover.

This ambiguous preface to the Hebrew edition of *Totem and Taboo*, which repeats the spectralization of savagery found in the text of *Totem and Taboo*, has been largely ignored by Freud scholars. It is not addressed to the Jews, but to what Freud calls the New Jewry: 'This author hopes', Freud proclaims, 'that he will be at one with his readers in the conviction that unprejudiced science cannot remain a stranger to the spirit of new Jewry'.¹⁰⁷ For Freud, the importance of this preface is clear, and enacts both an appeal and an apology which is further complicated by the fact that it was addressed to the sons of Moses, whom he hopes to be 'at one with', by another son whose words were marked by translation. Freud suggests, however, that he is aware that the oneness he seeks to be part of is both impossible to identify and identify with:

No reader of this book will find it easy to put himself in the emotional position of an author who is ignorant of holy writ, who is completely estranged from the religion of his fathers—as well as from every other religion—and who cannot take a share in nationalist ideals, but who has yet never repudiated his people, who feels that he is in his essential nature a Jew and who has no desire to alter that nature. (xi)

In the preface, Freud projects on to the other (the reader? the sons of Moses? the New Jewry?) a question that he puts to himself, thereby simultaneously asserting and dissolving the boundary between himself and that other:

If the question were put to him: 'Since you have abandoned all these common characteristics of your countrymen, what is there left to you that is Jewish?' he would reply: 'A very great deal and probably its very essence.' He could not now express that essence clearly in words; but some day, no doubt, it will become accessible to the scientific mind. (xi)

The claim that this essence cannot be expressed clearly in words, and the hope that it will be some day accessible is reminiscent of Freud's faith in biology, which will

¹⁰⁷ Freud, 'Preface to the Hebrew Edition', *Totem and Taboo*, p. xi.

ultimately uncover the workings of the unconscious.¹⁰⁸ Freud seems to be suggesting here that the ‘essence’ of his Jewry is located in the realm of the unconscious. Freud’s reference to new Jewry moreover implies that Judaism is also other to itself, with New Jewry being the conscious, scientific and civilized aspect of Jewish consciousness. The distinction between old Jewry (as the unsaid) and new Jewry refers, in the historical context of turn of the century Europe, to the distinction between Eastern European Jews and Western acculturated ones. As Gilman argues of this distinction: ‘All the stereotypical images of the Jew that were present in an undifferentiated manner in Central Europe, and that were applied to all Jews, Eastern and Western alike, came to be applied by acculturated Western Jews to Eastern European Jews.’¹⁰⁹ Freud’s own ambivalent identification and non-identification with old Jewry is revealed in *Moses and Monotheism* when Freud explains the initial non-publication of the text: ‘It did not seem attractive’, Freud disclosed, ‘to find oneself classed with the schoolmen and Talmudists who delight in exhibiting their ingenuity without regard to how remote their thesis may be from reality’(254).

This reference to the ‘schoolmen and Talmudists’ can perhaps be read as reflecting Freud’s own ambivalent attempt at assimilation into German culture. This process of acculturation, via the ‘unprejudiced science’ that ‘cannot remain a stranger to the spirit of the New Jewry’, began as early as Freud’s years at secondary school when, in 1869 or 1870, he decided to change his first name on the records from the Jewish Sigismund to the German Sigmund. This act of identification and non-identification functions as a mode of self-othering which problematizes what the name refers to. For the adolescent Freud, Sigismund already had a troubling referent, for ‘the name “Sigismund” gained currency as a favourite term of abuse in anti-Semitic jokes’.¹¹⁰ Freud’s action was a rejection of the gift of his father, Jacob Freud, who had named ‘Sigismund’ after the sixteenth century Polish monarch admired for his policy of

¹⁰⁸ You will recall the quotation used previously from *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* cited earlier: ‘The deficiencies in our description would probably vanish if we were already in a position to replace the psychological terms by physiological or chemical ones... Biology is truly a land of unlimited possibilities’(344).

¹⁰⁹ Gilman, *Freud, Race and Gender*, p. 13.

¹¹⁰ Dennis Klein, *Jewish Origins of the Psychoanalytic Movement* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1985), p. 46.

toleration towards the Jews.¹¹¹ Freud learnt in the most difficult way imaginable of the myth of the uniqueness of the proper name. This adolescent act underwrites the structure of difference that will later characterize the most subversive aspects of the Freudian project. It is an act, moreover, that would be replayed and reversed in the Preface to the Hebrew edition, addressed to the New Jewry in Hebrew translated from Freud's German.

Freud's desire to be assimilated into the stream of civilization would perhaps have been further exacerbated by the increasing anti-Semitism that characterized his years at medical school. The young Freud had joined the radical German student society which represented German interests at the University.¹¹² In 1875, however, a crisis erupted in response to a 7-page passage in a document published as part of a lengthy examination of medical education at German universities. Theodor Billroth, one of the most prominent members of the medical faculty at the University of Vienna, questioned the ability of Jews to be physicians and articulated the fear that Vienna was being overrun by Jewish medical students, arguing that 'even if they speak and think more beautifully and better in the German language than many teutons of the purest water [they] cannot be German'.¹¹³ This document led to anti-Semitic violence and the removal of Jewish students from the faculty. Even assimilated Jews increasingly became the object of attack, and the German nationalist student society was dissolved by the Government in 1878 when the students began to see German Jews as their enemies.¹¹⁴

This desire for assimilation into the German cultural stream was not uncommon among Jews of Freud's generation. Josef Breuer, who published *Studies on Hysteria* with Freud and whom Freud once claimed to be the father of psychoanalysis, commented on his own father's 'metamorphosis' from 'the student of the Talmud into a man of the nineteenth century'¹¹⁵ where the East European Jew, like the savage, occupies an allochronic discursive space.

¹¹¹ See Klein, p. 46.

¹¹² Cited in Klein, p. 47.

¹¹³ Cited in Gilman, *Freud, Race and Gender*, p. 18.

¹¹⁴ See Klein, p. 52.

¹¹⁵ Josef Breuer, 'Autobiography of Josef Breuer,' *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 34 (1953): 64-5.

Freud's relationship to his own Judaism can be recognized within his own theories about the ambivalence of neurotics, and the mechanisms of neuroses, denial and displacement. Clearly the relation to Judaism in the Hebrew preface to *Totem and Taboo* is marked, like the preface itself, by the psychic conflict of both homage and parricide. As Freud notes of this very conflict in *Totem and Taboo*, 'The child finds relief from the conflict arising out of this double-sided, this ambivalent emotional attitude towards the father by displacing his hostile and fearful feelings on a *substitute* of his father'(129). The displacement that moves through the text of *Totem and Taboo* is the spectre of the savage. Freud's translated Hebrew preface repeats and re-enacts this displacement in the suggestion that the new Jewry has emerged (or metamorphosized) out of the old Jewry phylogenetically, just as the civilized has emerged from the savage.

This metamorphosis is articulated most cogently in *Totem and Taboo* where Freud asserts:

If we are prepared to accept the account... of the evolution of human views of the universe—an animistic phase followed by a religious phase and this in turn by a scientific one—it will not be difficult to follow the vicissitudes of the 'omnipotence of thoughts' through these different phases. At the animistic phase men ascribe omnipotence to *themselves*. At the religious stage they transfer it to the gods but do not seriously abandon it themselves, for they reserve the power of influencing the gods in a variety of ways according to their wishes. The scientific view of the universe no longer affords any room for human omnipotence; men have acknowledged their smallness and submitted resignedly to death and to the other necessities of nature. None the less some of the primitive belief in omnipotence still survives in men's faith in the power of the human mind, taking account, as it does, of the laws of reality. (88)

Thanatos: the Space of Undifferentiation

But perhaps to psychoanalyze Freud in this way, although valid, is too reductive, too faithful, too hermeneutically closed. Rather, the question can be put in another way, that would suggest a different reading of the above passage. After all, one of the most interesting things about this passage is that Freud's assertion that the scientific view 'no longer affords any room for human omnipotence' is called into question by his simultaneous assertion that science will eventually answer all questions, itself a powerful statement of human omnipotence, symptomatic of a drive for mastery.

Freud explores such a drive in that most speculative and anxiety-ridden of articles, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. If, as I have already argued, reason can be thought of as technique for mastering, in the face of inevitable doubt, that which lies outside its domain, then *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* is an exercise in reason *par excellence*. This can be seen in Freud's assertion that, 'The outcome may give an impression of mysticism or sham profundity; but we can feel quite innocent of having had any such purpose in view. We seek only the sober results of research or of reflection based on it; and we have no wish to find in those results any quality other than certainty'(310). This is followed by a footnote, added in 1925, in which Freud reminds the reader that she or he 'should not overlook the fact that what follows is the development of an extreme line of thought'.

For Freud, there was an instinct aimed at preserving living substances. Observation of his grandson's compulsive playing of the 'fort-da' [gone/there] game led him to posit 'another, contrary instinct'.¹¹⁶ Freud speculates that this 'compulsion to repeat' on the part of his grandson who, 'by himself staging the disappearance and return of the objects within his reach'(285), was attempting to come to terms with the absence of his mother. Freud wonders whether these 'efforts might be put down to an instinct for mastery that was acting independently of whether the memory was in itself pleasurable or not'(226). This discussion of staging, however, is reminiscent of a Freud's own staging of the first identificatory totem meal of the primal horde. In introducing his discussion in *Totem and Taboo*, Freud writes: 'Let us call up the spectacle of a totem meal of the kind we have been discussing, amplified by a few probable features which we have not yet been able to consider'(140). This spectacle that Freud 'calls up' can also be thought of as a staging, a staging of the death and return of the father, but also a staging of the point of origin and its perpetual re-establishment. To master the origin, to master the beginning of time and everything that has originated from it, is to master history in its totality. The motives that Freud attributes to his grandson could thereby be attributed also to Freud, the intrepid explorer into the realm

¹¹⁶ Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, p. 310. I must say, in passing, that I have never been able to understand how the baby's 'o-o-o-o' was able to be translated by Freud and his daughter as 'fort'.

of the unknown, the unconscious: 'At the outset he was in a passive situation – he was overwhelmed by the experience; but by repeating it... he took an active part'.¹¹⁷ In its attempt to return to and narrate from the origin, *Totem and Taboo* can be thought of as representing the colonial drive for mastery that incorporates everything within its theoretical grasp through the mere power of thought, through which the stability of self is returned to Freud's subject (in both senses of the word). In *Totem and Taboo*, moreover, the limits of reason intersect with the realm of fantasy as articulated in the gendered and racialized metaphor of the 'dark continent'.

It is significant that this drive for mastery occurs on the very cusp of language which characterizes the child's incomplete grasp of language. Given that according to Freud, when 'we look at the relation between the process of human civilization and the developmental or educative process of individual human beings... the two are very similar in nature'¹¹⁸, the primal son's relation to language is worth mentioning. For Freud, the primal savage, prior to the murder of the primal father, has no unconscious; the savage's psyche inhabits a space that the death instinct presumably aims towards—undifferentiation. The savage, in Freud's account, exists prior to the splitting of the subject, and therefore prior to the inevitable loss by which subjectivity is haunted. Freud asserts that '[n]o impulses whatsoever came into existence except collective ones; there was only a common will, there were no single ones'.¹¹⁹ Similarly, in 'An Outline of Psychoanalysis', written in 1938, and published after his death, Freud wrote of what he refers to vaguely as 'an initial state'(in time? in the individual life?):

We may picture an initial state as one in which the total available energy of Eros, which henceforward we shall speak of as 'libido,' is present in the still undifferentiated ego-id and serves to neutralize the destructive tendencies which are simultaneously present.¹²⁰

The implication that the primal savage inhabits a space of psychic undifferentiation can be seen most clearly in the final paragraph of *Totem and Taboo*, and takes the form of

¹¹⁷ Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, p. 285. See also Derrida's reading of Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* in 'Coming into One's Own', in *Psychoanalysis and the Question of the Text*, ed. Geoffrey Hartmann (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), pp. 114-48.

¹¹⁸ Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, p. 333.

¹¹⁹ Freud, 'Group Psychology', p. 155.

¹²⁰ Freud, 'An Outline of Psychoanalysis'(1940) (London: Hogarth Press, 1963), p. 7.

the denial of mediation through language, a metaphysical proposition that the insights of psychoanalysis already call into question:

Nor must we let ourselves be influenced too far in our judgment of primitive men by the analogy of neurotics. There are distinctions, too, which must be borne in mind. It is no doubt true that the sharp contrast that *we* make between thinking and doing is absent in both of them. But neurotics are above all *inhibited* in their actions: with them, the thought is a complete substitute for the deed. Primitive men, on the other hand, are *uninhibited*: thought passes directly into action. With them, it is rather the deed that is a substitute for the thought. And that is why, without laying claim to any finality of judgment, I think that in the case before us it may be safely assumed that 'in the beginning was the Deed'. (161)

In this metaphysical passage, Freud is attempting to dispense with language and arrive at the truth of origins where consciousness is present to itself through unmediated action. Like the psyche of the primal man who, Freud argues in *Moses and Monotheism* 'had not advanced far in the development of speech' (324), the unconscious is also without language. As he writes in the metapsychological paper, 'The Unconscious':

We now seem to know all at once what the difference is between a conscious and an unconscious presentation. The two are not as we supposed, different registrations of the same context in different psychical localities; nor yet different functional states of cathexis in the same locality, but the conscious representation comprises the representation of the thing plus the presentation of the word belonging to it, while the unconscious presentation is the presentation of the thing alone.¹²¹

Yet the unified self-presence of the savage prior to the murder of the primal father, where the beginning is not a word but a deed is also an absence—the deed here is as spectral as the savage, and only haunts modern subjectivity through the 'indestructible trace'—the mark of both presence and absence. In this case, the supposedly unmediated deed is complicated by the fact that it is, like all Freud's assertions, totally textually constituted, and is already in a differential relation to the quotation from Goethe ('In the beginning was the Deed') which concludes *Totem and Taboo*.

So, if it is the deed that is transferred phylogenetically down through the generations, it is language, as the subsequent history of the reception of *Totem and*

¹²¹ Freud, 'The Unconscious' (1915), *PFL* 11, p. 207.

Taboo makes clear, that complicates and unsettles the project. In 'Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego', Freud refers to the primal horde as a 'Just-So Story', a reference that is also marked by a series of textually differentiated relations.¹²² Freud was quoting a review of the work by an American anthropologist A.L. Kroeber. Kroeber, whose name Freud misspelled (as Kroeger) in the first edition of 'Group Psychology', had in fact quoted from another English anthropologist R.R. Marett.¹²³ As the reference to a 'Just-So Story', set in colonial India, suggests, as well as the story of the reference to the Just-So Story, the past being searched for has never existed except as narrative: 'always absent, that past continually threatens to reproduce itself as a felt lack...longing for an impossibly pure context of lived experience at a place of origin... The point of desire which the nostalgic seeks is in fact the absence that is the very generating mechanism of desire'.¹²⁴ This nostalgia, which always desires to fill its own lack through incorporation of the other, is distinctly colonial, as the reference to a 'Just-So Story' suggests. Freud's project then, in *Totem and Taboo*, replicates and perpetuates the infantile drive for mastery expressed in a return to beginnings and wholeness, prior to the alienation of the subject through repression and language.

For Freud, this instinctive drive for mastery was peculiarly related to death, and through observation of the child's game, he concluded that this drive, the Death instinct, seeks to dissolve these units into their original state: 'It seems, then, that an instinct is an urge inherent in organic life to restore an earlier state of things.'¹²⁵ Freud's thinking here seems to work against the postulation of progress that was so central to the Enlightenment project. Yet, as we have seen, both in the anthropological works examined, and in Freud's *Totem and Taboo*, there are the dual and contradictory themes of progress and stasis. This contradiction at the heart of *Totem and Taboo* is projected on to its subject matter in the form of a quasi-historical formulation of civilized and primitive societies.

¹²² See Freud, 'Group Psychology', p. 154.

¹²³ See the footnote in 'Group Psychology' on p. 154; and also Jones, Vol. 2, pp. 346-7.

¹²⁴ Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984) p. 23.

¹²⁵ Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, p. 244.

examined, and in Freud's *Totem and Taboo*, there are the dual and contradictory themes of progress and stasis. This contradiction at the heart of *Totem and Taboo* is projected on to its subject matter in the form of a quasi-historical formulation of civilized and primitive societies.

In this sense, the knowledge produced about the savage, in the realms of both psychoanalysis and anthropology, may be thought of as an expression and an example of the death drive. *Totem and Taboo* reproduces the nostalgic search for origins, as well as the desire for mastery in the form of self-certainty that Freud speculates characterizes the death drive. In this sense, we can think of the dual project of *Totem and Taboo*, in bringing together knowledges from psychoanalysis and anthropology, knowledges thought to be the culmination of civilized progress, as being exemplary of the death drive, an instinct that, for Freud, 'seems more primitive, more elementary, more instinctual than the pleasure principle which it over-rides.'¹²⁶

Certainly, death occupies a central place in Freud's conjectural history, just as it has, since Plato, in certain conceptions of alphabetic textuality, the enabling technology for narratives like Freud's.¹²⁷ As both Borch-Jacobsen and Phillippe Van Haute point out, what is remarkable in the primal horde narrative is that the sons submit to the authority of the father, who prior to the primal parricide was not even their 'father', only after the murder takes place. Freud's statement that 'the dead father became stronger than the living had been',¹²⁸ leads to the paradox whereby:

the father's taboos, and therefore human society, arise from anxiety – about what? About nothing, about no one. It is when the powerful male is dead and no longer there to prohibit anything at all that, in a perfectly disconcerting way, there emerge the alterity of duty and the debt of guilt, both of them all the more unbearable. The father emerges from his own death, the law emerges from its own absence – quite literally *ex nihilo*.¹²⁹

¹²⁶ Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, p. 232.

¹²⁷ I am referring here to the close association of writing with death, that paradoxically is the very technology that enables the trace of the deed, a death, to live on.

¹²⁸ Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, p. 143.

¹²⁹ Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen, 'The Freudian Subject' in *The Emotional Tie: Psychoanalysis, Mimesis and Affect*, trans. Richard Miller and X.P. Callahan (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), p. 31. Van Haute renders this in arrestingly similar terms: 'it is just when there is no longer anyone around to forbid anything whatsoever that the law and guilt, *ex nihilo* so to speak, establish "themselves."' Phillippe van Haute, 'Law, Guilt and Subjectivity: Reflections on Freud, Nancy and Derrida', in *Deconstructive Subjectivities*, ed. by Simon Critchley and Peter Dews (Albany: State University of New York, 1996), p. 189.

existing law, but also, as Freud notes, because the attempt to take the place of the all-powerful father fails: 'in consequence of the pressure exercised upon each participant as a whole, that wish [to become like him] could not be fulfilled'.¹³⁰ For Borch-Jacobsen, this failed identification is about 'the unoccupiable place of the dead one, since death sets the absolute limit on identification'¹³¹:

Der tote who is resurrected and lives on eternally in the guilty memory of the sons *represents* death, *represents* their own unrepresentable death to them. Indeed, at the myth's extreme, we must imagine that the murderers, having devoured the other in order to appropriate his being, suddenly found themselves once again facing 'themselves' – that is, facing no one. The other was dead, *and so they themselves were dead*. The identifying act of incorporation confronted them – brutally, dizzyingly – with what is preeminently unassimilable: their own death, their own being dead, the very thing that eludes all appropriation.¹³²

Freud's conjectural history can thereby be thought of as an attempted and failed identification with death, an attempted mastery and a failed identification through which the primal sons derive their identity.¹³³ Likewise, *Totem and Taboo*, in so far as it can be seen as a recuperative gesture of mastery through which otherness is both evoked and denied, violently identified with yet never absolutely assimilable to itself. This is the logic of colonization.

¹³⁰ Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, p. 148.

¹³¹ Borch-Jacobsen, 'The Freudian Subject', p. 34.

¹³² Borch-Jacobsen, 'The Freudian Subject', p. 34. Again van Haute argument reiterates Borch-Jacobsen's point: 'But perhaps Freud is on the track of something more fundamental here. The identification fails because there is a limit to appropriation. The failure of the identification by the sons already reveals an unbridgeable limit. It discloses an alterity that I cannot appropriate and that makes the assimilation of the other inevitably fail. In the perspective of Freud's story, this alterity can be both other than death, the "absolute master," or he who is dead'(191). For van Haute, death, the unthinkable, and 'he who is dead' represents, for the sons, 'their own inconceivable death'(191).

¹³³ Van Haute's reading, written some ten years after Borch-Jacobsen's, is uncannily similar to Borch-Jacobsen's reading. Van Haute claims that the 'sons submit to the other (consequently, to themselves) insofar as the other escapes every identification: what the sons are gathering themselves around and what they are submitting themselves to is literally "nothing"—no subject, no Father, no leader—nothing but their own proper/improper inconceivable death their inability to be an absolute narcissist/subject. The 'delayed' (*nachträglich*) obedience that founds the community is not a submission to a political power, but an ethical respect for what in the subject escapes the subject; it is a respect for what is "beyond the ego" (*über-ich*, in the sense of nonassimilable) in the ego'(192). Van Haute's notion of ethical respect for the other is profoundly problematized by the role of women, a role that van Haute does not refer to, as objects of exchange for the new civil community created after the murder of the primal father. Similarly, the fact that *Totem and Taboo* is situated in a long line of conjectural histories that assimilate and incorporate the colonized into itself, not as the 'über-Ich' but as the 'id', is cause for concern. Finally, van Haute's own attempted and unacknowledged incorporation of Borch-Jacobsen's prior ideas about an identification makes his own reading overly optimistic as an example of an ethical relation to otherness.

Civilization and its Discontents

Freud is, in some very important senses, representative. In so far as he gestures toward the teleological where the future of civilization is characterized by the non-ambiguity of the end-point, when the subject once again will return to a state of unity, not with the instinctual force of the id, as it was prior to the primal parricide, but with the ego and the accumulated forces of reason, reality, civilization and scientific knowledge, Freud is reproducing the very hope of the Enlightenment.

Freud conceived of the 'barbarous' as 'the opposite of civilized', but in the sense that the past is the opposite of the future.¹³⁴ He claims that the 'influences of civilization cause an ever-increasing transformation of egoistic trends into altruistic and social ones by an admixture of erotic elements'.¹³⁵ Barbaric acts could always be attributed to archaic traces, of which certain peoples have a greater proximity to than others: 'It must be granted that all the impulses that society condemns as evil – let us take as representative the selfish and cruel ones – are of this primitive kind.'¹³⁶ It is the primitive within us, the forces at work in the individual id, Freud argues, that we need to guard against: 'the primitive stages can always be re-established; the primitive mind is, in the fullest meaning of the word, imperishable'.¹³⁷

Freud maintains that neurosis is characterized by ambivalence.¹³⁸ If so, his own relation to what he calls civilization is a deeply neurotic one. Freud always considered civilization as inherently paradoxical—thought to be the highest expression of human

¹³⁴ Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, p. 281.

¹³⁵ Freud, 'Thoughts for the Times on War and Death' (1915), *PFL* 12, p. 69.

¹³⁶ 'War and Death', p. 68.

¹³⁷ 'War and Death', p. 73.

¹³⁸ 'Our assertion that taboo originated in a primeval prohibition imposed at one time or another by an external authority is obviously incapable of demonstration. What we shall rather endeavour to confirm, therefore, are the psychological determinants of taboo, which we have learnt to know from obsessional neuroses. How did we arrive at the knowledge of these psychological factors in the case of the neurosis? Through the analytical study of its symptoms, and particularly of obsessional acts, defensive measures and obsessional demands. We found that they showed every sign of being derived from ambivalent impulses, either corresponding simultaneously to both a wish and a counter-wish or operating predominantly on behalf of one of the opposing trends. If, now, we could succeed in demonstrating that ambivalence, that is, the ascendancy of opposing trends, is also to be found in the observances of taboo, or if we could point to some of them which, like obsessional acts, give simultaneous expression to both currents, we should have established the psychological agreement between taboo and obsessional neurosis in what is perhaps their most important feature' (*Totem and Taboo*, pp. 35-36). This logically flawed argument suggests that if we can determine that taboo is caused by ambivalence, because we know that obsessional neurosis is caused by ambivalence, then obsessional neurosis is analogous to taboo.

existence, it is built upon the denial of everything we really want; it controls aggression and the chaos of instinct, but in so doing it produces psychic unhappiness and the perpetual revolt of the unconscious. Although the aim of the formation of civilization was to unite individuals against the threat posed by nature and by their own inclinations, in *Civilization and its Discontents*, Freud asserts: 'It is impossible to overlook the extent to which civilization is built upon a renunciation of instinct, how much it presupposes precisely the non-satisfaction... of powerful instincts' (286).

This idea of ultimate civilization, as scientific knowledge which requires the repression of 'atavistic vestiges', presents Freudian psychoanalysis with an epistemological contradiction, a dilemma that could, in Freudian terms, be thought of as consolation: 'Each of us behaves in some respect like a paranoic, corrects some aspect of the world which is unbearable to him by the construction of a wish and introduces this delusion into reality.'¹³⁹ In Freud's view, this defensive strategy, although understandable, represents the antithesis of the psychoanalytic project as production of knowledge within reality. The dilemma is that for Freud the terms science and civilization are virtually synonymous, and they work in a circle of closed logic that reinforce each other. If the notion of civilization as phylogenetic progress, however, is a neurotic delusion produced as an effect of so-called civilization (and I have tried to suggest that it is), what status can be given to the scientific knowledge which civilization produces including the positing of the idea of civilization itself?

Freud's appeal to science as the mark of civilization is further problematized by Freud's own relation to civilization. For while 'unprejudiced science' was the road to civilization, it was science's prejudices that undermined Freud's own claim to scientificity and civilization as a result of his Judaism. According to Gilman, 'Freud was aware of the anti-Semitic association of the products of Jewish scientists with the nature of the Jewish mind'.¹⁴⁰ And as he told his friend and disciple Abraham Kardiner, he

¹³⁹ Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, p. 269.

¹⁴⁰ Gilman, *Freud, Race and Gender*, p. 33.

hated the idea that 'Psychoanalysis would founder because it would go down in history as a "Jewish" science'.¹⁴¹

In spite of these problems, Freud continued his scientific exploration of the Oedipal complex as the mechanism by which, if successfully resolved, the work of civilization, where the instincts are repressed and the energy re-channelled into the work of culture, can be undertaken. It is through the repression produced in the Oedipal moment that the split subject, the subject divided from itself, emerges. Although Freud argues that it is civilization that controls and redirects the aggressive forces of the id, internalizing them and directing them towards the ego, the metaphors of colonial aggression that he uses to describe this process unsettle his formulation: 'Civilization... obtains mastery over the individual's dangerous desire for aggression by weakening and disarming it and by setting up an agency within him to watch over it, like a garrison in a conquered city.'¹⁴² Bearing in mind that the word 'savage' comes from the Latin 'sylva', meaning woods, that is those who lived in the woods rather than the cities, this image of occupied and garrisoned cities is a remarkable one. Civilization, here anthropomorphized, seeks to protect itself from aggression, yet a city had been conquered, presumably aggressively, in order for such protection to be established. Is the feared locus of aggression the conquered or the conqueror?

Similarly, in 'The Dissection of the Personality', Freud refers to the repressed as 'foreign territory' and the purpose of psychoanalytic therapy is 'to strengthen the ego, to make it more independent of the superego, to widen its field of perception and enlarge its organisation, so that it can appropriate fresh portions of the id. Where id was, there ego shall be'.¹⁴³ That civilization is associated with the ego, and sexuality with the id, in an imperial relation, is clear in Freud's assertion that civilization 'behaves towards sexuality as a people or a stratum of its population does which has subjected another one to its exploitation'.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴¹ Cited in Gilman, *Freud, Race and Gender* p. 33.

¹⁴² Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, p. 316.

¹⁴³ Freud, 'Dissection of the Personality'(1933[1934]), PFL 2, p. 112.

¹⁴⁴ Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, pp. 293-94.

It is perhaps for this reason that, for Freud, Rome was the symbol of what he desired to be and desired to conquer. He told his friend Wilhelm Fliess that ‘my longing for Rome is deeply neurotic. It is connected with my schoolboy enthusiasm for the Semitic hero Hannibal’.¹⁴⁵ This desire was reproduced in Freud’s study where ‘above the chair where Freud sat listening to his patients, are two large framed fragments of Pompeiiian-style wall paintings dominated by mythological figures: a centaur (half-man/half-horse) and Pan (half-man/half-goat). They represent aspects that are primitive, phallic and pleasure-seeking in human nature. Below these large framed fragments, on a pedestal, sits a dignified portrait head... It is “the Roman citizen,” symbol of a nation dedicated to the rule of law’.¹⁴⁶ Rome, the symbol of civilization, is an imperial state that both civilizes and colonizes.

But if omnipotence, like Hannibal’s, is characteristic of the forces of aggression, then it is surely the colonizing Oedipalized ego, and its all-encompassing rationality, that deserves to occupy this position. These forces, moreover, are not primeval traces, or atavistic vestiges, as Freud suggests, but are an effect of historical forces that it displaces on to prehistory. What I am suggesting, however, is that civilization, and the rational *cogito* that seeks to strengthen itself in the face of doubt, at the expense of what it deems irrational, prove to be the locus of aggression. It is civilization where the manifestation of the death drive and its desire for mastery operates at its most efficient. It is in the desire for a strong ego, for a surety and stability of identity, the very form of identity, you will recall, that systems of primogeniture require, that the threat of otherness must be extinguished.

The Cartesian *cogito* that psychoanalysis is said to have displaced, the subject that psychoanalysis was produced by, returns through the psychoanalytic moment, where the aim of the civilized psyche is the co-option or appropriation of the id by the ego. It is hardly surprising that the psychoanalytic moment should emerge during the modern imperial one as a displacement mechanism of the intrapsychic otherness that

¹⁴⁵ Cited in Peter Gay, *A Life for Our Time* (London: Dent, 1988), p. 132.

¹⁴⁶ Cited in Marianna Torgovnich, *Gone Primitive: Savage Intellectuals, Modern Lives* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1990), pp. 196-97.

has been repressed. It was the contention (which Freud shared) that Aborigines were our prior primitive selves, dominated by the forces of instinct, and requiring rapid civilizing to control these forces, that functioned as a justification for the violent colonization of Australia.

Within this configuration, Freud's analysis of the causes of anti-Semitism are questionable. In *Moses and Monotheism*, Freud argues that anti-Semitism is the result of the refusal of Jewish people to participate in and accept the burden of guilt imposed by the murder of the primal father. Christians acknowledge their parricidal guilt by accepting Christ's sacrifice as atonement. It is for this reason, Freud asserts, that Jews have fuelled resentment and are presently suffering. I want to suggest that this argument is itself marked by a profound repression, and the repression is held in place by one of the most powerful taboos functioning in twentieth century Western societies: the taboo on calling into question the status of civilization as the highest attainment of reason, knowledge, truth and justice through which human beings, subject to the inexorable laws of progress, attain freedom and liberation. This is accompanied by the difficulty of calling into question the stable, coherent and unified modern subject, itself an historical effect that justifies its colonial aggression through appeals to progress, civilization and freedom. With this in mind, it is possible to suggest that anti-Semitism, like the racism manifested in the aggressive colonial 'drive'—territorially, psychically, and epistemologically, is a result of the logic of civilization itself. From this perspective, it could be argued that reason, knowledge and civilization are instigators of the savage violence they project on to others, as the after-effect of an imagined primitive past.

How else, but as a result of repression, are we to explain the surprise Freud expresses in *Moses and Monotheism*: 'We are living in a specially remarkable period. We find to our astonishment that progress has allied itself with barbarism'(295). Freud interprets the German participation in the First World War as an anomaly, rather than a logical conclusion of the civilizing process, and expresses dismay and astonishment at 'the brutality shown by individuals whom, as participants in the highest human

civilization, one would not have thought capable of such behaviour'.¹⁴⁷ Yet, in *Civilization and its Discontents*, Freud suggests the way in which civilization is haunted by that which it disavows: 'neither was it an unaccountable chance that the Dream of Germanic world-domination called for anti-Semitism as its complement'(305). It could be argued therefore that it was in the foreclosure of the other, in the simultaneous repression of otherness and desire to know and master otherness, that the necessity to institute sciences dedicated to exploring and annihilating, creating and destroying otherness emerged. Psychoanalysis, like anthropology, emerged as both a cause and an effect of what Freud calls civilization.

In 1938, while Freud was in London, forced there as a result of anti-Semitism, moving towards the conclusion of the book that had haunted him, *Moses and Monotheism*, Germany was moving towards the historical rupture that we now call the Holocaust, an event haunted by the spectre of otherness that it sought to eliminate in the name of truth, homogeneity and civilization. The Holocaust is the culmination of the logic of Western Civilization, the logic of Enlightenment anthropology and the logic that Freud applied in his analysis of what he referred to as savages. From this perspective, civilization is not instituted by the resolution of the Oedipal complex, as Freud suggests in *Totem and Taboo*, but is an effect of the ongoing non-resolution of the Western Oedipal moment, where the split subject, infinitely at war with and in love with itself, incorporates otherness into itself and displaces its otherness on to others.

Considered from this perspective, the colonization of Australia was a distinctly Oedipal act, and the removal of Aboriginal children from their communities and placing them in white institutions and homes, as reported in *Bringing the Home* was aimed at the elimination of the Aboriginal race altogether. As John Frow argues:

the almost unspeakable word here is 'genocide'. While seeking to remain strictly within the legal framework of the time and to avoid a retrospective moralism, the Report nevertheless concludes that a principal aim of the child removal policies was the elimination of indigenous cultures, and that in the sense given the word by the relevant international convention this aim constitutes genocide.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁷ Freud, 'War and Death', p. 67.

¹⁴⁸ John Frow, 'A Politics of Stolen Time'[online], *Australian Humanities Review*, Available: <http://www.lib.latrobe.edu.au/AHR/archive/issue-February-1998/frow1.html> (19 July 1999)

It is with this in mind that I will now consider three Aboriginal writers and the challenges they present to colonialist modes of Oedipalization, and the elimination of otherness that this process involves.

Chapter 2: Re-reading David Unaipon

Myths and History

My reading of Freud's *Totem and Taboo* in the previous chapter suggests that Freudian psychoanalysis is committed to a specific vision of history, and the emerging discipline of anthropology enabled this vision of history to be both theorized and simultaneously effaced. Part of the theorizing of myth involved determining what distinguishes myth and history, and part of the tension in *Totem and Taboo* is the way in which, in spite of Freud's denials, these categories are collapsed. Although Geoffrey Kirk claims that '[t]heories about the meaning of myths were propounded at least as early as the sixth century B.C'.¹, in the aftermath of Darwin's theory of evolution, the late nineteenth century saw a renewed interest in myth as an object of anthropological interest. Myth 'became once again an object of rationalist scepticism albeit in the apparently more appreciative mode of scholarly investigation'.² This attitude to myth has, according to Kirk, 'been dominated in this century by the trends initiated by Sir James Frazer'⁽²⁾, who described his monumental comparative study of myth, *The Golden Bough*, as a record of 'the long march, the toilsome ascent, of humanity from savagery to civilization'.³

Yet, even in a strictly anthropological sense, the meaning of myth is extremely unclear.⁴ One of the few things that can be said about myths, however you define them, is that they have come to be associated with the beginnings of civilization. Evolutionary anthropology looked at myths comparatively whereby cultures were placed in an evolutionary scale from least to most civilized. This ascent from savagery to civilization is accompanied by a concomitant movement from mythology to history, where history

¹ Geoffrey Kirk, *Myth and its Meaning in Ancient and Other Cultures* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1970), p. 1

² Michael Bell, *Literature, Modernism and Myth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 13.

³ James G. Frazer, 'Preface to the Third Edition', *The Golden Bough: A Study in Comparative Religions* Vol. 1 (London: Macmillan, 1900), p. xxv.

⁴ Biblical scholars, like Robertson-Smith and Frazer, claimed that myths are associated with, and even originated from, ritual. This assessment, however, has been widely challenged and, in its broadest anthropological sense, myth is not just to do with ritual, nor even with religious beliefs, feelings and practices. Ultimately, to differentiate between a myth, a legend and even folktale proves impossible. See Kirk; see also Stocking for a discussion of Max Müller's work and its influence on Frazer and Tylor.

is conceived of as closer to a scientific and empirical notion of the truth. The fact of the production of history was understood to be an effect, as well as signifying the truth of, evolutionary progress. Anthropology, which can be thought of as a special branch of history, was the history of people without history, the history of Europe's own pre-history. As the savage is the forefather of the civilized, so mythology became the forefather of history leading to the assumption that mythology embodied the originary explanatory modes of humanity.

Freud, like the anthropologists he drew upon for his version of history, was clearly interested in mythology. Like Frazer and Robertson-Smith, he saw mythology as a throwback to the infancy of civilization, and he extended his phylogenetic argument, examined in the previous chapter, into the realm of mythology. For Freud, in the same way as contemporary human beings retain the primitive trace of the murder of the primal father, objective, civilized history, retains the vestiges of primitive forms of history, or non-scientific history, that is mythology. As Freud argues in *Civilization and its Discontents*: 'In the realm of the mind... what is primitive is so commonly preserved alongside of the transformed version which has arisen from it that it is unnecessary to give instance as evidence' (256).

Similarly, for Freud, as the function of civilization was to incorporate primitivity into civilization as much as possible, the function of objective, civilized history was to incorporate and supercede primitive forms of history, that is, mythology. This involves, as I argued in my earlier discussion of *Moses and Monotheism*, the decoding of distortions, to produce truer, and more civilized forms of history. In order to produce historical truth, Freud argues 'we must uncover... tendentious purposes. If we find means of recognizing the distortions produced by those purposes, we shall bring to light fresh fragments of the true state of things lying behind them'.⁵ Freud not only gestures towards the possibility of an objective description of the past, he also suggests that the development of history out of mythology is linked to the development of civilization to which it is closely aligned.

⁵ Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, pp. 281-82.

In this sense, Freud's conception of mythology and its relation to history is inherently patriarchal, concerned, as it is, with the nature of inheritance. Myths are of interest because they provide clues about the way Europe's forefathers conceptualized the world they lived in. According to Mieke Bal, the Freudian argument 'tries to explain structures by stories..., and the inherent subjectivity with the pseudo-objectivity of the "scientific myth" of phylogenetic explanation/beginning. The replacement of logical articulation by (non-falsifiable) origin is an attempt to impose, on notions that are alien to it, a family structure. Ideas, phantasies, get a father and become *sons*.'⁶

For Freud, however, the mythological past is not merely to be dismissed. Rather, it is to be interpreted as a symptom of the inability to face up to the historical truth of civilization, which, like neurotic symptoms, can be reinterpreted in the light of the methodology of civilized history, thereby allowing the historian/analyst to retrospectively rediscover the objective truth lying behind the myth:

Our knowledge of the historical worth of certain religious doctrines increases our respect for them, but does not invalidate our proposal that they should cease to be put forward as the reasons for the precepts of civilization. On the contrary! Those historical residues have helped us to view religious teachings, as it were, as neurotic relics, and we may now argue that the time has come, as it does in an analytic treatment, for replacing the effects of repression by the results of the rational operation of the intellect.⁷

This process of uncovering historical truth by decoding distortions is, in Freud, strangely racialized: 'The study of these creations of racial psychology is in no way complete, but it seems extremely probable that myths, for example, are distorted vestiges of the wish-phantasies of whole nations—the age-long dreams of young humanity'.⁸ What Freud means by 'racial psychology' here is unclear, as it is in his earlier reference to a 'racial treasure-house of myths, legends and fairy-tales'.⁹ It does seem to suggest, however, that Freud's view of myth as archaic could be readily transferred, in racial terms, to what he elsewhere refers to as 'savages'.

⁶ Mieke Bal, 'Myth à la lettre: Freud, Genesis and Rembrandt, and the Story of the Son', in *Discourse in Psychoanalysis and Literature*, ed. by Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan (London and New York: Methuen, 1987), p. 66. Future references are to this edition, and are included in parentheses in the text.

⁷ Freud, 'Future of an Illusion', *PFL* 12, pp. 227-8.

⁸ Freud, *Collected Papers*, IV, (London: Hogarth, 1925). p. 182.

⁹ Freud, *Collected Papers*, IV, p. 182.

For Freud, not only are myths primitive, in the sense of archaic, they are also to be found in that part of civilized man in which the primitive has left its trace, and which is most pronounced in childhood. Freud's phylogenetic hypothesis, articulated in *Totem and Taboo* where the individual's life recapitulates the life of the species, is also evident in the child's propensity for mythical thought. The unconscious is a storehouse of the archaic heritage that is transmitted phylogenetically and from it 'children in their fantasies are simply filling in the gaps in their individual truth with prehistoric truth'.¹⁰

Jo Labanyi argues that it is Freud's 'concern with the origins of neurosis in childhood that makes him take his terminology—"Oedipus Complex", "Narcissism"—from Greek mythology, seen as embodying the mental life of "original" Western man'.¹¹ However, this produces a strange contradiction. Even as Freud conceived of mythology as 'the age-long dreams of young humanity', psychoanalysis itself is produced out of and deduced from a series of myths, the most spectacular of which is Freud's evocation of the murder of the primal father which he raises to the status of historical fact. So Freud simultaneously draws upon mythologized thinking to construct and sustain his argument, which he elevates to the status of historical and scientific truth, even as he sees it as a remnant of a primitive past, a past which is itself a mythical construction.

In this way, psychoanalysis, and the evolutionary anthropology from which it draws its authority, is characterized by the themes of progress and stasis. On the one hand, Freud is committed to historical and evolutionary progress; on the other, he can only conceive of the modern Oedipal subject as being, at its core, timeless and pre-historical, thus enabling its universality. In this way, a specific historical subject—the modern, Western man—is accorded a universal status. As I suggested in the previous chapter, the effects of civilization are given as its cause.

This contradiction is analyzed by Mieke Bal who demonstrates the way in which, for Freud, myth shares something with his concept of the phantasy. 'Phantasy' is

¹⁰ Freud, 'The Paths to the Formation of Symptoms', in *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, SE, 16, p. 371.

¹¹ Jo Labanyi, *Myth and History in the Contemporary Spanish Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 10-11.

defined by Laplanche and Pontalis in *The Language of Psychoanalysis* as the 'Imaginary scene in which the subject is a protagonist, representing the fulfilment of a wish (in the last analysis, an unconscious wish) in a manner that is distorted to a greater or lesser extent by defensive processes'.¹² This subjective and personal experience of phantasy, which is both distorted and imaginary, is in stark contrast to Freud's notion of the 'Primal Phantasy':

Typical phantasy structures (intra-uterine existence, primal scene, castration, seduction) which psychoanalysis *reveals* to be responsible for the organisation of phantasy life, regardless of the personal experiences of different subjects; according to Freud, the *universality* of these fantasies is *explained* by the *fact* that they constitute a phylogenetically transmitted inheritance.¹³

These two forms of phantasy encompass the contradictory meanings that inhabit the way Freud thinks about myth. Myths are like the phantasy in that they are imaginary, subjective and fictitious, while they share with the primal phantasy, that which is universal, explanatory and foundational.

It is these opposing meanings which make the use of the term 'myth' so problematic. One need only open a dictionary to examine the range of meanings the signifier 'myth' lays claim to. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines myth as:

A traditional story, either wholly or partly fictitious, providing an explanation for or embodying some popular idea concerning some natural or historical phenomena, or some religious belief or ritual, esp. one involving supernatural persons, actions, or events... A widely-held (esp. untrue or discredited) popular story or belief; a misconception... a rumour;¹⁴

Myth thereby serves as both a foundational story of the origin, which relates the truth at the beginning, and also signifies a falsehood; in other words, while a myth may be foundational, it does not necessarily have its foundation in fact. Paradoxically, this lack of foundation in fact, moreover, does not necessarily remove the fictionality of myths from the realm of truth.

¹² J. Laplanche and J.B. Pontalis, *The Language of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (London: Karnac Books, 1988), p. 314.

¹³ Laplanche and Pontalis, *The Language of Psychoanalysis*, p. 331.

¹⁴ *The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, 2 Vols., ed. Leslie Brown (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), Vol. 1, p. 1875.

It is perhaps this that has led to the Romantic and Modernist revivals of myth. According to Ong, the Romantic Movement marks 'the beginning of the end of the old orality-grounded rhetoric'(158). The revived interest in myth can then be thought of as nostalgic desire, which may account for the criticism it has received in the latter half of this century. It was as early as 1953 that myth came to be opposed to history in an article by Philip Rahv, 'The Myth and the Powerhouse':

Myth, the appeal of which lies in precisely its archaism, promises above all to heal the wounds of time. For the one essential function of myth stressed by all writers is that in merging past and present it releases us from the flux of temporality ... hence the mythic is the polar opposite of what we mean by the historical, which stands for process, inexorable change, incessant permutation and innovation. Myth is reassuring in its stability; whereas history is the powerhouse of change which destroys custom and tradition in producing the future ... In our time the movement of history has been so rapid that the mind longs for nothing so much as something permanent to steady it. Hence, what the craze for myth represents most of all is the fear of history.¹⁵

In this period, as Michael Bell has noted, the concept of myth came to be synonymous with ideology, and antonymous with history, perhaps most famously articulated by Barthes's claim that myth 'transforms history into nature'¹⁶ It is this timeless universality, the belief that, in the words of Bal, 'a myth is a myth because, under the layers of dust of historically changing signifiers, it remains the same signifier-independent signified, a universal story'(59), that is, so to speak, the greatest myth of all.

Both Rahv and Barthes provide important critiques of the Romantic view that myth puts beings in touch with their origins and subsequently, with timeless and eternal truths, where myth's 'splendour is that of the original totality, the pristine unity of thought and action, word and deed'.¹⁷ However, the relationship between mythology and history, in both senses of the word (that is, both past events, and the narrativization of those events), is more complicated than they suggest. Like Freud, their Hegelian

¹⁵ Philip Rahv, 'The Myth and the Powerhouse', *Partisan Review*, 20 (1953), p. 637.

¹⁶ Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (London: Paladin. 1972), p. 129. See also Bell, p. 226.

¹⁷ Rahv, p. 641

valourization of history, even if it acknowledges the fact of temporal change, also gives the impression of objectivity that conceals the voice that speaks.

What these criticisms fail to recognize is that while what we call 'history', which is a form of modern thought, does not call into question, through historicization, the status of the subject that produces history, it remains profoundly ahistorical. As Foucault has argued, the notion of historical causality which underlies the belief in historical progress, leads to an obsession with origins, an obsession that in turn leads to the production of history as a mode of understanding, a history that is then naturalized:

It is no longer the origin that gives rise to historicity; it is historicity that, in its very fabric, makes possible the necessity of an origin which must be both internal and foreign to it: like the virtual tip of a cone in which all differences, all dispersions, all discontinuities would be knitted together so as to form no more than a single point of identity, the impalpable figure of the Same, yet possessing a power, nevertheless, to burst open upon itself and become Other.¹⁸

It is the discipline of history, and anthropology as the history of humanity, that 'creates an origin, a place of birth, where what emerges is both a specific subject and the historical methodology that articulates and inaugurates it'.¹⁹ In other words, the modern Western subject is an effect of, among other things, the discourses of history and anthropology which, in turn, produce certain kinds of subjects, subjects that desire to know themselves through an understanding of the past. The point is, as Barker has argued, 'theories of history depend on, constitute and are constituted by modes of the subject'(71).

This mode of subjectivity, and the universal status accorded to it, is, as I have already argued, deeply implicated in the colonial project. Evolutionary anthropology, refusing to acknowledge modes of subjectivity that it does not recognize in itself, situates other cultures as previous incarnations of itself, thereby providing the theoretical justification for their incorporation in the form of colonization. It is impossible to disentangle this epistemological desire from a phantasmatic one, where the colonized, in this case Aboriginal Australians, are conceived of as a site of

¹⁸ Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p. 329.

¹⁹ Barker, p. 54.

wholeness that the dislocated and rational civilized subject seeks to inhabit. Mythology thereby becomes that which is both superceded by history, as well as a means by which man can be restored to his original state of wholeness, hence the nostalgia surrounding its revival.

Kirk claims that myths 'do not have a single form or act according to one simple set of rules, either from epoch to epoch or from culture to culture'(2). As he reminds us, for the Greeks, *muthos* simply meant a tale, or something one uttered, in a wide range of senses. For Kirk, the vagueness of this etymological point of departure is an unhelpful one. Although I do not presume to answer the impossible question of what myth actually is, this chapter hopes to retain a sense of vagueness and, through the contradictions encapsulated within both the terms 'history' and 'myth', attempts to ask alternative questions.

The History of David Unaipon

This discussion of mythology and history, and the ambivalences surrounding them, seems to me to be one way of introducing and thinking about the life and work of Australia's first, yet little-known, published Aboriginal writer, David Unaipon.²⁰ Unaipon was born on 28 September 1872, the fourth of nine children. His father, James Ngunaitponi, was the first Aboriginal convert to the Aborigines' Friends' Association's (AFA) congregational mission, Point McLeay, in the Lower Murray region of South Australia. The AFA was an interdenominational movement formed in 1858. Unaipon's mother, Nymbulda, was the daughter of the *rupulle*, the elected leader and president of the *Tendi*, or democratically-elected body which governed each *lakalinyeri*, or clan.²¹

²⁰ The brief history that follows has been gleaned from a variety of sources: *Australian Friends Association Annual Reports* (Adelaide: Aborigines' Friends' Association, 1936-64); John Alexander, 'Following David Unaipon's Footsteps', *Journal of Australian Studies*, 54/55 (1997), 22-29; John Beston, 'David Unaipon: the First Aboriginal Writer (1873-1967)', *Southerly*, 39.3 (1979), 334-51; Graham Jenkin, *Conquest of the Ngarrindjeri* (Melbourne: Rigby, 1979); Philip Jones, 'A Curve is a Line and a Line is a Curve: Some of the Truth about David Unaipon', *Sydney Review*, 14 (1989), p. 8 and the entry under Unaipon in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 11: 1891-1931 ed. Geoffrey Serle (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1988), pp. 303-05; Andrew Markus (ed.), *Blood From a Stone: William Cooper and the Australian Aborigines League* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1988) and *Governing Savages* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1990); Margaret Simons, 'Nobody's Hero', *Eureka Street*, May, 1994, pp. 18-20. Future references are to these editions, and are included in parentheses in the text. I have also referred to material on Unaipon in a range of newspaper articles that will be cited as they appear.

²¹ See Jenkin, p. 20. As Jenkin notes in his history, almost all his information of Ngarrindjeri social organization comes from non-Aboriginal sources, and especially from Rev. George Taplin, the first

From age seven, Unaipon attended the mission school, and was consequently one of the first Ngarrindjeri (the indigenous community of the Lower Murray region) youths not to be initiated.

In 1887, at age fifteen, Unaipon was taken from his birthplace, Raukkan, and placed, as a servant, in the home of C.P. Young, the first secretary of the AFA. Although Unaipon returned to Raukkan from time to time, he did not settle back permanently at Point McLeay until he was in his nineties. Young later wrote of his visit to Raukkan to collect Unaipon:

I brought away with me ... a living proof of the excellent training of the children. I only wish the majority of white boys were as bright, intelligent, well-instructed and well-mannered, as the little fellow I am now taking charge of. He is the son of our old friend, James Unaipon.²²

Young encouraged Unaipon's interest in music, philosophy and science, attributes for which Unaipon would later become famous. It was from this early stage that Unaipon became interested in perpetual motion, to the quest for which he devoted his life.

On 4 January, 1902, Unaipon married a Tangini woman from the Coorong, although little is known about the marriage. By 1908, he had suffered a rupture, and had to wear a truss for the rest of his life, making it difficult for him to perform manual labour, the only real employment option for Aboriginal people at that time. This was the same year his father, James Ngunaitponi, died at the age of seventy-four. Between 1909 and 1944, Unaipon made nine patent applications, all of which lapsed.

In October 1913, Unaipon was appointed a collector for the AFA. For fifty years, under the sponsorship of the AFA, he travelled South Eastern Australia, combining this work with lectures and sermons in churches and cathedrals of different denominations. His wife stayed at home while he travelled. Although successive governments controlled every aspect of Aboriginal life to well into the latter half of this century, Unaipon's connections and intellect enabled him to remain fairly free of the

missionary of the AFA in to the lower Murray region, the Ngarrindjeri homelands. Not only did Taplin keep a detailed diary, he also wrote *Folklore Manners, Customs and Languages of the South Australian Aborigines* (Adelaide, 1878).

²² Cited in Jenkin, p. 185.

usual legislative restraints that applied to Aborigines. In 1926, he appeared before a Royal Commission into the treatment of Aborigines.

In 1928, the Commonwealth Government appointed J.W. Bleakley, the Chief Protector of Aborigines in Queensland, to investigate Aboriginal administration and welfare in the territory. Unaipon assisted with this investigation and the resulting report suggests that Unaipon was considered as a possible leader of a native state. According to the report, Unaipon condemned the idea as unworkable, arguing that 'to press such a system upon them would only result in chaos, for the different tribes would not agree'.²³ The subsequent report advocated increased control over Aboriginal lives. In 1934, Unaipon urged the Commonwealth to take over Aboriginal affairs and proposed that South Australia's Chief Protector of Aborigines be replaced by an independent board. This did not happen.

In 1951, David Unaipon published a six-page article called 'My Life Story' in the *AFA Annual Report*. In 1953, he wrote another article entitled 'Leaves of Memory', again published in the *AFA Annual Report*. This was the same year that Unaipon received the Queen's Coronation Medal. In his nineties, Unaipon returned to Point McLeay to continue his quest for perpetual motion. He died in 1967, at the age of ninety-five, the same year that white Australia decided by referendum that Aborigines should become Australian citizens.

This is necessarily a brief sketch of Unaipon's life, a sketch intent on keeping to the facts. To study David Unaipon, however, is to be confronted with the problem of the archive. Although there is a substantial number of historical documents that refer to him, they operate 'on a field of entangled and confused parchments, on documents that have been scratched over and recopied many times'.²⁴ The attempt to produce a narrative out of them involves, in the words of Foucault:

the reconstitution, on the basis of what documents say, and sometimes merely hint at, of the past from which they emanate and which has now disappeared far behind them; the document was always treated as

²³ J. W. Bleakley, *The Aborigines and Half-Castes of Central Australia and North Australia* (Victoria: Government of the Commonwealth of Australia, 1929), p. 30.

²⁴ Foucault, 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History', trans. Donald Bouchard and Sherry Simon, in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon, 1984), p. 76.

the language of the voice since reduced to silence, its fragile, but possibly decipherable trace.²⁵

To begin with, almost all of David Unaipon's writings were financed and published by the AFA. The AFA, moreover, made possible his education, provided him with employment and financial assistance, and sponsored his travel and speaking arrangements. It was also his assistance from the AFA that enabled him to move around the southern states of Australia relatively unhindered at a time when general Aboriginal movement was kept under the strictest Government surveillance and control. One would imagine that it was therefore extremely important for Unaipon not to lose the support of the AFA. Given that his medical condition prevented him from undertaking much other work, it is difficult to see how Unaipon could have spoken against the AFA, even if he had wanted to. I am not trying to suggest that Unaipon did want to speak out against the AFA, but rather that he had a very limited place within the discursive field that he inhabited; and this field determined what it was possible for him, at least publicly, to say. These limitations, I would argue, must be borne in mind when attempting to think about Unaipon's work.²⁶

An additional complication is that Unaipon was often referred to as a legend, and accounts of his life, even his own accounts, vary considerably. It is widely accepted that, as a boy, Unaipon read Isaac Newton's *Laws of Physics* and widely believed that Unaipon's first patent in 1907 adopted Newton's ideas of curvilinear motion which Unaipon converted into straight-line movement to invent the hinge that drives the modern sheep shears. Apparently, Unaipon patented the idea but did not get the funds to develop it, and eventually it was stolen from him and adopted without any money or credit. Graham Jenkin, author of *Conquest of the Ngarrindjeri*, investigates this story and claims that Unaipon took out provisional patent number 15624 entitled 'Mechanical Motion' in 1909 and ratified it in 1910. Jenkin concludes: 'If indeed the invention had been fully patented, there would still be drawings and specifications of it in the Patents

²⁵ Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, p. 6.

²⁶ For an elaboration of this position, see Foucault, 'Politics and the Study of Discourse' in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, ed. by Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon and Peter Miller (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991), pp. 53-72.

Office, but as it was allowed to lapse, no such details exist. Thus the truth of the matter will probably never be known' (236).

The Myth of David Unaipon

Jenkin argues that because 'he was such a legendary figure, many myths grew up, in turn, concerning David Ngunaitponi'.²⁷ Jenkin attempts to dispel some of these myths: 'Amongst other pieces of misinformation to be found in print are that he attended St Peter's College, that he was an ordained clergyman, and that he went to England to meet the Queen—all of which, along with various other non-facts written about him, are quite erroneous' (234). Jenkin also refers to an article published in the *Adelaide Register* which reported an Easter service at Raukkan in 1907 in the following way: 'The organ was faultlessly played by a pure black whose mother was queen of the tribe in days gone by. He is still regarded by the natives, though by circumstances deprived of his own position, as one who should not be expected to do rough work.' As Jenkin responds: 'Quite apart from the preposterous notion that because Pullum was the rupulle, his daughter, Nymbulda Ngunaitponi, must have been a queen, it is interesting to see that David's inability to undertake heavy labour (because of his rupture) is ascribed here to his alleged princely standing' (234).

Philip Jones, a social anthropologist with the museum of South Australia and the person who wrote the entry on Unaipon in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, refers to Unaipon in another article, which, like Jenkin's, also sets out to dispel myths about Unaipon, including those propagated by Jenkin, as 'an historical figure of almost mythic proportions'.²⁸ Jones includes aspects of Unaipon's life that had been left out of other biographies presumably because they worked against the 'apparently uncontrollable compulsion to make a hero and martyr of the man' (8). These include the suggestion that he abused his wife,²⁹ that he was 'parsimonious' towards his relatives,

²⁷ Jenkin, p. 234. Ngunaitponi seems to be an alternative Anglicized spelling for Unaipon which is clearly the simplified form. Unaipon's father, James, is generally referred to as Ngunaitponi, the meaning of which, according to Unaipon, is 'I go'. David, on the other hand, is almost always referred to, and refers to himself as Unaipon. See 'An Aboriginal Genius: Full-Blooded Native who is Philosopher, Inventor, Genius', *Daily Herald* [Adelaide] 1 June 1914, p. 11.

²⁸ Jones, 'A Curve is a Line and a Line is a Curve', p. 8.

²⁹ See Simons, p. 20.

and, perhaps most damning of all, that he, with other Ngarrindjeri, had been involved in the historical re-enactment of the landing of the British in Tasmania. By 1910, when the re-enactment took place, there were, as a result of systematic extermination, no full-blood Aborigines left in Tasmania.

Looking through newspaper articles from earlier this century, it does seem that Unaipon occupied a mythologized place in the Australian imagination. A selection of these will suffice to make the point. A 1907 article, entitled 'An Ingenious Aboriginal', opens in the following way:

Few people who have not made a special study of the native question are aware of the extent to which original talent is sometimes found among the aborigines. In a broad sense, it is no doubt true that the native mind is not apt to stray from the narrow and beaten paths that have been formed by generations of habit, but one sometimes comes across startling exceptions to the rule. One of these exceptions, Mr. David Unaipon... has lately been in Adelaide on a remarkable errand. He brought with him a neatly drawn design of a piece of mechanism which, he claims, can be attached to machinery and facilitate the attainment of perpetual motion.³⁰

Another article, published in 1925, titled 'Aboriginal Intellectual: David Unaipon' begins in much the same vein:

For a twentieth century citizen to be suddenly confronted with a man from the Stone Age would be an experience sufficiently piquant. But suppose, faced with the Stone Age man, he addressed you in cultured tones and proceeded to discuss the harnessing of gravity and the poetry of Milton? Your feelings would probably be somewhat similar to those of the reporter who interviewed David Unaipon on his visit to Adelaide this week.³¹

Adelaide's *Daily Herald*, in an article titled, 'An Aboriginal Genius: Full-Blooded Native who is Philosopher, Inventor, Genius' begins in awe:

Behold a Contradiction in human terms. An Australian native who is a Philosopher, Inventor and musician, and who devotes any spare time he may have to the study of evolution; a full-blooded aboriginal who can quote Newton, Huxley, Darwin, and other evolutionists and philosophers. There you have David Unaipon of Point McLeay.³²

³⁰ 'An Ingenious Aborigine', *Advertiser* [Adelaide], 12 April 1907, p. 4.

³¹ 'Aboriginal Intellectual: David Unaipon', *Observer* [Adelaide], 10 October 1925, p. 46.

³² 'An Aboriginal Genius', p. 11.

It was not just newspaper articles that gushed about Unaipon in this way. In 1931, Francis Garnett, who had been the superintendent of Raukkan from 1900 to 1906 and was later Chief Protector of Aborigines, South Australia, wrote:

At one end of the scale stands a poor blackfellow eating grubs: at the other end stands David Unaipon, the cleverest Native Australian ever known, the brainiest man in the whole black population of thirty thousand. David has astonished the professors of the universities of Sydney and Melbourne by the breadth of his intelligence and his capacity for absorbing knowledge... Like the great Hebrew king whose name he bears, David has a great love of music... he is a born orator and elocutionist... David refused to waste his time memorizing [literature of a light humorous character] and would only recite extracts from Milton's *Paradise Lost* or something equally impressive ... Point McLeay at length became too small for our expanding genius, David's affinity is for the ways and thought of the white men, and for years he has travelled through the Australian states, lecturing and preaching. He is a great reader of books of science and philosophy, and he talks familiarly of evolution and anthropology. He has made collections of native legends ... He is a lover and champion of his own race, but his love of the intellectual life has made him a wanderer far from his kith and kin, and enabled him to make himself at home in the cities of white people. Of course, he is very human. Like many other men of note he is only a second rate financier. Some of the inevitable weaknesses of the self-made man can be easily seen in him. But he is careful concerning his appearance, pure in his language, courteous in his manner. He is a non-smoker and teetotaler. He is an Australian Aboriginal, but he also belongs to Nature's Aristocracy.³³

After Unaipon died in 1967, Jim Robbin's eulogy in the *Adelaide Advertiser* simply stated: 'David Unaipon was an inventor, a musician, a philosopher. A man who could quote Milton, Darwin, Huxley. A blackfellow.'³⁴

From these fragments, it seems that Unaipon occupied such a legendary place because he was the startling exception to the rule, the 'Stone-Age' man that had travelled through time and arrived in the twentieth century, a 'contradiction in human terms'. The scale that Garnett refers to that finds a poor blackfellow eating grubs at one end and Unaipon at the other is, of course, the evolutionary scale, and, as can be seen in a photograph in the *AFA Annual Review* in 1936, that the missionary enterprise could enable the Aborigines to take leaps along this scale was one of its proudest claims (See Appendix 2).

³³ Cited in Jenkin, p. 235.

³⁴ Jim Robbins, 'Day By Day', *Advertiser* [Adelaide], 9 February 1967, p. 4.

It is easy to see why Unaipon was claimed by British Australians as the most important Aboriginal voice at the time, sharing, as he seemed to, with scientists and anthropologists, many of the assumptions about evolutionary anthropology that allowed colonization to continue without question. It was, perhaps, Unaipon's seeming commitment to assimilationist beliefs and policies, policies that are now seen as being largely responsible for the widespread destruction of Aboriginal communities, that has led, in this later period of so-called self-determination, to the contemporary neglect of Unaipon. In Margaret Simon's article, 'Nobody's Hero', she quotes Fred Wandmaker, who had tried to make a movie of Unaipon's life, 'but nothing had come of it':

In the surge of interest in Aboriginal history during the bicentenary year, Wandmaker hoped the project would at last be picked up, but racists are not the only people discomfited by Unaipon's story. 'Unaipon was a coconut,' Wandmaker says. 'You know what that means? White on the inside. Today's activists don't see him as someone to celebrate.' (19)

In this chapter, I hope to recuperate Unaipon as an important figure in Australian history and literature. I hope to avoid the pitfalls of heroization, but also to demonstrate the way in which a term like 'coconut' is ahistorical, and does not take into account the context in which Unaipon's life was lived. This chapter, then, is an attempt at contextualization. It is important to remember that the terms in which debates about Aborigines were argued had already been set by the emerging discipline of evolutionary anthropology which had bestowed on itself the truth-status of science, leaving little room, within its own terms of reference, for challenging some of the basic assumptions that upheld it. As I have argued in my previous chapter, for anthropology (and psychoanalysis for that matter), Aborigines were representatives of the earliest stage in humanity's history. The belief in progress became enmeshed in nineteenth-century racial science leading to the almost universally held assumption that the Aboriginal was as close to archetypal man as existed. Australia's status as a primitive continent turned it into a scientific laboratory where early anthropologists could study man's progress from savagery to civilization, from tyranny to democracy, from superstition to reason and from indolence to work.

Anthropology in Australia

Anthropology, as a discipline, became institutionalized in Australia with its inclusion as Section G at the first meeting of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science in 1880, some four years *before* it was institutionalized in Britain. As anthropology became established, so too did what Russell McGregor, in *Imagined Destinies*, refers to as the ‘doomed race’ theory.³⁵ According to this theory, which was prevailing scientific opinion up until as late as the 1950s, the Aborigines were doomed to extinction. As McGregor’s thorough analysis makes clear, ‘racial extinction most commonly appeared in the scientific literature as a bald statement of fact, unaccompanied by any explanation of how or why it could occur’(56-57).

As I argued in the previous chapter, the idea of progress was founded on the assumption that societies developed from a state of savagery to civilization, civilization being the goal, and this assumption about temporality was displaced on to a geographical axis. It was this displacement, or in McGregor’s words, this ‘entanglement of the idea of progress with the concept of race that lent credibility to the prediction of inevitable extinction’(ix). The perceived inability of Aborigines to adapt to the conditions of invasion was interpreted as an inability to progress through the necessary stages to the point of civilization, and it was this perception that solidified the doomed race idea. It was Aboriginal primitivity, rather than, say, invasion, that was seen to be the cause of the demise of the Aborigines, an inevitability thereby attributed to the hand of nature.

This was the discursive universe that Unaipon was forced to inhabit. To bring this into sharp relief, the anonymous reporter of the article, for example, that describes Unaipon as a ‘contradiction in human terms’, goes on to explain how he:

met this remarkable specimen of the human family at Dr. Herbert Basedow’s rooms. It was most appropriate that the meeting should take place there. Than the doctor no one in Australia or for that matter in any part of the world, takes a keener or more practical interest in the welfare of the despised aboriginals. As proof of that interest he is now formulating a scheme for the preservation of the species, that is, the comparatively few tribes, or remnants of tribes that remain, which is gaining the support of scientific bodies of note. Dr Basedow is an

³⁵ See McGregor, esp. pp. ix-xii.

anthropologist of note, being chiefly known in scientific circles for his original research among Australian aboriginals.³⁶

This paragraph contains several popular assumptions worth noting. First, the reference to Unaipon as a specimen reflects the constitution of Aborigines as objects of anthropological knowledge. Second, that Aborigines are referred to as a 'species' was, even in scientific circles at the time, quite incorrect. Third, that Aborigines were becoming extinct, hence the reference to 'remnants' requiring preservation. Finally, and most crucial to my argument, was that anthropologists like Basedow, who subscribed to the doomed race theory, were seen and saw themselves, as McGregor has argued, not merely as men of science but as 'men of strong humanitarian views, who were horrified by what they saw of the brutal treatment of Aborigines' (17). In other words, men that are now considered to be racists were, at the time, considered to be and considered themselves as committed Aboriginal activists.

Basedow's position, in regard to Aboriginal culture and development, is clearly revealed in this article. When the reporter asks about the 'vexed problem' of the 'Home of the first man', Basedow hypothesizes the existence of a large continent to the north of Australia: 'All lines of migration are traceable from that portion of the earth.' He continues to argue:

In the Australian aboriginal you have a type of the original man—one who was, so to speak, isolated from the rest of the world. For anthropologically the Australian aboriginal is a full brother of ours, the Caucasian being a subsequent modification of the original Australoid.³⁷

When the reporter then inquired of Basedow the 'reason of the diversity between us in every way?', he replied, presumably without irony, that the diversity is:

due to the fact that those who migrated northward into Europe had to fight for their existence, which resulted in the survival of the fittest, the present-day Europeans, who through long ages have, by rivalry and subsequent competition in commerce and science, attained their present state of perfection. On the other hand, that section of the type which migrated southwards into Australia found a happy hunting ground. No need was there for them to fight for existence, hence no call for any special display of ability, the result being that they remained in their primitive condition.

³⁶ 'An Aboriginal Genius', p. 11.

³⁷ 'An Aboriginal Genius', p. 11.

The assumption was that Aboriginal customs were primitive in relation to European civilization and, furthermore, that European civilization was unquestioningly the already-achieved state of perfection, the goal towards which all cultures must, and would surely desire to, strive.

Basedow's opinions represented both a scientific and welfare-oriented position, and only one of many possible positions (and, it should be noted, the most liberal-minded) within the vast array of opinions and debates which circulated about Aborigines.³⁸ The other broadly opposing view was what was known as degenerationism, whereby societies could move down as well as up the ladder of progress. For degenerationists, Aborigines were believed to be the debased remnants of a once civilized people, with extinction being a more certain and more deserved outcome.

For the evolutionists, the primary question was whether or not Aborigines could 'catch up' with European civilization; whether, in other words, it was possible to 'civilize' them, civilization always and unequivocally being equated with Europeanization. Although there were strong voices on either side of this contested debate, there were certain shared assumptions that were enshrined in early evolutionary and anthropological science. At no stage was the right to colonize called into question. Although a small group of people could at least concede that Australia had once been Aboriginal land, colonization itself was considered with the same kind of inevitability that characterized evolutionary theory. In this scenario, colonization is, quite simply, an effect of nature. Similarly, as can be seen from Basedow's comments, no one doubted the superiority of the European culture, its position at the vanguard of progress, and its right to remain there. There was, moreover, never any question of Aborigines surviving and thriving on their own terms, nor any question concerning the clear benefits of becoming civilized. As McGregor has argued, '[p]rogress was a law of nature, and those who had failed to elevate themselves would necessarily be swept aside in the universal

³⁸ For detailed discussion of these opinions and debates, see Hiatt, Stocking and McGregor.

struggle for survival' (58). As the twentieth century moved on, McGregor argues, fewer and fewer people believed that Aborigines could be civilized:

As the Enlightenment vision of universal human progress faded, as attempts to civilise and convert failed, and as racial attitudes hardened, it came to be considered that the best that could be done for the Aborigines was to protect them from overt injustice and brutality—for the short time they had left on this earth. If, as increasingly came to be taken for granted, the Aborigines were incapable of attaining the status of civilisation, they were equally incapable of living within a civilised community. (18)

For those who believed it was possible for Aborigines to progress, the question remained of the best way for such a project to be initiated. It was this question, always tied up with the role of missionaries in the civilizing process, that led to the increasing hostility between missionaries and Government administrators.³⁹

Intellectual Debates and Administrative Power

These debates, however, were not conducted in an intellectual vacuum. The impact of the debates had material effects on the lives of Aboriginal people where the assumptions of evolutionary anthropology justified legal constraints. It is for this reason that accusations of apoliticism in the study of discourse are profoundly misplaced. On the contrary, the discursive universe that I have been attempting to outline and its political effects are inseparable. It is significant that many of Australia's early anthropologists were Government-appointed administrators of Aborigines who were not just recognized as experts, but also as activists and legislators on their behalf. Baldwin Spencer, whom I discussed in the previous chapter, is the prime example here, but Herbert Basedow also played an influential role. It is in this intersection of anthropology and legality that Foucault's notion of bio-power, where disciplinary technologies come in to play with normative social sciences, can be seen at its most effective.

A brief look at varying legislations will suffice to make the point about techniques of power. John McCorquodale, who has done an exhaustive study of the

³⁹ The relation between anthropology, administration and Christianity is crucially important here. For a discussion of the tensions within these fields, see Stocking and McGregor.

legislative treatment of Aboriginal Australians, argues that a 'bewildering array of legal definitions led to inconsistent legal treatment and arbitrary, unpredictable, and capricious administrative treatment'.⁴⁰ McCorquodale's study found that there have been 700 separate pieces of legislation specifically dealing with Aborigines since colonization. The South Australian Government, whose jurisdiction Unaipon came under, passed a Northern Territory Aborigines Act on 7 December 1910, modelled on the Aboriginal Acts of Queensland (1897) and Western Australia (1905). The major provisions concerned the regulation of employment, declaration of reserves and the restriction of sexual relations between races. The Act required the appointment of a Chief Protector, and the position was offered to Unaipon's friend, Herbert Basedow. Less than a month after the enactment of the legislation, the Northern Territory passed from the control of the South Australian Government into the hands of the Commonwealth Government. The 1910 Act became the basis for the Commonwealth administration for the indigenous inhabitants of the Territory.

Although Basedow was considered a moderate, and a man who had the best interests of the Aborigines at heart, that did not prevent him from suggesting the use of 'permanent individual identification' for effective 'Aboriginal Protection and Control'.⁴¹ Following both the Queensland and Western Australian Acts, Basedow also suggested the removal of mixed-race children from camps and into homes or institutions. This suggestion was in line with the belief that full-bloods should be allowed to die out peacefully, and the mixed-race population should be absorbed into the white community. Biological absorption, as it was called, which even at the time was recognized as a euphemism for extinction,⁴² of which Basedow was a proponent, was the basis of these Acts. These policies of assimilation, their causes and effects, are some of the issues that this thesis will focus on in greater depth in subsequent chapters. Suffice to say, for the moment, the sheer number of pieces of legislation, 67 of which

⁴⁰ John McCorquodale, 'The Legal Classification of Race in Australia', *Aboriginal History*, 10.1 (1986), 7-24.

⁴¹ McGregor, p. 69. McGregor provides an informed and detailed discussion of the role of anthropological administrators in Australia, including Baldwin Spencer and Herbert Basedow. He does not mention George Grey, however, who could well be thought of as a precursor to these men.

⁴² See McGregor, p. 179.

are only concerned with definitions of Aboriginality, point to the anxieties around identity, and the desire to fix it in law, that, as we have seen, is central to questions of inheritance and paternity.

Although Basedow arrived in Darwin on 17 July 1911, he tendered his resignation 45 days later. He was subsequently replaced by Baldwin Spencer in January 1912. Before his arrival, the Aboriginals Ordinance of 1911, which Spencer had been involved in drafting, extended the powers of the Chief Protector beyond those already granted under the 1910 Act, as did the 1918 Ordinance. The South Australian Aborigines Act became law on 7 December 1911, with additional regulations added in 1917 and 1919, and its principal sections remained in force for over half a century.

According to Jenkins, the Act:

gave the Chief Protector of Aborigines and his delegates absolute power over every Aboriginal or part-Aboriginal's person; together with his children, his property, his money, his dwelling, his education, his employment, and in fact his whole life. Regulations under the Act, which were added in 1917 and 1919, further increased the powers of superintendents and further eroded what vestiges of human rights still remained with the Aborigines. Under these additional regulations, Aborigines could be summarily fined by the superintendent for not closing a gate, or for being untidily dressed—amongst the other 'misdemeanours' listed. Even the times at which they had to rise in the morning were stipulated! (246)

In 1912, Unaipon led an AFA-sponsored deputation to the South Australian Government requesting that 'a Board be appointed by the Government to take control over the Aborigines of the State including the control of the Mission Stations, subject to the provision for the purely Missionary aims of the Association'.⁴³ This was partly in response to the dire financial situation that the mission was facing, which had been exacerbated by the embezzlement of funds.⁴⁴ In response to the deputation, the Government appointed a Royal Commission in 1913. Unaipon gave evidence at the Commission, although whether or not Aborigines were listened to is hard to ascertain, given that the Commission included questions such as: 'Do you find half-castes more treacherous than full-bloods?' and 'Do you think you can make anything but a

⁴³ Cited in Jenkin, p. 259

⁴⁴ See Jenkin for an elaboration of this embezzlement, esp. pp. 215-21.

blackfellow out of a blackfellow?⁴⁵ The Aborigines Protection Board, a Commonwealth agency which was formed in 1909, and had been gradually taking over the administration of the missions, began to administer Raukkan in 1916.

Such questions, and the legislation enacted, reveal the relation between the doomed race theory as an inevitability, and the proliferation of mixed-race children, which so unsettled the widely held notion of race as a distinct and bounded category. As McGregor claims, the doomed race argument 'was premised on the notion that each race embodied a particular constellation of relatively stable physical, mental and cultural attributes. That race embodied fixed characteristics which were unable to be altered in the short term' (53). Certainly, an anxiety about miscegenation, that became known as the 'half-caste problem', can be seen in the focus on the relative worth and capacity of full-bloods and so-called 'half-caste' Aborigines. Once again, this was an extremely contested site. Although there was much discussion of hybrid inferiority, 'most commonly expressed in the allegation that half-castes inherited all the vices of their progenitors and few of their virtues'⁴⁶, the dominant anthropological view was that half-castes, because of their inheritance of white blood, were superior, more likely to progress, and therefore more adaptable to civilization. In 1934, Rev. Sexton, President of the AFA, the organization for which Unaipon worked, claimed that 'the admixture of blood gives a half-caste superiority over his darker brother'.⁴⁷ Referring to miscegenation, Sexton argued that 'the full-blooded native is declining and passing away. As a matter of fact, he withers away before the touch of civilization'.⁴⁸ This might explain why every single reference to Unaipon that I have come across opens with the fact that he is a full-blood Aborigine.

Unaipon as exemplar

A report in the *AFA Annual Review*, on the 1937 Conference of Aboriginal and State Aboriginal Authorities in Canberra, reveals the extent to which the distinction

⁴⁵ Cited in Jenkin, p. 260.

⁴⁶ McGregor, p. 139.

⁴⁷ Cited in McGregor, p. 140.

⁴⁸ Cited in McGregor, p. 133.

between full-blooded and mixed-race Aborigines was a central issue for discussion in determining legislation:

The representatives at Canberra conference drew sharp distinctions between the full-blooded aborigines and their mixed descendants, and recommended different treatment for them. The full-blooded black is quite as intelligent as the half-caste, and in some cases more so, as can be proved by David Unaipon, who shows much greater intelligence than those with less Aboriginal blood in their veins.⁴⁹

The contradictory nature of these debates can be seen in an article by the Rev Sexton, entitled 'Has the Full-Blooded Aboriginal Sufficient Intelligence to Undertake the Responsibilities of Citizenship?' Using Unaipon as one example, Sexton seems to have altered his position regarding the inevitable demise of full-blooded Aborigines:

The lighter skin natives do not stand in the same category with the intelligent full-blooded aborigines. Think for a moment of the aborigines whose names have come before the public because of their gifts, you will find they are all full-bloods. James Unaipon, Mr Taplin's right-hand man, who taught him the native language, was a full-blooded aborigine; Matthew Kropinyeri, a gifted short-hand writer, was another; so is David Unaipon, with his musical gifts and inventive skill.⁵⁰

Although Unaipon's reception is now read as a patronizing example of an Aborigine 'made good', hence his contemporary neglect, it is important to bear in mind the kinds of constraints I have just outlined that determined Aboriginal possibilities and chances when rethinking Unaipon's life and work. As Unaipon was no doubt aware, at the time, the only chance of Aboriginal survival, let alone equality and citizenship, was assimilationist. As a full-blood Aborigine, to prove that one could become civilized, even if that was just another way of saying Europeanized, was perhaps the only, and even the most subversive, option. Unaipon represented, and seems to have set out to represent, what Aborigines could become if given the chance. From this perspective, Unaipon was not only an exception to the rule, but an exception that just might challenge it. Unaipon, by challenging the assumption that Aborigines could not become civilized, simultaneously challenged ideas that lent credibility to the doomed race idea,

⁴⁹ *AFA Annual Review*, 1938, p. 8.

⁵⁰ F. H. Sexton, 'Has the Full-Blooded Aboriginal Sufficient Intelligence to Undertake the Responsibilities of Citizenship?' *AFA Annual Report*, 1945, p. 24.

ideas that claimed that, because Aborigines were incapable of adaptation or civilization, they would die out.

That Unaipon did challenge these perceptions, and used himself in that way, is apparent from the way in which he is discussed:

People who are inclined to deprecate all efforts to educate the natives as unprofitable will do well to remember that Unaipon is a full-blooded native. The instance may be an exceptional one, but it is *evidence* that there are possibilities of no mean order with regard to the intellectual development of the Australian natives.⁵¹

Reverend F.H.L. Paton, writing of Unaipon in the *AFA Annual Review* argues much the same position:

He often lapses into a brown study, and sits huddled up, lost in deep thought on some scientific problem. I have listened spellbound to his addresses, and have always marvelled at his vast knowledge and amazing versatility. Such men are, of course, exceptional, but they *prove* the aborigines have latent spiritual and intellectual powers of the very highest order. They only await the opportunity and the inspiration.⁵²

Although the AFA can be seen as using Unaipon to prove the success of their own missionary project, it is also the case that such a success, necessarily had effects beyond those desired by the AFA, including entitlement to political rights, as the following anonymous argument makes clear:

It is not without significance that [Unaipon] should emerge from mission stations where [he] received the Enlightenment and impetus necessary to develop [his] powers, and should come forth to show Australia that the Aborigines possess gifts and graces which justly entitle them to a much better status within the nation.⁵³

Even Herbert Basedow, in his explication of racial theories through the now discredited science of phrenology, used Unaipon as an example of the heights to which Aboriginal people could rise. The result, as you will see, is that his own theoretical position, although articulated in scientific discourse to mask its deeply confused position, is thereby disturbed:

⁵¹ 'An Ingenious Aborigine', p. 4.

⁵² F.H.L. Paton, 'Two Outstanding Australian Aborigines', *AFA Annual Review*, 1938, pp. 28-9. Emphasis added.

⁵³ 'The Intellectual and Artistic Gifts of Aborigines', *AFA Annual Review*, 1939, p. 42

‘The aboriginal brain anatomically and physiologically in its primitive condition is quite as capable of acquiring the results of centuries of gradual study and development as is our own brain, which, by heredity, should be expected to have every advantage over the primitive brain of the blackfellow. Modern science and study has made the brain of the white man larger in its frontal lobes than that of the aboriginal, and it has more convolutions than the primitive brain. All the natural instincts are present in the aboriginal brain, however, and you will find that a native will rise to the occasion every time. You have an *example* before you in Unaipon.’

I agreed. Unaipon was a *living example* of the facts adduced by the doctor; a wonderful example of the degree of perfection to which the aboriginal brain could attain...

The broad forehead, surmounted by a shock of black hair, silver streaked, the intelligent, deep-set eyes, the well-shaped head, proclaim David Unaipon an aborigine of more than ordinary intelligence.⁵⁴

Even more than the uses to which Unaipon was put, it is his own notorious comments that have also led to his being rejected as an early Aboriginal spokesman. At times, Unaipon himself draws upon and perpetuates the assumptions of evolutionary theory:

Look at me and you will see what the bible can do. Sixty or seventy years ago my people were wandering about with spears and boomerangs, living their wild and savage life; but the comings of the Gospel has changed all this, and I stand as one of the many who have been brought out of the darkness into light. My favourite hymn is ‘At Even, Ere the Sun was Set,’ and there is one line in it that I can prove to be true by my own conversion. It is this: ‘Thy touch has still its ancient power.’⁵⁵

In an interview, moreover, the tension between the primitive and the civilized is played out, and Unaipon’s own views on civilization, and colonization, are indeed troubling:

All his acquired culture has not taken away from David Unaipon his more primitive gifts. He can still spear fish, for instance, in the milky waters of the Murray. Asked whether he regarded civilization as a privilege or a disaster, he said he undoubtedly preferred his present state to the primitive life which would have been his lot but for the coming of the whites... ‘The coming of the white man was a blessing. We were isolated from the world’s culture. It is true that my people could not adapt themselves to civilization, but that is because it came too suddenly for us.’⁵⁶

Certainly, such statements can be read, in Fanonian terms, as evidence of a deeply-ingrained inferiority complex, the result of alienation brought on by the violence of

⁵⁴ Quoted in ‘An Aboriginal Genius’, p. 11. Emphasis added.

⁵⁵ David Unaipon, ‘Thy Touch Has Still its Ancient Power’, *AFA Annual Review*, 1938, p. 31.

⁵⁶ ‘An Aboriginal Intellectual’, p. 46

colonization. Yet, as Fanon noted, such 'effective disalienation... entails a recognition of social and economic realities'(10). Following Fanon, I will think about Unaipon's writings as strategic recognitions, and their historical importance perhaps lies in the fact that, through Unaipon, we can also recognize these social and economic realities, the limited options for Aboriginal people which continue to this day, and their effects on Aboriginal subjectivity. In this light, one way of thinking about Unaipon's position is as a strategic attempt to be conciliatory, a plea to give Aborigines more time to get used to an invading force that clearly was not going to go away. Unaipon's expression of desire for civilization, as opposed to the 'primitive life', a life that Unaipon, as someone brought up from birth in a mission, had never actually lived, can also be seen as evidence of a willingness to adapt, at a time when the only other alternative being presented was extinction.

Unaipon's internalization of evolutionary anthropology can be seen in his most famous address, 'An Aboriginal Pleads for his Race' (see Appendix 3):

Civilisation has come to my people so suddenly that they have not been able to adapt themselves to it. Evolution is a process which takes time. Some people say the white man should leave the aborigine alone, should not interfere with his customs and his manner of living. The white man must not leave the aborigine alone. We cannot stand in the way of progress. The aborigine must not be left alone in the middle of civilization. That would be like an aborigine leaving a white man alone in the bush...

This piece, Unaipon's most well-known, is striking in many ways, not the least of which is its adherence to evolutionary principles. Yet, when Unaipon pleads with the white man to not leave the Aborigine alone, a plea for interference which is now seen as one of the primary reasons for the destruction of traditional Aboriginal societies, it can also be thought of as a plea to take responsibility for the effects of colonization, a plea to not leave the aborigines alone to die, while also holding out against the prospect of complete government-supported biological absorption. Unaipon's analogy between 'an aborigine leaving a white man alone in the bush', and the white man leaving an aborigine 'in the middle of civilization' is a plea to whites to identify with the situation in which Aborigines have been placed, a plea that asks white Australians to put themselves in the place of the colonized other. It is a request to encounter otherness in

some of its unfamiliarity, fore-grounding adaptation rather than progress, while simultaneously alluding to the many recorded instances of Aborigines saving whites lost in the bush.

Unaipon's most coherent disavowal of the inevitability of the doomed race concept appears in an article published in the *Daily Telegraph* in 1914, entitled 'A Dying Race: Civilization and the Blacks'. It is a revealing interview, and worth quoting at length:

David Unaipon, a full-blooded native from the Point McLeay mission station... in addressing the Royal Geographical Society in Melbourne on Friday night, said that he was thankful that Christianity had been brought to this tribe. He explained to an interviewer how he reconciled this statement with the fact that of the once numerous Narrinyeris (sic) only thirty full-blooded representatives remain. The missionary, he said, had come too late. He had been preceded by the careless drovers and the bushmen, who had seen no harm in giving rum to the aborigines. Almost as great a foe to the tribe had been the pointing stick, and with rum on top of that superstition the natives of the lower Murray had been nearly annihilated. Great efforts had been made by the missionaries to save the remnant of the tribe, but the difficulties were great.

'I do not believe,' said the native prince, 'that because aborigines become civilized and live in houses they will die rapidly. It was the chopping and changing about that reduced the numbers... If the remnant of the tribe had been allowed either to live in the primitive state or had adopted European methods thoroughly, it would have increased instead of decreasing.

'You must leave the full-blood in the primitive state or take him right away from the bush. For my part I would sooner be working in an engineering shop in the city than living in the bush. I would not care if I never saw the bush from one month's end to the other. It would be far better for the full bloods if they were working in a city. They would have so many things to see and think about that their hereditary instincts would weaken.'

David Unaipon does not think the aboriginal race is doomed. Half measures, he fears, will kill them; but if they are placed in a proper environment, which he describes as 'right away from the bush,' he believes that they will increase. He has adopted European methods right up to the hilt and says he is a better man than one who goes only half way.

Several times in the course of the interview he emphasized the view that it would be better to leave the full-bloods alone than to half civilize them... Environment, he declared, was greater than heredity, and a different environment would produce a different man... As for the half-castes, the call of the wild was not so strong in them, and they would be likely to do best on a farm.

In spite of some of the problematic formulations in this piece, one thing that is clear is that David Unaipon intervenes in the nature/culture debate by arguing, ahead of his time, that race, or at least the attribution of certain characteristics to it, is an

extremely unstable category, which is not fixed, and is largely determined by environment. There is also the suggestion, at other times contradicted, that Aborigines should either be left alone, or fully assimilated, which would include citizenship rights, the right to freedom of movement, and the right to employment, all of which Aborigines were, at the time, denied. It has to be remembered that this interview took place the year after the 1913 Royal Commission, and although the most important issue from the perspective of the commissioners was the 'problem' of the proliferation of mixed-race children, according to Jenkin, 'from the Ngarrindjeri point of view, the two most crucial questions for the commissioners to enquire into were the perennial problems of unemployment and shortage of land'(264). Although Ngarrindjeri shearers were considered the best workers, by the time of the commission, pressure from white labourers meant that even this source of employment, one of the most reliable for Ngarrindjeri people at the end of the nineteenth-century, had been denied to them. Work places were generally segregated, and by 1913, as Sexton reported to the Commission, the shearing sheds were 'very largely closed against them'.⁵⁷ When questioned about the possibility of alternative rural employment, Sexton replied:

We have men who go out from Pt. McLeay, but they are regarded as inferior labourers, and they get smaller wages. Then possibly you have an outcry against that state of things. They are driven back to the station and there is nothing for them to do... they really are in a most pitiable condition, and young men have spoken to me again and again if something could not be done so that they could obtain remunerative employment instead of depending on charity.⁵⁸

According to Sexton, the situation was no better in urban centres. Unaipon, also raised this point with the commission, claiming that: 'Twenty years ago it was easier for us to live. There was more work to be got. We used to work then and were paid for it, and lived as a result of our own labour. Things have changed in that work is not now available.'⁵⁹ Unaipon's comments in the interview in the *Daily Telegraph* the following year need to be seen in this context.

⁵⁷ Cited in Jenkin, p. 265.

⁵⁸ Cited in Jenkin, p. 265.

⁵⁹ Cited in Jenkin, p. 266.

The Oedipalizing of David Unaipon

One of the most important questions Unaipon's life and work raises concerns the production of subjectivity under colonial conditions. I have argued in the previous chapter that certain technologies, like the spread of alphabetic literacy and printing, and socio-political circumstances that centred on the concern with inheritances from the father intersected in Europe to produce an Oedipal subject. I have also argued that this subject, in its restricted identifications (oppressor/oppressed), and in its desire to eliminate otherness (which it sets up as uncivilized) for the surety of its own identity, is inherently colonizing. Colonialist metaphors to describe the relation of the id to the ego in psychoanalytic theory can be thought of as one exemplification of this. Unaipon's life and work can be thought of as revealing the way in which colonialism seeks not merely to assimilate the other, but to reproduce in the colonies the Oedipalized psychic configuration that I have outlined in the previous chapter. Such a project of reproduction of the same in the colonial context can be seen in the visitor's book, at Raukkan, in which Prince Alfred, Duke of Edinburgh, wrote on 11 November 1867, five years before Unaipon was born: 'May the children who are now in your schools grow up to be good Christians, and may the aptitude you, of the present generation, shew to assume the manners and customs of the Colonists, be well marked in your successors.'⁶⁰

This process, however, is always deeply ambivalent, largely because the Oedipalized subject always requires a form of otherness that can be incorporated into itself. So although, as we have seen, the post-Enlightenment Oedipalized subject is concerned, on the one hand, with the possibility of equality and liberation, this equality and liberation was always predicated on the subjection, in the form of objectification and regulation, of the other. Although Unaipon believed, and probably quite rightly, that the only viable option for Aboriginal survival was to become 'civilized', within the logic of civilization, as we have seen, the rhetoric of equality was extremely limited, and was always underpinned by relations of subjection. Nonetheless, Unaipon can be seen as marking the emergence of a specific colonial subject in the Australian context, a

⁶⁰ Cited in Jenkin, p. 151.

subject located in the interstice between pre- and post-colonization, caught on the cusp of changing epistemologies and technologies.

Certainly Unaipon's commitment to both Aboriginal rights and to the progress of civilization and Christianity produced a deeply ambivalent discourse in relation to his own culture. His passionate advocacy for the rights of his people is haunted by a simultaneous disidentification, and reidentification with a Christian, rationalist and patriarchal system as perpetuated by the colonizer. His active participation, moreover, in the discourse of anthropology enacts that movement from being an object of anthropological knowledge to being both subject and object of his own knowledge.

Unaipon's movement from objectification to subjectification can also be seen as being a form of Oedipalization. There are numerous examples of Unaipon appealing to a certain Oedipalized mode of being, or what Unaipon refers to, in the interview in the *Daily Telegraph*, as his 'mode of life', that is structured around the patriarchal nuclear family:

'About a year ago I and another full-blooded native at the mission became sick with indigestion. With an aboriginal it is a grievous complaint. He was not nearly so bad as I. For sick weeks I had scarcely a wink of sleep. We both had wives. Now, the other man was different from me in that he had never fully adopted the European methods, nor had his wife. My wife was far advanced in civilization and was a good cook and nurse. He died, and I became as well as ever. It was simply because of the differences in our mode of life.'⁶¹

In this quotation, we see the very sexual division of labour that characterized the seventeenth-century social contract (one of the conditions of the emergence of capitalist relations) and an appeal to a civilized European family to explain Unaipon's recovery. This is the only mention Unaipon ever makes of his wife, who occupies a strangely marginal place in narratives of his life, reflecting, one might say, the domestic sphere articulated by social contract theorists.

It is certainly ironic, given that one of the central justifications for anthropological and administrative intervention in Aboriginal culture was protection of Aboriginal women from the aggressive sexuality of Aboriginal men, that the most so-

⁶¹ 'An Aboriginal Genius', p. 11

called 'civilized' Aboriginal in Australia may have abused his wife. This is a suggestion made by both Philip Jones and Margaret Simons, who writes: 'Little is known about his marriage, but there are reports that he abused his wife and locked her up' (20). It is worth remembering, though, that under South Australian law at the time, marital rape was sanctioned on the basis of a man's conjugal right, and in Britain, up until as late as 1881, 'husbands were allowed forcibly to imprison their wives in the matrimonial home to obtain their rights'.⁶² If the Christian tradition that Unaipon married within claimed that marriage was a divine institution that united two individuals into a single person, then under English law, that person became the husband, and a wife's very existence was incorporated into that of her husband. Although anthropologists argued that pre-colonial Aboriginal relations between men and women were based on 'violence and unwilling submission' rather than the 'mutual affection and consent' of the 'more advanced' English domestic relations, under English law at the time, the powers of a husband 'included the right to vent aggressive impulses on [his wife's] person for the purpose of legitimate chastisement: he could beat her, so long as he did not do it in a "violent or cruel manner"'.⁶³

That Unaipon maintains some faith in the terms of such a civil fraternal contract, even if, in the Australian context at the time he wrote, Aboriginal people were quite explicitly denied participation in such a contract, can be seen in his articulation of his desires for his own son: 'I want to see that boy well-educated.... I don't want him to be a parasite, and have to rely upon the Government or mission, but become an honourable citizen of South Australia'.⁶⁴

Perhaps the most striking example of Unaipon's Oedipalization, however, is his strong identification with his father, and how often he sees himself, and is seen as, continuing, or inheriting, the role of his father, a structural relationship central to reproducing capitalist institutions. Such a conception of inheritance is at work in the *AFA Annual Review*:

⁶² Pateman, p. 123. For an extended discussion of the marriage contract, and its relation to the social contract, see Pateman, esp. chapter 5.

⁶³ Stocking, p. 198.

⁶⁴ 'Aboriginal intellectual: David Unaipon', p. 46.

It was generally agreed that he is a splendid advocate of his race and a brilliant preacher for missions. In this Review, reference is made to David's father, who was the first evangelist to the Narrinyeri tribe, and it is evident that the spirit of the father has descended to the son, moving him to do whatever he can to promote the spreading of the Gospel among the people of his own race.⁶⁵

This formulation is framed in quasi-mystical terms where Unaipon's 'family' resonates with Trinitarian theology, and its reproduction in the image of an all-male and paternal 'holy family' an image, one might well argue, that is echoed in the Oedipal triangle.

Fathers and Sons

Compared to the ghostly absence of Unaipon's wife, Unaipon's father, James Ngunaitponi, has a overwhelming presence in all versions of Unaipon's life. Jenkin describes him: 'striding across the stage of time like some Greek hero, the monumental figure of James Ngunaitponi dominates the play... There seem to have been no known limit to his talents'(161). This is a curiously theatrical metaphor, a variant of the universal existential drama of the family triangle and brings to mind, in the context of my analysis, the theatrical model of the psyche, dominated by the Greek drama of *Oedipus Rex*, that Freud so often drew upon.

James Ngunaitponi, the first convert and missionary for the AFA, consented to go to Raukkan with Taplin and arrived there in 1864. George Taplin, the first missionary to the Lower Murray region, became superintendent of the Port McLeay mission on behalf of the AFA. Just prior to taking on this post, Taplin had informed the AFA committee that he was hoping to train a certain James Reid for missionary work among the Ngarrindjeri. James Reid, however, was none other than James Ngunaitponi, who had adopted the name of the recently deceased Scottish missionary, James Reid, 'in honour of the man who baptised him'.⁶⁶ Like Freud's name-change, James Ngunaitponi's change of name is an act of both an identification and disidentification, and not merely with cultural or racial groups, but also with structural relations. Certainly, James Ngunaitponi's position generated a great deal of hostility and uncertainty. Taplin's diaries report how Ngunaitponi faced ridicule and abuse from

⁶⁵ 'The Intellectual and Artistic Gifts of Aborigines', *AFA Annual Review*, 1939, p. 41.

⁶⁶ Cited in Jenkin, p. 143.

whites, and persecution from Ngarrindjeris: 'The principal cause of all the unpleasantness lately is, I believe, the fact of my shewing such kindness and favour to James Unaipon... I saw it the very next day after James came, and I believe they secretly and thoroughly hate him'.⁶⁷ According to Jenkin, when Unaipon 'did forge family ties with the *Karatindjeri* [the local *lakinyeri* or clan] by marrying Nymbulda, the daughter of Pullum, the rupulle, James only invited more persecution because he married her in the Christian, rather than the traditional fashion'(162):

As the years passed, the animosity which James had stoically endured, when he first settled at Raukkan, faded: and he became a leader for the people as a whole—not just for the young Christians. Because of this he succeeded in converting even some of the old conservatives to Christianity. This process was facilitated by the realisation by the older people that the control over the rising generation was diminishing rapidly, and that the ancient religion of their fathers had been effectively destroyed. (163)

During 1873, Taplin worked on his acclaimed anthropological work, *The Narrinyeri*, which was published by the AFA, and provides the most detailed information there is on the pre-invasion life-style of the Ngarrindjeri. Much contemporary historiography and anthropology relies on this text, indeed I have relied on it, as has Graham Jenkin, who has provided the only historical account of the Ngarrindjeri which is, in itself, problematic. *The Ngarrindjeri* was reprinted in 1878 as part of a larger work, *The Folklore, Manners, Customs and Languages of the South Australian Aborigines*.

According to Jenkin, who has read Taplin's dairies from the period of the writing of *Folklore, Manners, Customs and Languages of the South Australian Aborigines*, Unaipon's father, James, was an important contributor to this project:

James Ngunaitponi played a significant role in assisting Taplin in his work on the Ngarrindjeri... Over a period of six years, James explained the social structure, recounted legends, taught the language, corrected translations, and recalled the recent history of the Ngarrindjeri. The journals from 1873 onwards show clearly how great a part James Ngunaitponi played in recording his own rich cultural and linguistic heritage. It was James, for instance, who first told Taplin about the Tendi and enabled him to see it in action, but no acknowledgement of this fact is given in *The Narrinyeri*. James

⁶⁷ Cited in Jenkin, p. 162.

acknowledgement of this fact is given in *The Narrinyeri*. James Ngunaitponi was certainly the assistant author, and could possibly have claimed to be co-author of this important work. (153)

Needless to say, James Ngunaitponi did not appear as the text's co-author although, in *Folklore, Manners, Customs and Languages of the South Australian Aborigines*, there is an anthropological photo of Ngunaitponi, shirtless, standing beside a ruler. His name is not mentioned, and he is only referred to as a Narrinyeri Male (see Appendix 4). This photograph, the only photograph I have seen of James Ngunaitponi without a shirt, exemplifies the way in which Aboriginal subjects are turned into anthropological objects, and the particular is turned into the general.

As we will see, such appropriation is not limited to James Ngunaitponi's life, and in this sense, David Unaipon can be seen as following in his father's footsteps in more ways than one. And just as David Unaipon will repeat and re-enact his father's position as object of exploitation, in an uncanny repetition of father and son narrative, characteristic of Oedipal culture, Taplin's own life is marred by allegations that his son, Frederick, had sexually assaulted a young Aboriginal girl on the mission. In a narrative with strange echoes of the story of the primal horde as told by Freud, it is said, according to Jenkin, that Taplin eventually died from the stress associated with the allegations that Frederick had sexually assaulted an Aboriginal girl on the mission. After the death of George Taplin, and in spite of continuing and regular allegations that his son was harassing Aboriginal women, and that he had even fathered a child to an Aboriginal woman, Frederick Taplin was appointed to the position of superintendent of the mission in 1879. In narratological terms, this is the story of the son who replaces the father, over the father's dead body, and, in replacing his father, gains sexual access to women.⁶⁸

The Ngarrindjeri leaders had tried, unsuccessfully, to stop his appointment, and their complaints culminated in March 1889, when all the Senior Ngarrindjeri churchmen made a deputation to Adelaide to speak to the AFA committee and petition them for Taplin's removal. David Unaipon would have then been 17 years old at the

⁶⁸ This story is told in detail by Jenkin, esp. chapter 7. See also Simons, pp. 19-20.

time, and, although no details remain of the inquiry that followed, his father would have very likely been part of this deputation.

It was during this inquiry that Frederick Taplin met his death, when his lodging house was burned down mysteriously. Taplin was the only person to die in the blaze, although his bed and other articles in his room were untouched by smoke. There was a flat roof outside his window out of which he could have escaped easily. Lodgers suggested that he died trying to save others, although no-one reported being saved by him. Three years later, however, in the aptly-titled *Christian Colonist*, he was painted as a hero, and it was asserted that he had 'gone up to Heaven in a chariot of fire'.⁶⁹ There was no mention of either the reason he was in Adelaide, nor the allegations he was facing.

In their reporting of events, the *Christian Colonist* can be seen here as fulfilling the role of the epic poet who, according to Freud, 'disguised the truth with lies in accordance with his longing'.⁷⁰ This was an advance of the imagination, according to Freud, over Totem-worshipping primitive societies: 'Just as the father had been the boy's first ideal, so in the hero who aspires to the father's place the poet now created the first ego-ideal.'⁷¹

Oedipalization and Autobiography

If the process of Oedipalization is, as I have argued, a process of self-reflexive individualization around the question of a son's relation to the authority of the father, then part of the process of individualization is the production of an autobiographical subject. Although it is generally considered that the first autobiography is St Augustine's *Confessions*, Philip Barker locates the emergence of autobiography in Abelard's *Historia Calamitatum* in the twelfth century. According to Barker, Augustine's *Confessions* should not be considered autobiographical in the modern sense because it is mediated through God. Modern autobiography, by contrast, is only mediated through the text, the very object that enables the subject to reflect upon

⁶⁹ Cited in Jenkin, p. 117.

⁷⁰ Freud, 'Group Psychology', p. 169.

⁷¹ Freud, 'Group Psychology', p. 169.

themselves. This modern technology of the self emerged at a specific historical juncture when, as we saw in the previous chapter, systems of primogeniture and the confessional practices, manifested in the Lateran Council, that emerged out of it, combined with the increasingly widespread use of alphabetic literacy to produce a subject that is situated around writing, interiority and relations of sexuality and inheritance.

What distinguishes the modern autobiography, that *Historia Calamitatum* can be seen as representing, from previous similar textualities is that Abelard's autobiography is not just a collection of events that the subject has observed but, rather, that the subject reflects upon events at a chronological distance. Unlike other memoirs, moreover, only events the subject has directly participated in are included and reflected upon. Finally, the autobiographical subject, as it emerged in the twelfth century, is framed in relation to the theme of knowing oneself. It is not merely fortuitous that Abelard, the writer of the *Historia Calamitatum*, should also have written a book on ethics titled *Know Thyself* (*Scito Te Ipsum*), nor that Abelard's philosophy would break with Augustine's in so far as it advocated or privileged reason over faith and action over intention, a movement that can be seen as being from a focus on exteriority to interiority.

Barker's Foucauldian reading of the emergence of the self-reflexive subject also argues that the demand for the production of a transparent voice that knows itself necessarily produces a subject that is never as sure of itself as it is meant to be. Abelard's logical and ethical work were situated in the medieval tradition of methodological scepticism, which can be thought of as a fore-runner to Descartes' methodological doubt. As Barker asserts: 'On the one hand, [Abelard's] epistemological/ontological foundation demands the certainty of subjective experience, on the other, his methodology continually acts to undermine it' (131). Finally, according to Barker, the 'question of sex is absolutely central to the *Historia Calamitatum*' (141), which was written after he seduced his student Heloise and was subsequently castrated, an act that, unsurprisingly, led to the re-examination of his life and even, Barker suggests, to psychotic tendencies.⁷² In other words, the self-reflective subject and the

⁷² For an elaboration of Abelard's life and work see Barker, esp. pp. 113-147

truth of the self that it seeks, as it emerges in the work of Abelard, is always threatened with the possibility of incoherence.

Psychoanalysis has a curious relation to this history of subjectivity. Certainly, its epistemology has been enabled by autobiographical practices. The retrospective postscript to Freud's own *Autobiographical Study* suggests as much:

Two themes run through these pages: the story of my life and the history of psychoanalysis. They are intimately interwoven. This *Autobiographical Study* shows how psychoanalysis came to be the whole content of my life and rightly assumes that no personal experiences of mine are of interest in comparison to my relations with that science.⁷³

On top of this, it can also be said that the psychoanalytic patient is required to construct their own autobiography and then relate to it through the analyst. Psychoanalysis not only 'presupposes the composing of the subject in relation to a textual strategy, it is part of its clinical practice to make this its object of analysis, reconstituting and stabilising the relation between the subject and text'.⁷⁴

Finally, psychoanalysis relies for its theories on a specific form of textuality. Not only, as we have seen in the previous chapter, does Freud's anthropological theorizing emerge out of pre-existing textual practices—like those of Frazer, but its theories are constituted textually through mythical narratives, the most important of which is, as I have suggested, Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* whose self-blinding, Freud has asserted, 'was simply a mitigated form of the of the punishment of castration'.⁷⁵ It is significant that Freud would resort to ancient Greek drama for his model of the psyche, especially as it 'was the first Western verbal art form to be fully controlled by writing'.⁷⁶ It is in ancient Greek drama that the voice is both enabled and supplemented by the technology of writing. It is this structure of supplementarity that constitutes Western thought and subjectivity. When this technology intersected, in medieval times, with technologies of the self, a very specific subject emerged, the effects of which are

⁷³ Freud, 'Postscript', *An Autobiographical Study*, trans. By James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1950), pp. 131-32.

⁷⁴ Barker, p. 182.

⁷⁵ Freud, 'The Uncanny', *PFL* 14, p. 352.

⁷⁶ Ong, p. 148.

still prevalent. As Barker suggests: ‘if modern subjectivity has inherited the self-reflexive tradition of Abelard and Descartes... then Freud and psychoanalysis are the modern interpreters of it *par excellence*’(182).

It is from the conjunction of these technologies, methodologies and historical transformations that the Oedipal, self-reflective autobiographical subject emerged, and it is here, according to Barker, that ‘the Cartesian trap lies in wait’:

On the one hand, Descartes’ project announces the possibility of a science of the subject as he dislocates it from the specific conditions of its emergence. On the other, in the face of the impossibility of a theogonical or theological defence in contemporary culture, this subject cannot have stability restored to it. It vacillates between doubt and certainty, producing in us the fault line that constitutes us as subjects—a faultline that runs from Abelard to Descartes, Kant, Hegel, Nietzsche and Freud, and simultaneously constitutes the possibility of disintegration and multiplicity as well as an impossible need for stability, rationality, metaphysics, essentialism and transcendentalism. (171-2)

Given his history, and the monitoring and regulation of Aboriginality that has taken place for most of this century, it is not surprising that David Unaipon would produce an autobiographical narrative. Unaipon’s ‘My Life Story’, published in 1951, marks the emergence of the first autobiographical Aboriginal subject in Australia. The interesting thing about this life story is that it had apparently been related to the President of the AFA, Rev. Sexton, who then read it out at the Annual Meeting, before it was published in the report. It has, then, gone through a series of repetitions, and the voice of the ‘I’ is an echo of an absent voice which haunts the story, surrounding it with uncertainty. This might explain the strangely ambivalent tone of ‘My Life Story’. It opens:

The story of my life begins 78 years ago when I made my advent into this world in a native wurley, along the banks of the River Murray at Taillem bend. My father and mother were full-blood aborigines..., and we lived according to the customs of a primitive race.⁷⁷

Apart from the fact that this is not true, that is, Unaipon was not born in a native wurley, and did not live according to the customs of a primitive race, what is striking about this

⁷⁷ Unaipon, ‘My Life Story’, *AFA Annual Report*, 1951, p. 10. Future references are to this edition, and are included in parentheses in the text.

passage is the self-reflexivity of its opening phrase. Unaipon, in other words, is telling a story, and it is his story, rather than his life, that begins 78 years previously. Advent, moreover, is a word associated with the coming of Christ, and Unaipon's claim that he was born 'in a native wurley' extends this association.

About processes of colonization, Unaipon's reflection on the processes of colonization reveals an ambivalence that are not as obvious in his earlier public statements:

I can vividly recall those days of my youth, for our home life and the homes of others were greatly disturbed by the advent of the white man into tribal lands. All his movements were keenly watched and made known to the natives by means of smoke fires and other agencies... Through the want of understanding each other, white and black came into conflict. Spears were thrown, and the white man's superior weapons were used upon the natives with deadly effect. All this came about because the blackfellow did not understand the white man's aims, and neither side had a grasp of the language necessary for a proper understanding between them. (10)

Although Unaipon puts conflict down to misunderstanding, he is also clearly aware of the unequal power relation between whites and blacks that could be effected materially. The 'white man's aims', that Unaipon claims the blackfellow did not understand, are nowhere articulated. These uncertain aims hang, like a shadow, over the story.

Unsurprisingly, much of this life story, presented to the AFA, expresses gratitude towards it, but given that the story opens with a clear non-factual statement, the status of the information in this story is always uncertain. Unaipon does, however, claim that the bad feeling between the colonizers and his people was ameliorated by the arrival of Taplin: 'The aborigines greatly resented the incursion of the newcomer into their domains, and it was only when the Aborigines' Friends' Association sent Mr. Taplin among them as a missionary that there began a better feeling between the black and white race'(10).

Unaipon's autobiography reiterates Unaipon's identificatory relation to his father: 'On his arrival [Taplin] sought out the most intelligent natives and established good relations with them, and through them made known the tribes the nature of his mission. Among these leaders was my father, James Unaipon'(11). And again, in the same self-conscious narrative mode, Unaipon states: 'In my life story I recall several

important influences which have shaped my career. One of these has been the Christian example of my father'(12).

Apart from the opening paragraph that immediately calls into question the status of the information presented, Unaipon's narrative raises other questions. At one point he asserts that 'I have everywhere received a sympathetic welcome and been given much encouragement in doing so by members of the white race'(12). On the following page, however, in discussing the 'help' he received 'from the study of the Bible', he claims: 'It was in this Book I learned that God made all nations of one blood and that in Christ Jesus colour and racial distinctions disappeared. This helped me many times when I was refused accommodation because of my colour and race.'(13)

The question of subjectivity is also raised in this autobiography:

Mr. Taplin did not expect to change the lives of the older people, but centred his activities upon the younger generation. He established a school which I attended and there entered a new mental world. He associated with this a dormitory so that the boys and girls might be trained in civilized ways, and it was there I learned to use a knife and fork, say grace and adopt table manners.⁷⁸

The suggestion is that Unaipon, and the lives of all the Aboriginal children in the mission, were changed, and that this change involved the entering of 'a new mental world', that was fundamentally connected with 'training' in civilization. In his narrative, Unaipon even refers to himself as 'a product of missionary work', reiterating the production of subjectivity that was such a large component of the colonial project.

Yet, 'civilized ways', as I attempted to demonstrate in the previous chapter, are fundamentally 'capitalist ways', and part of the problem for Unaipon, and Aborigines like him, was that they were neither able to participate in the sphere of work or production (however exploited it might be) or in the sphere of consumption. It is, perhaps, in this light that we can think about Unaipon's discussion of the 'good' and 'bad' in civilization in 'An Aboriginal Pleads for his Race':

⁷⁸ Unaipon, 'My Life Story', p. 11. See Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process: The History of Manners and State Formation and Civilization*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994). This is a detailed study of the part played by manners in the signification of civilization, and it is striking to think that that is what 'civilized ways' boils down to.

with the good influence of the missionary there also comes the influence of the lower type of civilization, and the pull downwards is greater than the lift upwards.

This is the real problem. If the aborigine could see only the good points of civilization there would be no problem. But the uneducated, uncivilized aborigine thinks that whatever a white man does is good. He lacks the civilized man's power to distinguish between what is good and what is bad in civilization...

If some sort of reserve were possible, in which only the good influences of civilization could be felt, a new civilized race could be built up.⁷⁹

This ambivalent reference to civilization, and the missionary as the 'good' aspect is belied by the fact, under civilization (the central component of which is capitalism), missionary enterprises, even by 1936 when this was written, were already outmoded and had already been replaced by the rationalized social authority of government bureaucratization characteristic of advanced capitalism. This was the cause of much of the hostility between missionaries and administrators/anthropologists. Contrary to Freud's account, where the barbaric aspects of civilization are the archaic vestiges of the primitive, Unaipon's account seems to be suggesting something fundamentally different which can be seen in his claim about the very difficulty of differentiating between the dual aspects of the phenomenon of civilization. There is no 'good' and 'bad' civilization. Rather, as I hope to have shown in my previous chapter, civilization is always haunted, and defines itself against, the savagery that it disavows and displaces.⁸⁰

This is one of the insights of Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus* – that capitalism, both in the psyche and in society, under the 'cash nexus', and dominated by the abstract demands of the market, aggressively eliminates all existing meanings and beliefs. This might explain Unaipon's commitment to Christianity as accompanying what is otherwise the merely rampant capitalist enterprise of colonialism: 'the only

⁷⁹ Unaipon, 'An Aboriginal Pleads for his Race', *AFA Annual Review*, 1936, p. 1.

⁸⁰ Even today, the 'good' Aborigines are the ones who can get jobs, and 'bad' Aborigines are the ones who fight for land-rights. I am referring here to an article I recently read in the *Sydney Morning Herald* about the 'swift and disillusioning lesson in politics' for John Howard's 'hand-picked head of ATSIC [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commissioner], Gatjil Djerrkura.' Howard's Government had manufactured the ousting of his outspoken predecessor. The article opens: 'The prime minister must have thought he had found the perfect blackfella. Here was a temperate, Methodist mission-educated Aborigine and a self-made corporate success. A suit with an impressive track record brokering mining agreements. A family man with a wife from Melbourne... "He doesn't raise his voice," noted the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, John Herron.' Lauren Martin, 'Irreconcilable Differences', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 February 1999, p. 13. Like Unaipon before him, Djerrkura learnt the hard way about the path of moderation.

improvement of my race lies along the lines of properly conducted missionary enterprise, which goes down to the fundamental needs of the aborigines and gives them the inner power to reconstruct their lives which have become shattered by contact with white civilization'.⁸¹

This suggests that Christianity provided Unaipon with a set of beliefs in the face of the demolition of Aboriginal beliefs and the increasing impersonal administrative bureaucratization and intrusion into Aboriginal lives. As a product of the missions, and excluded from white Australian society, Christianity was one of the few systems of meanings that Unaipon had access to. In 'My Life Story', Unaipon speaks at length about the value of the Bible:

As a native lad I found there was no information available about the past history of the human race except that which came down through the traditions of the old men of the tribes. In listening to the old men's stories I could not find any record of worthy achievements by the members of my race, but what a contrast I found when I opened the Bible. There I found thrilling stories of adventure and achievement which spurred to action. In various places of the Bible I found the blackfellow playing a part in life's programme. I found it was a blackfellow that befriended the prophet Jeremiah when he was unjustly cast into prison. It was a blackfellow who was there at the right moment to relieve Jesus by bearing the cross when the saviour fell beneath its weight. (13)

This is an idiosyncratic reading of the Bible, where it is valued as a source of adventure stories and, in a proto-postcolonial argument, positive role models for Aborigines, in the face of the destruction and humiliation of Aboriginal elders. Unaipon's claim that such role models do not exist in Aboriginal stories, may well be due to Aboriginal stories not having the same kind of cross-cultural and racialized referents that the Bible contains. The Bible then is valuable, because it shows blacks to be of value in a multi-racial society, the kind of society that Australia had rapidly become, and the kind of society in which Unaipon hoped Aborigines would come to be equally valued .

The final paragraphs of 'My Life Story' are concerned with race relations in Australia:

⁸¹ Unaipon, 'My Life Story', pp. 13-14.

I have often been asked the best method of dealing with the aboriginal problem. I have carefully studied the plans adopted for the advancement of the aborigines, and I see no way out but in co-operation between the white and black races. Colour and race prejudice should be laid aside and equal rights given to both black and white Australians. (13)

Unaipon's claim, 'I see no way out but...', is the kind of acting within constraints that I hoped to point out through my contextualization of his life and work. For Unaipon, the only solution is equal rights, and such rights require co-operation. Unaipon's statement brings to mind Fanon's assertion, published the year after Unaipon's autobiographical narrative: 'However painful it may be for me to accept this conclusion, I am obliged to state it: for the black man there is only one destiny. And it is white'(9).

'Leaves of Memory', Unaipon's second autobiographical piece, was written in 1953 when Unaipon was 80 years old, and was spoken directly by Unaipon to the AFA. There is something more obviously metaphorical about this rewriting. The 'leaves' perhaps refer to the leaves of a page upon which memories are inscribed, revealing the extent of Unaipon's interiorization of the textual practices out of which autobiographies are constituted. There is also a sense in this title that, perhaps, after eighty years, David Unaipon knew he was leaving. The autobiographical moment is a graphic moment, and memory becomes something material that is inscribed on leaves, and is then, in death, left behind. 'Leaves of Memory' presupposes and points to that moment, that impending yet still future historical event when all that will be left of Unaipon, all that will be remembered of him, will be these material traces that he leaves on paper. It is as if this emerging self-reflexive subject, writing his second autobiographical narrative in the space of two years, is committed to reiterating his life and self in order to confirm its existence because, for the autobiographical subject, this is the only way in which one's existence can be confirmed.

'Leaves of Memory' also has a slightly different tone to the earlier story. Unaipon opens by expressing his gratitude for being invited to speak and being able to 'take the opportunity of recalling some of my many memories of the early days of the

Mission at Pt. McLeay founded by the Association, and where I was born in 1872'.⁸²

Already there is a divergence from the previous story, with Unaipon claiming that he was born at Pt. McLeay Mission. In this narrative, moreover, he is much less conciliatory towards white settlers who he claims 'invaded the tribal territories', and he states, in the most uncompromising language that he has ever used, that 'much bitterness sprang up between the black and white race in the south, when the white settlers invaded the tribal territories... and appropriated the land to their own use, and several tragedies resulted'(6). In this narrative, bitterness is not caused by mutual misunderstanding but by unilateral invasion.

Even Unaipon's descriptions of missionary benefits, and the role of Taplin, are down-played in this latter piece:

This bitter feeling of resentment and opposition was relieved by the coming of the missionaries...A new state of affairs began when [Taplin] settled at Pt. McLeay, as he gradually persuaded the natives to adopt civilized ways and leave their old-fashioned wurlies and live in houses like the white people. He also gave special attention to the young natives by opening a school for their education, and a dormitory for them to live in where they were trained in civilized ways...To do these things, Mr. Taplin consulted the old men of the tribes, and gradually secured their co-operation. Among those men was my father, James Unaipon. (6)

Resentment here is only relieved rather than removed, and the persuasion of natives to leave their life-styles and co-operate with the missionaries is only gradual, with even the suggestion that it was somewhat coercive. Similarly, Unaipon implies that it was only through consultation with the old men that Taplin's project could be undertaken at all.

Unlike 'My Life Story', the later life narrative's attitude to Bible stories has shifted even more radically which, in this account, 'resemble' tribal lore, rather than being preferable to it: 'The natives were particularly fond of some of the Bible stories... [which] bore some resemblance to items in their own tribal lore'(7). Although in 'My Life Story', Unaipon states that one of the things he liked about the Bible was 'the blackfellow playing a part in life's programme', in 'Leaves of Memory', he states that what the 'natives were particularly fond of' was 'the graphic stories of the flight of the

⁸² Unaipon, 'Leaves of Memory', *AFA Annual Report*, 1953, p. 6. Future references are to this edition, and are included in parentheses in the text.

children of Israel from Egyptian bondage, and their forty years walkabout in the wilderness'(7). Whether or not Unaipon is also referring to himself here is unclear, but this lack of clarity can be read as a blurring of boundaries between himself and other Aborigines that, at other times in his life, he was eager to maintain.

Once again, Unaipon refers to himself as 'as one who is a product of the Pt. McLeay Mission' and then states that, as this product, he 'would like to say that as time advanced I began to feel that I should like to move about in the white man's world. Efforts were made to detain me at the Mission... but my desire persisted for a walkabout among the white race'(8). This statement suggests that while missionaries were producing certain kinds of subjects—Christian, 'civilized', Oedipal—the modes of being that that we take for granted as characterizing the modern subject—free choice, self-determination, education—remained off limits to Unaipon, even by the missionaries. What is also striking is that Unaipon uses a word with strong Aboriginal significations, 'walkabout', to describe the activities he devoted his life to. Perhaps it is in this light that we can think about the following, rather shrewd paragraph:

I made up my mind to find out the secret of perpetual motion. The idea occupied my mind day and night and I conceived the idea of inventing a machine to demonstrate my theory. Through the assistance of this Association I had an instrument made which I showed to University Professors and students. This aroused their interest, particularly I think, because a blackfellow should reverse the ancient practice of the tribes in encouraging inactivity, by trying to find out the secret of perpetual motion. (8-9)

In this way, a connection can be made between the Aboriginal practice of walkabout with the scientific investigation of perpetual motion, confusing the anthropological association of Aborigines with indolence, and civilization both with activity and with scientific knowledge.

This memory of arousing the interest of University Professors, and Unaipon's challenge to their entrenched stereotyping of Aborigines as only being objects of knowledge rather than subjects of it, may also have been an oblique reference to the fact that in November, 1926, Unaipon was arrested and held on vagrancy charges, an event which was reported in the *Adelaide Advertiser* at the time:

The well-known full-blooded Aborigine, Mr. David Unaipon, is in Adelaide, and when interviewed on Wednesday he expressed strong resentment of the impression conveyed by a report that he had been 'disciplined' for idleness... He had been visiting the mission and was questioned by the superintendent regarding his reasons for being there. He replied that he was gathering information for articles and stories he was compiling. The police was called in and he was put in goal for idleness. He understood that a person could not be arrested and imprisoned for vagrancy when he could prove that he had adequate lawful means of support. At the time he was arrested he had pounds 3 in his pocket.⁸³

The story reports how, in response to these charges, Unaipon exhibited a pile of type-written documents, a portion of the work upon which he was engaged, and asserted: 'An idle man...does not produce work such as that'. This article highlights the impossible position that Aborigines were placed in. Prevented from selling his labour power, always able to be legally detained by the police and removed from Government land (he was, in fact, at Raukkan at the time, the place of his birth) Unaipon's intimidation by white authorities is a recurring story for Aboriginal people in Australia.

Unaipon's interest in Aboriginal mythology, however, can be dated from around this time, and in the *Observer* interview published in 1925, he explained how his anthropological interest had come about:

at present... I am studying our Aboriginal folklore. I should probably never have thought of doing so but for an offer from Angus and Robertson, but I have become extremely interested in it. I am now collecting folk legends for a book, and they are going to publish it.⁸⁴

The History of William Ramsay Smith

While Unaipon was in negotiations with the Melbourne-based publisher, Angus and Robertson, Angus and Robertson, unbeknownst to Unaipon, was in negotiations with William Ramsay Smith, a prominent anthropologist who was interested in a collection of Aboriginal myths.

William Ramsay Smith was born in Aberdeenshire in 1859. He studied at Edinburgh University, graduating in almost every branch of his Arts course, gaining honours in natural science, and he was prizeman in mathematics and logic. He then took the degree of Bachelor of Science and, in 1884, won a medical scholarship and entered

⁸³ 'The Aborigines: Mr. Unaipon's Views', *Advertiser* [Adelaide], 18 November 1926, p. 15.

⁸⁴ 'Aboriginal Intellectual: David Unaipon', p. 46.

upon the study of medicine, completing the course several years before he graduated in 1892. He was an Assistant-Professor of Natural History and Senior Demonstrator of zoology from 1885-1890, as well as being an examiner for the Royal College of Surgeons and Physicians. In 1892, he entered private practice and also undertook sanitary work for the Local Government Board of Scotland. In 1889, he married Margaret MacKenzie of Ross-shire.⁸⁵ This brief history of Ramsay Smith's training indicates that he was an extremely brilliant man, and that he was an example of that all-inclusive epistemological project that characterized, particularly in Scotland, the post-Enlightenment man.

Ramsay Smith arrived in South Australia in July 1896, to take up the position of a senior physician to the Royal Adelaide Hospital after the honorary medical staff had resigned over a dispute with the Government. Although the British Medical Association had warned physicians not to accept any of the advertised posts, Ramsay Smith defied their cautions, and his conduct was viewed by the BMA as 'highly dishonourable and unprofessional'.⁸⁶ In 1897 he was expelled from the organization and never re-admitted. He did however, retain his post at the Royal Adelaide Hospital until 1903 as well as being Inspector of Anatomy and Superintendent of the University School of Anatomy from 1899 to 1903.

We know little of the details of Ramsay Smith's life, but the incident with the BMA is not the only event that brought him into disrepute. The few textual fragments we do have suggest that Ramsay Smith was a man with many enemies, and he clearly was both authoritarian and simultaneously disrespectful of authority.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ These details come from the entry under Smith, William Ramsay by Ronald G. Elmslie and Susan Nance in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 11: 1891-1931 ed. Geoffrey Serle (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1988), pp. 674-5; *The Cyclopaedia of South Australia*, ed. T. H. Burgess (Adelaide: The Cyclopaedia Company, nd), pp. 318-9; and Ramsay Smith's obituary in the *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Edinburgh*, 57 (1936-37), p. 436.

⁸⁶ This saga is reported in the 1896-97 volumes of the *British Medical Journal*.

⁸⁷ Ramsay Smith had been the focus of an inquiry after complaints were made against him by nurses working under him during the war. The inquiry found that the friction 'arose from Lieut. Colonel Ramsay Smith trying to impose a system of command in an arbitrary and tactless manner on a body of men [sic] who were not accustomed to military discipline'. Jan Bassett and Bryan Egan, 'Doctors and Nurses at War: No. 1 Australian General Hospital, Cairo, 1915', *Journal of the Australian War Memorial*, 22 (1993), p. 16. After the reorganization of the armed forces in South Australia, Ramsay Smith was appointed Surgeon-Captain, and attached to the field artillery. At the outbreak of war in South Africa in 1899, the same year that he had been appointed President for the Central Board of Health in South Australia, he took over the command of the field artillery and saw active service as Surgeon-Captain of

Ramsay Smith and the Subject of Anthropology

Ramsay Smith, however, became and remained one of the most respected and influential members of the anthropological community of South Australia to which his interest in comparative anatomy, in particular, allowed him access. As Marc Manganaro has asserted:

An influence on comparative philology, and a fundamental predecessor of the comparative method in evolutionary anthropology, was the comparative anatomy and biology of the early part of the nineteenth century, especially as embodied in the work of Georges Cuvier and, later of course, Charles Darwin. Comparative anatomy enjoyed great status in the first half of the nineteenth century: Edwin Ackerknecht has referred to it as 'the glamour science of the day.' Of course, the increasingly evolutionary character of the field had a great impact upon the institutionalisation of anthropology as a discipline. Physical anthropology, separating from cultural anthropology in the middle of the century, was really a direct descendent of comparative anatomy, and yet both physical and cultural anthropology became evolutionist mainly under the influence of comparative anatomy.⁸⁸

That these intellectual and evolutionary allegiances had effects in Australia, and that Ramsay Smith was a recognized authority, is clear from McGregor's study of the 'doomed race' theory, *Imagined Destinies*:

For the scientist of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries one of the most appealing features of evolutionary theory lay in its capacity to encompass the entire range of human attributes in a single bio-social law. Thus a specialist in kinship systems, like Howitt, could weave a racial theme through his analyses; while on the other hand a specialist in anatomy, like the Adelaide scientist Dr William Ramsay Smith, could write authoritatively on both Aboriginal physical characteristics and their cultural practices. (37-38)

the Imperial Bushmen's Corps, and was special officer for plague administration in South Africa. He was awarded the war medal with two clasps in 1901, in 1903 he was appointed Major, and in 1906, Lieutenant-Colonel and principal medical officer of the Commonwealth military forces in South Africa. Ramsay Smith left Australia for Egypt in December, 1914 and it was here that a bitter battle between himself and principal matron of No. 1 AGH. She made complaints against him because he had 'taken control of the allocation of nursing staff from her; humiliated her in public over arrangements for sick nurses; given her "peremptory instruction in regard to the Nurses' mess" which caused nurses who were late by only a few minutes to miss meals; reprimanded nurses in front of patients; not allowed her authority over visitors wishing to see nurses who were on duty; made the house matron responsible to himself rather than to Miss Bell; and ordered her (Miss Bell) to report two nurses for a breach of discipline when they had mistakenly used the wrong room for visitors'(14). In the interviews that followed, Miss Bell was supported in virtually every instance, and both Bell and Ramsay Smith were recalled to Australia.

⁸⁸Marc Manganaro, *Myth, Rhetoric and the Voice of Authority: a Critique of Frazer, Eliot, Frye and Campbell* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1992), p. 11

And write authoritatively he indeed did, especially in his capacity as President of the Anthropology Section of the Australian Association of the Advancement of Science (AAAS). Not only had he given a paper at the 11th Meeting of the AAAS in 1907, another address at the 14th meeting in 1913, and written the entry on 'The Aborigines of Australia' for the Official Year Book of the Commonwealth of Australia in 1910, but he also co-wrote the Aborigines entry in the Australian Encyclopedia with Baldwin Spencer in 1927. William Ramsay Smith was one of Australia's most authoritative voices on Aboriginality and, in his many articles, he shows himself to be a cautious and thorough scholar. Ramsay Smith reiterates, solemnly and approvingly, Marett's claim that, 'Anthropology is the child of Darwin. Darwin makes it possible. Reject the Darwinian point of view, and you must reject Anthropology also.'⁸⁹ Like other anthropologists of his day, he believed that anthropology was intimately linked with evolution. The status of what McGregor, following Foucault, calls a 'single bio-social law' can be seen in the claims that Ramsay Smith makes for the all-inclusive epistemological realm of anthropology:

Anthropology comes into touch with all things human. For it deals with man's body and mind, and all that these include and imply; with his physical structure and bodily functions; with his intellect, emotions and will; with his languages, religions and customs, social conditions, habits instincts appetites, and activities. It deals with all human activities past and present, with everything in the Universe that is related to man or that influences him in any way, and with the manner and extent of the influence.⁹⁰

Ramsay Smith certainly makes great claims for anthropology and it is possibly for this reason that he takes the status of anthropological expertise so seriously. He was a strong advocate of the professionalization of anthropology, and he was careful to dissociate himself from the many amateur anthropologists and naturalists that were so numerous at the time.⁹¹ For Ramsay Smith, anthropology was serious scientific business:

⁸⁹ William Ramsay Smith, 'Ethnology and Anthropology', *Report of the Fourteenth Meeting of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science*, 1913, p. 369.

⁹⁰ Ramsay Smith, 'Ethnology and Anthropology', p. 367

⁹¹ See Tom Griffiths, *Hunters and Collectors: The Antiquarian Imagination in Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). Griffiths explores in detail the place of amateur antiquarians in Australian colonial history.

The people forming the great majority to whom the science is a recreation might surely unite in an effort to supply materials to those workers who apply themselves closely to what is an arduous and sometimes, unfortunately, an expensive task In the universal 'grab-all' for door-mats be graciously pleased to pay some respect to the altar cloths of the anthropologists.⁹²

It was only the trained and professional anthropologist that could interpret artifacts and, for Ramsay Smith, this took on a moral imperative: 'Not everyone... can say what is normal or abnormal, trivial or important, commonplace or unique in any particular skull; and the moral, therefore, is—Bring everything in the way of teeth and skulls under the notice of the anthropological expert'.⁹³

Like Herbert Basedow, with whom he was acquainted, Ramsay Smith subscribed to the belief in Aboriginal primitivity. As he states, 'the Australian aboriginals have furnished the largest number of ape-like characters. The more one investigates the more confirmation does this statement receive'.⁹⁴ He did, however, accept the relation of the Aboriginal to the Caucasian, which many in Australia's colonial community at the time found intolerable. According to Ramsay Smith it 'appears established that the aboriginals are an homogeneous race, unmixed in descent, of Caucasian stock, not negro or negrito—a primitive race, a relic of the oldest human stock'.⁹⁵

Ramsay Smith, like other anthropologists who considered themselves not only scientific observers, but also humanists, strove to undo the equation of primitivity with degradation:

The Australian aboriginals are a primitive race. This established and accepted fact, taken in conjunction with superficial observations of early explorers, the misrepresentations of some of the early settlers, and inaccurate reports of later writers, has given rise to an impression that they are a degraded race. But primitiveness and degradation are not synonymous.... And here one must record definitely and emphatically that the Australian race is not a degraded one, physically, mentally or morally. Some tribes and some individuals may exhibit

⁹² Ramsay Smith, 'The Place of the Aboriginal in Recent Anthropological Research', *Report of the Eleventh Meeting of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science*, 1907, p. 576.

⁹³ William Ramsay Smith, 'The Place of the Aboriginal in Recent Anthropological Research', p. 566

⁹⁴ William Ramsay Smith, 'The Aborigines of Australia', *Official Year Book of the Commonwealth of Australia*, No. 3 (Melbourne: Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics, 1910), p. 158.

⁹⁵ Ramsay Smith, 'The Aborigines of Australia', p. 158.

inferior and degraded traits, but as a race it shows no signs of retrocession, degeneration, or degradation.⁹⁶

One of the interesting yet disturbing things to note about Ramsay Smith, in the light of the work done in the previous chapter, is the way in which an off-hand, institutional anti-Semitism pervades his work. At one stage he claims, in the vaguest of terms, that from his knowledge of Aborigines, a 'Jewish cast of countenance, *possibly more apparent than real*, is frequently and widely met with'.⁹⁷ What such a statement might mean is a difficult question. In another odd analogy between Jews and Aborigines, Ramsay Smith writes:

Judging from this standpoint we must allow that the more we know of the blackfellow the more we are constrained to say that he is saturated with religion; but writers have been calling it sorcery, witchcraft, superstition and such-like names... For instance, we recognise that the morality or religion of the early Jew was to be gauged by his attitude towards the law... blessings or curses as the case might be, and these of an arbitrary sort, until he evolved a higher sort of religion. The hope or fear of these consequences was the motive power. The aboriginal has systems of sanitation not only comparable to the Mosaic, which is still the wonder of the world, but superior to it in two ways: firstly, because in many respects they are more comprehensive and detailed, and secondly, because the motive power appeals much more to him—his fear of wrong doing may be a lower motive than the Jew's hope of worldly success for well-doing; but it is certainly a stronger one.⁹⁸

Perhaps the most disturbing aspect of this anti-Semitism is that, as late as 1979, Graham Jenkin refers to Ramsay Smith in order to explicate Aboriginal laws of sanitation: 'Parallels can be found for [practical and logical purposes of sanitation laws] elsewhere, such as the Judaic and Islamic religions: and Dr Ramsay Smith illustrates the point by comparing the Mosaic laws with the Aboriginal laws (which he considers superior) regarding systems of sanitation'(16).

Ramsay Smith's relation to the doomed race theory is more complex than the other populist assumption of the inevitable demise of Aborigines. He closes his article entitled 'The Aborigines of Australia' with the claim that: 'the problem of what to do with the race, the most interesting at present on earth, and the least deserving to be exterminated by us, and the most wronged at our hands, is not a difficult one to solve,

⁹⁶ Ramsay Smith, 'The Aborigines of Australia', p. 162-63.

⁹⁷ Ramsay Smith, 'The Aborigines of Australia', p. 163; Emphasis added.

⁹⁸ Ramsay Smith, 'The Aborigines of Australia', p. 173.

were a solution really desired'(175). In other words, for Ramsay Smith, extinction is not an inevitability, but something that could be averted by effort and intervention.

However, Ramsay Smith's anthropological writings suggest that the welfare and protection that he advocated were not to help the Aborigines *per se*. His belief in the one-race theory, and the relatedness of Aborigines and Caucasians, 'enhances the interest in the aboriginal, and brings the subject of the ethnology and anthropology of the black nearer home to us'.⁹⁹ For Ramsay Smith, the study of Aboriginality was crucial because, with that strange allochronic logic that marks early anthropology, contemporary aborigines were ourselves in a prior life. As he argued for the continuation of his version of anthropology, he declared that 'almost every part of the anatomy of the aboriginal is being examined and re-examined with the view of discovering keys that will open up the secrets of human origin and racial affinities.'¹⁰⁰

The primary purpose of the study of Aboriginal society, according to Ramsay Smith, was to promote a deeper understanding of Western civilization. The anthropological object of knowledge is, in effect, oneself, and it comes as no surprise that Ramsay Smith would allude to the Delphic Oracle, 'Know Thyself', as the epistemological justification of the anthropological project; nor that he would quote one of those founders of self-reflexivity, St Augustine:

The injunction of the oracle, 'Know Thyself,' written over the gates at the temple at Delphi, has been accepted as the text of all religions, and the motto of all philosophies. Expressed in modern scientific thought-currency, it is 'Study Anthropology.' Anthropology, in helping man to know himself, is concerned with the questions—What are we? Whence are we? How are we? For it deals with man, present-day man, individually and in bulk, with the rock out of which he was hewn or the pit out of which he was digged, and with the process of the making or the moulding. It imposes on the searcher an inquiry into ancestry, relatives and relationships. To echo metaphysics, Anthropology studies man in the phases of being and becoming. To borrow a phrase from a religious book, it deals with how man works out his own salvation. It is also prompted to ask whither, as a race, we are going, and how we can affect our destination, or our destiny, and control the conditions of the journey. The indifference of the natural man to this study, absolutely and relatively, has been set forth by St. Augustine: 'men go and gaze wonderingly at the lofty mountain peaks, the great sea billows, the

⁹⁹ Ramsay Smith, 'The Place of the Aboriginal in Recent Anthropological Research', p. 575.

¹⁰⁰ Ramsay Smith, 'The Place of the Aboriginal in Recent Anthropological Research', p. 558.

deep flowing rivers, and the stars in their courses, and take no stock in themselves, see nothing worth looking at.’¹⁰¹

This conjunction of Augustine’s self-reflexivity and the injunction of the Delphic Oracle to know oneself, brings to mind Abelard’s book on ethics, *Know Thyself (Scito Te Ipsum)*. Ramsay Smith’s discourse can be located in that space between the religious and the secular, the space out of which anthropology, as a secular and rational discourse on the human being as both subject and object of its own knowledge, came into being. In anthropology, as in psychoanalysis, knowledge is self-knowledge, and the self is the foundation of knowledge. Yet this belief in the foundation of knowledge at the origin of the self is itself constituted by a series of textually-constituted repetitions—‘the injunction of the origin’; ‘to echo metaphysics’; ‘to borrow a phrase’.

It is for this reason, as McGregor has argued, that the ‘most common accompaniment [of the doomed race theory] was not an explication of the process, but a plea for research to be conducted promptly, before the most primitive of races vanished forever’.¹⁰² Ramsay Smith exemplifies this position, and he does so with recourse to the most extraordinarily ambivalent textual metaphor: ‘The primitive pages are here in abundance, but only for a little while. The Sibylline books are presented open to us as a gift; and, as a people, we can’t be bothered.’¹⁰³ In Greek and Roman mythology, the sibyl is one of many women in ancient times that uttered oracles and prophecies, the most famous of which led Aeneas into the underworld. Sibylline books, as an extension of this, refers to a collection of oracles belonging to the ancient Roman state. Sibylline books are therefore located in the space between the mythological and the historical, and the mythological world of the Sibyl becomes the basis for the foundation of the law, and the guidance that the law provides. It is in the mythological story of the Sibyl that anthropology finds its theoretical justification. For Ramsay Smith, Aboriginal people are a kind of textual gift, and they can function as the oracle, less predicting the future, than confirming the past:

¹⁰¹ Ramsay Smith, ‘Ethnology and Anthropology’, p. 366.

¹⁰² McGregor, pp. 56-57.

¹⁰³ Ramsay Smith, ‘Ethnology and Anthropology’, p. 374.

Centuries ago, nature 'side-tracked' a race in Australia. At the present time, despite some drawbacks or interference from outside, that race remains, to a large extent, in primitive conditions. It is capable of casting light on the evolution of human races in a way, and to an extent, that probably no other can equal. It gives us the key, from a study of present customs, to the origin and meaning of the mythology of the Greeks and the Romans, and of mythology generally.¹⁰⁴

The Myths of Ramsay Smith

It is perhaps this reasoning that explains Ramsay Smith's interest in Aboriginal mythology and folklore, even if, in a circle of logic reminiscent of Freud, he draws upon mythical reasoning to elucidate his aims:

Folk-lore is usually defined as including such traditional or archaic beliefs, customs, superstitions, legends, or tales as have become obsolete or are no longer believed.

The aboriginal, like every other citizen of the world, has his stock of fables, for the benefit of the youth principally—stories obviously intentionally invented for the purpose of pointing a moral or enforcing some useful truth or precept. He also has his parables of the same nature and for the like purpose. His legends, using the term in a somewhat loose sense, are fairly numerous. It is when we come to mythology, however, that real interest is aroused and practical difficulty arises in connection with the aboriginal's beliefs. If we accept a myth as 'a tale handed down from primitive times, and in form historical, but in reality involving elements of early religious views, as respecting the origins of things, the powers of nature and their workings, the rise of institutions, the history of races and communities and the like,' then we find that in dealing with the aboriginal we are studying 'folk-lore in the making.' This is where the interest lies. The difficulty arises when we try to determine how much of the material is actual belief influencing the native's thought, action, conduct, life, i.e., how much comes within the category of religion; and how much has become mere tradition, interesting only as history or amusement, i.e., what comes within the category of folk-lore. The task of the apostle of anthropology is to resolve the literary nebula into 'gospel' on the one hand and the 'old wives' fables' on the other.¹⁰⁵

The task that Ramsay Smith is setting both himself and anthropology more generally here is analogous to the task Freud set himself, explored in the footnote examined in the previous chapter, where he has to decide whether to 'regard the present state of things as a true picture of the significant features of the past or as a secondary distortion of them'. Ramsay Smith's strangely gendered Christian metaphor, where anthropology's task is a hermeneutically theological one, almost in the biblical tradition, where the

¹⁰⁴ Ramsay Smith, 'Ethnology and Anthropology', p. 374.

¹⁰⁵ Ramsay Smith, 'The Aborigines of Australia', p. 174.

anthropologist has to differentiate between the truth and gossip, the original and its corruption. It is at the point of the origin that such truth resides.

It is, perhaps, this conjunction of anthropology and mythology that Ramsay Smith is here stressing that led to the beginning of his correspondence with George Robertson, of the publishers, Angus and Robertson. On January 22, 1925, Ramsay Smith wrote to Robertson, telling him that a Mr Harrap of Harrap Publications in London had asked him to write a volume on Australian Aboriginal myths to complete his series: 'After very serious agitation', he claims, 'I said I would undertake the work'. He mentions casually to Robertson, 'I thought of David Unaipon, whom I have known well for upwards of 20 years'.¹⁰⁶

It is difficult to say when Ramsay Smith may first have met Unaipon, although there is evidence that he did visit Raukkan in 1907 in his role as the Head of Public Health in South Australia. Ramsay Smith had been sent to Raukkan to investigate the causes of several deaths of Aboriginal children. Ramsay Smith came to the conclusion that the children were being 'overtaxed', and he recommended that school hours should be shortened and standards lowered. Ramsay Smith's suggestions were implemented in 1909, and in 1910 books and slates were abolished in a effort to control the spread of consumption. Loose paper, which could be destroyed at the end of the day, became the only material used for reading or writing. Of these suggestions, Jenkin, in *Conquest of the Ngarrindjeri* wrote:

These measures were designed with the *best of intentions*, for the aborigines have had few stronger *advocates* than Ramsay Smith. Nevertheless, from that time on, the expected levels of attainment at Raukkan were to decline, and inspectors were to make allowance in their reports for the fact that the children were 'only aborigines'. (198)

Even as late as 1979, in one of the few available histories of Unaipon's community, Ramsay Smith was considered a prime advocate of Aboriginal advancement. Perhaps one way of thinking about this is by thinking through the ambiguous legislative implications of the word advocate—one who speaks in the place of another; one who

¹⁰⁶ *Angus and Robertson Papers*, Mitchell Library, Sydney, 22 January 1925. All future references to these papers are from this collection.

pleads for the other. Such a concept inevitably raises the question of authorization. Who authorized Ramsay Smith's benevolent advocacy? There is, moreover, a disturbing irony in Ramsay Smith's self-authorized advocacy of the removal of writing materials from the Aboriginal school that Unaipon had attended, when it is Unaipon's writings that he will later so blatantly consume.

It is speculation to wonder whether or not Ramsay Smith knew of David Unaipon's collecting of Aboriginal legends, or even if he knew of the negotiations under way between Unaipon and Angus and Robertson. Certainly both Unaipon and Ramsay Smith were members of the Aborigines' Protection League, a breakaway group from the AFA that was formed by Colonel J.C. Genders, in 1925. 1925 was the year that Ramsay Smith initiated his correspondence with Angus and Robertson over the issue of myths and legends. Could it be that Ramsay Smith was able to exploit Unaipon's negotiations through their mutual membership in the Aborigines Protection League?¹⁰⁷

George Robertson's reply to Ramsay Smith stated: 'My first feeling was that of being an intruder in your cabbage patch, but on second thought I came to the conclusion that our little book, with Unaipon's portrait, will help your more ambitious volume by preparing the way. I did not mention your letter to our dusky author..' ¹⁰⁸

Unaipon, presumably the 'dusky author' referred to in the letter, is uninformed of these developments, although it does seem, at this stage, as if Angus and Robertson are still intending to publish Unaipon's work under his own name. Robertson's 'first feeling' of being an 'intruder' in Ramsay Smith's domain reveals the extent to which Aboriginal mythologies are conceived of, not as Aboriginal structures of belief, but as objects waiting to be made meaningful by anthropologists. Robertson's metaphor, moreover, suggests the way in which objects of knowledge are considered in territorial

¹⁰⁷ By September 1926, the provisional committee of the League included Basedow, Ramsay Smith and Unaipon. In 1927, the League submitted a petition, with 7000 signatures to the Commonwealth House of Representatives, calling for the creation of a Model Aboriginal state. For a discussion of the founding of the Aborigines Protection League, see McGregor, pp. 118-120.

¹⁰⁸ *Angus and Robertson Papers*, 6 February 1925.

terms, revealing the extent to which a colonial mentality structures even those domains considered to be the neutral domain of science.

It is difficult to say how comprehensive the Angus and Robertson correspondence actually is. None the less of that, it does manage to give a somewhat fragmented account of the subsequent unfolding of negotiations between Ramsay Smith and George Robertson. Ramsay Smith wrote back to George Robertson some nineteen months after George Robertson's guilty reply: 'To resume a somewhat ancient story', Ramsay Smith writes, 'Yesterday David Unaipon called on me'.¹⁰⁹ It seems, where the question of Aborigines is concerned, the ancient is rarely far away. Ramsay Smith claims in this letter that Unaipon had called to ask for his help: 'From an extensive knowledge of him, I did subscribe, hoping for nothing in return.' Ramsay Smith continues:

The glamour was gone; he was badly dressed, as I had never seen him before. There was no word of *quid pro quo*; I thought he was out for 'quids for nothing'. He opened business by saying he wanted to know if I could help him to have a manuscript typed. He said nothing about previous interviews, but not knowing what he might be after I raised the subject of contributions by asking him how he stood with you.

Ramsay Smith is insistent here that he wants 'nothing' from Unaipon. On the contrary, he suggests, Unaipon wants something for nothing from him. Ramsay Smith's suspicion is clear from his phrase, 'not knowing what he might be after', but the cause of his suspicion is a mystery. Ramsay Smith includes in this letter a dialogue that his secretary had taken down from his previous meeting with Unaipon from over a year ago:

'Angus and Robertson have got all the MSS that you are going to publish?...' 'Yes'
 'Do you think that you can collect other legends and myths in the North and else where, and if so, are you going to use them?...'
 'No I am not going to Published (sic) what I collect. I thought that I could help you....'

¹⁰⁹ *Angus and Robertson Papers*, 5 November 1926. In this letter, Ramsay Smith claims that he had not seen Unaipon since 2 October 1925, over a year before this letter was written. According to this correspondence, David Unaipon, at this last meeting, had called on Ramsay Smith to ask for help. Ramsay, in his correspondence to George Robertson, states: 'From an extensive knowledge of him, I did subscribe, hoping for nothing in return.' According to Ramsay Smith's letter, he had heard nothing more of Unaipon until the day before he wrote the present letter, 4 November 1926. This, however, does seem somewhat hard to believe, after all, both men were members of the provisional committee of the Aborigines' Protection League formed in 1925.

‘Then will you let me have the legends when you return?...’ ‘Yes.’
 ‘I may make some compensation afterwards...’ ‘Thank you, Sir.’

This staging of what could almost be thought of as a theatrical event can, in line with the theatre model of the psyche that pervades Freudian psychoanalysis, be conceived of as that form of psychic compensation for anxiety that Freud describes in his grandson’s ‘self staging’ of the disappearance and return of his mother. Given the way events subsequently unfold, it is almost as if Ramsay Smith is ‘acting out’ that which he will repeat, and feeling pre-emptive anxiety that he projects on to Unaipon. Ramsay Smith’s final sentence reiterates this impression: ‘I think I led you to understand that I had known David of old. Though in some, if not most, ways he is a bad egg he is “good in parts”, or rather there is some corn among the chaff if one knows how to winnow.’ Ramsay Smith is here re-enacting what he has earlier claimed to be the task of anthropology—to divide truth from lies, the good from the bad. He is, moreover, claiming to be the privileged apostle who is most in a position to undertake this dissection. The metaphor of winnowing is central here. Winnowing is a categorical task: to weed out rubbish, to clear of refuse or inferior specimens. Yet, it is also the task of Freudian psychoanalysis, to sift through evidence and decode distortions in order to produce or uncover the truth. It was an uncanny experience, a sobering reminder of the premises of archival research, to be sitting in the Mitchell Library and reading Ramsay Smith’s letters and having much the same desire to winnow.

Angus and Robertson replied to Ramsay Smith a week later with the following offer:

By arrangement Unaipon collected and wrote up for us a number of aboriginal legends and we bought the copyright for £2/2/- per thousand words, the sum-total amounting to about £150. Quite a charming book can be made of them, and we intended asking Professor Tucker to prepare it for the press. If, however, you want them, we will transfer the copyright to you for what it cost us furnishing you with a typewritten copy and reserving the original MS. for ourselves.¹¹⁰

¹¹⁰ *Angus and Robertson Papers*, 9 November 1926. This letter was signed by a man called Paul Shenstone on behalf of Angus and Robertson, through whom most of the negotiations subsequently took place.

This is an offer that Ramsay Smith accepts: 'I have to thank you for your letter of 9th November which straightens out all matters concerning my old friend David, and leaves a clear field for operations.' Ramsay Smith, 'on considering matters from every point of view [he] can think of', accepts the offer. He closes the letter by stating, 'I am glad to have Mr Robertson's literary valuation of the manuscript and I shall use my best endeavour to see that it does not lose by any editing to which I may subject it'.¹¹¹ Once again, information and knowledge is conceived of in territorial terms, and Ramsay Smith's noun, endeavour, which can be traced to the Latin 'to owe', indicates the way in which Robertson's 'valuation' accrues a debt for Ramsay Smith. The quantitative and abstract valuations of the market place (£2/2/- per thousand words) are disguised by a weak appeal to some kind of unspecified aesthetic code that is characteristic of what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as the strange mixture of cynicism and factitious piety that permeates capitalist relations.¹¹²

That this cycle is to continue can be seen in Ramsay Smith's letter to Angus and Robertson on 24 January, 1927. Ramsay Smith's acknowledgement of the receipt of his first batch of manuscripts, expresses his gratitude in similar terms: 'I realise that whatever place such a book may take among anthropological publications, and I shall do my best to make it worthy, almost everything may be traced to Mr. Robertson's generous action.'¹¹³ In a later letter to the publishing company, Ramsay Smith writes: 'I

¹¹¹ *Angus and Robertson Papers*, 16 November 1926. Angus and Robertson's return post, dated 15 January 1927, includes a list of stories written by Unaipon, the copyright of which they have transferred to Ramsay Smith, including three stories that had been posted by Unaipon to George Robertson. These are 'The Sun, a Goddess and a Creation'; 'Chirr Bookie (Blue Crane)'; and 'Perindi and Harrimiah'. There is no original manuscript for these last three stories in the Mitchell Library, although they are included in Ramsay Smith's edition. In this letter of 16 November, Angus and Robertson inform Ramsay Smith that: 'In our letter which was returned unclaimed we told [Unaipon] not to send any more, and we think you may prefer to arrange direct with him for these. If he raises the point, you may tell him not to bother with the £6 we advanced. Apart from that, the £5 which we paid him towards the cost of some photographs, we paid him in all £167.50; but we shall be satisfied with the amount stated in the previous letter (£ 150), and shall send you copies of all the legends which we have.' This 'unclaimed letter' was supposedly sent on 25 October, 1926, although the *Angus and Robertson Papers* suggest it was never sent.

¹¹² Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, p. 225. Here Deleuze and Guattari are incorporating a Nietzschean-inspired analysis of debt and guilt to Marx's analysis of exploitation.

¹¹³ *Angus and Robertson Papers*, 24 January 1927. Ramsay Smith received Unaipon's stories in two batches from Angus and Robertson dated 25 January, 1927 and 11 February, 1927. On 10 March, 1927, the sale of the copyright of Unaipon's stories went through: Angus and Robertson 'do now sell and assign to the said Dr William Ramsay Smith the copyright of the undermentioned stories and articles by David Unaipon which the said David Unaipon has sold and assigned to the said Angus and Robertson Ltd by virtue of documents executed by him on the undermentioned dates, namely: 8 January 1925; 12 January

shall take an opportunity of writing to Mr. Robertson and telling him how this transaction has simplified my work of preparation of the volume of Myths, and has made it possible to give a view of Australian Aboriginal myths that I take as quite new in literature.’¹¹⁴

Just how much this transaction simplified his work can be seen in the publication, in 1930, by Harrap publishers of London, of a book called *Myths and Legends of the Australian Aboriginals*, by William Ramsay Smith. Most of this text consists of Unaipon’s stories (either given or sold to Angus and Robertson, presumably to be published under his own name). *Myths and Legends of the Australian Aboriginals* was republished in 1974 in Boston by the Johnson Reprint Company; a Japanese edition was published in 1985 by Oseana Shuppan; in 1996, *Myths and Legends of the Australian Aboriginals* was republished in London under the title of *Aborigine* by Random House under its Senate Imprint, and in 1997, Tiger Books in Middlesex republished *Aborigine* in full. All of these editions are attributed to Ramsay Smith; none mention Unaipon.¹¹⁵ In his final letter to Angus and Robertson, informing them that he had just despatched his own manuscript to Mr Harrap of Harrap publications, Ramsay Smith wrote: ‘The book has cost an enormous amount of pains-taking work, but I think the literary result will prove that it is worth writing. You know something of the pecuniary cost: I say I spent a good deal more in the same line before it was finished.’¹¹⁶ It is the nature of this ‘pains-taking work’ that I will now discuss.

1925; 14 January 1925; 16 January 1925; 21 January 1925; 6 February 1925; 23 February 1925; 11 March 1925; 15 April 1925; 15 May 1925; 15 June 1925; 30 June 1925; 3 July 1925.’ There is, however, no record of any documents confirming that Unaipon had sold and assigned his myths to Angus and Robertson. According to Ramsay Smith, in October 1925 ‘when [Unaipon] called on me about his expedition he told me you were going to give him 2 guineas per 1000 words and that he had then finished or would finish by December [1925], 2 volumes of 50000 words each.’ Given that Ramsay Smith told Angus and Robertson that Unaipon said, on 4 November 1926, that he had not heard from Angus and Robertson in a year, it is possible that such transactions never took place: ‘Yesterday I [Ramsay Smith] told him I would write to you to ask how matters stood between you. He said he had sent you all the manuscript he had promised and that he had heard (sic) nothing from you for 12 months. I said that until I knew exactly how things were with you I could say nothing about helping him with any typing of manuscripts or of buying anything he had for sale.’

¹¹⁴ *Angus and Robertson Papers*, 11 February 1927.

¹¹⁵ A publication of Unaipon’s work, under his own name, is presently being prepared by two Australian academics, Stephen Muecke and Adam Shoemaker. It is hoped that a biography of Unaipon will be out within the next three years. On top of this, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts Corporation are in the process of mounting a legal case to reimburse the Ngarrindjeri community for money lost through the violation of copyright. The outcome of this case is yet to be determined.

¹¹⁶ *Angus and Robertson Papers*, 16 September 1927

Cross-Cultural Comparisons

The extent of Ramsay Smith's appropriation of Unaipon's material can only be seen by comparing *Myths and Legends of the Australian Aboriginals* with Unaipon's original manuscripts in the Mitchell Library in Sydney, which were given to the library by Angus and Robertson. Perhaps, initially, the most striking difference between the two texts occurs in that strange space occupied by the preface which I explored in the context of Freud's preface to the Hebrew edition of *Totem and Taboo*. David Unaipon's preface, dated 1924-35, begins with the words:

My race—the Aborigines of Australia—has a vast tradition of legends, myths and folklore stories. These, which they delight in telling to the younger members of the tribe, have been handed down orally for thousands of years. In fact, all tribal laws and customs are, first of all, told to the children of the tribes in the form of stories just as the white Australian mother first instructs her children with nursery stories. Of course, the mothers and the old men, in telling these stories, drag them out to a great length, putting in every detail with much gesture and acting, but in writing them down for our white friends I have used the simplest forms of expression in order that the neither the meaning nor the 'atmosphere' may be lost. As a full-blooded member of my race I think I may be the first, but I hope not the last, to produce an enduring record of our customs, belief and imaginings.¹¹⁷

This preface begins with a strong assertion of Aboriginal identification. It does, moreover, claim a double motivation; these myths are told to teach and instruct young Aboriginal children, and, as a result, meanings and values are inscribed within them. Yet Unaipon also makes clear that the intended audience of these written versions of oral performances are his 'white friends', one of whom, perhaps, is Ramsay Smith himself. Under the guise of teaching and instructing Aboriginal children, these myths are also teaching and instructing white Australia, to prove to white Australia that, just as they have transmitted techniques for learning and reproducing culture, Aboriginal culture is learned as well, and thereby value-laden. Unaipon's *Legendary Tales*, by analogizing Aboriginal and white Australia, acts as a corrective to those views that see Aboriginal culture as natural and instinctive, in opposition to the civilized culture of white Australia. The other significant thing about this preface is that it suggests that

¹¹⁷ *Angus and Robertson Papers*. The manuscripts of Unaipon's myths have no dates or page references.

these tales need to be simplified if a non-Aboriginal person is to understand them, that the process of transcription necessarily involves a transformation. The myths being read are already different from themselves. Part of this difference, moreover, is the elimination of the somatic and gestural multi-dimensional textuality of the myths as performed. Finally, Unaipon, in his preface, makes a claim about his own project, that he is the first Aboriginal person to produce an 'enduring record' of Aboriginal culture. Yet, although the record has definitely been enduring, both in its intransitive sense of remaining in existence, the sense in which Unaipon probably used it, and also its transitive sense of undergoing a hardship. Unaipon can be thought of as signalling the movement from an Aboriginal subjectivity (whatever that might be) to European subjectivity. Yet this European subjectivity is bound by a market-driven notion of ownership, out of which legislation like copyright, that secured the word as a commodity, came into being. It was print technology, moreover, that enabled such a conception of textuality, and the first known 'royal decree or privilegium was often secured forbidding the reprinting of a printed book by others than the original publisher' in 1518. It was much earlier than this, however, that the ancient Latin poet Martial uses the word *plagiarius*—a torturer, a plunderer, an oppressor—to refer to someone who appropriates another's writing.¹¹⁸

Even as the network of colonialism acts to produce certain kinds of subjects (we might want to call this psychic colonialism), colonial forces (plunderers and oppressors) denied Unaipon, the emerging colonial subject, the very advantages this subjectivity supposedly provided, including protection under copyright as the sovereign author of one's own work. Although it is argued that western epistemology excludes others unless they assimilate forms of knowing that have been accorded universal status, the cynicism and piety structuring the neurotic and Oedipalized colonizing subject ensures that it both does and does not seek to transform the colony in its own image.

Smith's preface begins on a completely different note, reconstituting Unaipon's myths as anthropological objects: 'The mythology of any and every people has become

¹¹⁸ See Ong, p. 131

a subject of profound and meaningful interest to anthropologists.’¹¹⁹ It is clear that, for Ramsay Smith, these myths are, so to speak, anthropological data, and it is this which gives them both meaning and interest. Although both prefaces claim to want to teach Europeans about Aboriginal culture, Ramsay Smith’s preface, in contrast to Unaipon’s preface, suggests that it is only through his anthropological interventions that Aboriginal myths produce meaning, and that Aboriginal culture, prior to this intervention, does not already have mechanisms for the production of meaning. The movement, moreover, from Aboriginal myths to the ‘mythology of any and every people’ is that movement from the particular to the general that Barthes finds so colonizing in mythology. For Barthes, ‘myth is speech stolen and restored. Only speech which is restored is no longer quite that which was stolen: when it was brought back it was not put exactly in its place’ (136). Barthes’ definition of myth as ‘robbery by colonization’ is painfully accurate in Ramsay Smith’s preface (143).

Ramsay Smith claims, moreover, that his book is ‘a collection of narratives as told by pure-blooded aboriginals of various tribes who have been conversant with the subject since childhood’(7). Of the changes he made to the narratives, he claims they are ‘few and slight, and do not go beyond what were to be considered necessary in order to make clear the meaning, or to give some degree of grammatical correctness to the text without changing the “aroma” of the story when using equivalent English terms or phrases’(7). This strangely apostrophied ‘aroma’ presumably replacing Unaipon’s apostrophed ‘atmosphere’ can perhaps be explained in the light of the association of the sense of smell, in evolutionary terms, with the heightened sexuality of a more primitive stage. In a footnote in *Civilization and its Discontents*, Freud argues that ‘the diminution of the olfactory sense seems itself to be a consequence a man’s raising himself from the ground, of his assumption of an upright gait; this made his genitals, which were previously concealed, visible and in need of protection... The fateful process of civilization would thus have set in with man’s adoption of an erect posture’(288-89). For Freud, the ‘undeniable depreciation of olfactory stimuli’ is linked to ‘the sexual

¹¹⁹ William Ramsay Smith, *Myths and Legends of the Australian Aboriginals* (London: Harrap, 1930), p. 7. Future references are to this edition, and are included in parentheses in the text.

repression which advances along with civilization'(296). Furthermore, this olfactory reference adds to the lack of mediation that Ramsay Smith hopes to present these myths as being constituted by:

The myths as they were told are allowed to speak for themselves. There has been no searching evidence either to support or to disprove any anthropological or other theories. On the other hand, no pains have been spared in the endeavour to find out accurately what was in the minds of the narrators.... A good deal of what is set forth relates more or less intimately to the physical conditions of the country and to the habits, religion, customs, observances, relationships, occupations and recreations that go to make up the life of the aboriginal... Although these in some instances may not give the actual words of the 'actors' in the incidents or of their conversations, they sound natural, as if they were the language of the reciter of the story. They help to give a physical setting and a local colour, and to provide a human atmosphere. (8-9)

Ramsay Smith's narrative is a mythical production in itself. Part of the myth that he seeks to perpetuate, in contradistinction to Unaipon, is that Aboriginal culture is pre-cultural, hence his attempt to make the 'actors' in the story 'sound natural'. This preface gestures towards a relocalization of the text to its natural place in oral performance, denying the fact they were actually constituted by a prior written text—Unaipon's. Ramsay Smith hopes to create the illusion that he is starting from scratch; rather than entering a field of textuality, he is entering an experience which requires, for it to be sustained, the complete erasure of Unaipon whose name appears at no stage in the work. Although Ramsay Smith states that the stories cannot be used to prove or disprove any anthropological theory, they, in themselves, remain the object of anthropological interest. This seems to contradict the 'apostolic task' that Ramsay Smith had set himself: to establish truth from falsehood, 'gospel' from 'old wives' fables'. Ramsay Smith's rhetorical pose, positioning himself as collector of facts, and minimizing his role as theorist, enables him to construct, empirically, the Aboriginal object of knowledge as transparent and himself as privileged conduit through which the reader can enter 'the minds of the narrators'. Ramsay Smith, quite explicitly, claims that the gathering of these facts/narratives/data was his own experience as ethnological anthropologist.

While Unaipon had been both the subject and object of his mythological investigations, Ramsay Smith, by offering an interpretation of Unaipon's myths as transparent and unmediated, as 'speaking for themselves', simultaneously delegates the place of Aborigines to objectivity, as well as obscuring the relations of power through which such a construction of the Aborigine as object of knowledge was able to take place.

This is interesting because, when questioned in the *Observer* article about the process of collecting myths, Unaipon admitted that his task of collection was difficult, 'but not as difficult as it would be to a European':

'I have the totem system to help me', he said. 'The totem binds us together much as masonry does Europeans. My first duty when I go into a strange tribe is to ask for a totem. 'Then, if they say, for instance, "that man is a swan," I say that my mother was also a swan, and he treats me as a relative, and tells me what I want to know. Or I find a man who is a kangaroo, the totem of my father...'¹²⁰

Leaving aside the troubling implications of this mode of collection, and the ambivalent status Unaipon occupies as a kind of 'native informant', Unaipon's writing up of the myths has a methodological precedent, less in traditional Aboriginal culture, than in comparative anthropology of the kind practised by James Frazer. Unaipon, it seems, subscribes to the anthropological view of myths, and his methodology can be thought of as following from this pseudo-scientific perspective. As he writes in his introduction to 'Totemism', published later, under Unaipon's name, in 1929:

'Totemism' is one of the most ancient customs instituted by the Primitive Man. The practice of it among the Australian Aborigines and its adaptation owes its origin in a Mythological conception during the Neolithic Age. The function of mythology is admitted by science to be an attempt of the Primitive Man to explain the religious and physical phenomena. (4)

Marc Manganaro has argued that Frazer's comparative method in *The Golden Bough*, which 'is literally bursting with previous writings and points of view... proliferates voices in order to control them and protect the author'.¹²¹ Manganaro claims

¹²⁰ 'Aboriginal Intellectual', p. 46.

¹²¹ Manganaro, p. 6.

that 'such openness is integrally tied to appropriative cultural representation, that a will to power operates not only within but because of the profusion of source and voice in these comparative texts.'¹²³ Unaipon's emulation of this methodology, however, produces something far more ambiguous. In so doing, not only is he making Judeo-Christian mythology an object of study comparable to Aboriginal mythology, his re-positioning of himself as an Aboriginal anthropologist, who also studies European mythology, can be seen as a major reversal in the operation of power in Australia, and in anthropology more generally. This is not to suggest that Unaipon's movement from object of knowledge to subject of knowledge is unproblematic, nor that it is not only so enmeshed in different and repressive technologies of power, but it is to suggest that Unaipon's position as an Aboriginal anthropologist is a de-stabilizing one. As Eric Wilmot has argued, himself an Aboriginal scientist and writer, 'Unaipon was... the first Aboriginal scientist who concentrated his investigations upon Europeans'.¹²⁴

One of the reasons, I have claimed, the Bible is of interest to Unaipon is that, unlike Aboriginal mythology, it is multi-racial, and offers precedents for the relation between cultures. As he wrote of the Bible in 'My Life Story': 'It was in this Book I learned that God made all nations of one blood and that in Christ Jesus colour and racial distinctions disappeared'(13). This is why, perhaps, Unaipon provides so much cross-cultural analysis in his own re-telling of Aboriginal myths. Western Christian culture therefore becomes an object of study, and Aboriginal culture is placed along side it, rather than necessarily being inferior to it, or being a forefather of it. The way Unaipon talks about the Bible in *Aboriginal Legends*, is not as the Word of God, and, in line with the anthropological thinking of the day, more as a series of narratives.

One of the ironies of Ramsay Smith's rewritings of Unaipon's *Legendary Tales* is that although he has hoped to retain the 'aroma' of unmediated Aboriginality, he very much emulated Unaipon's prose style, a style that was inherited from the work of Milton, Bunyan and the King James Bible. The prior textuality that Ramsay Smith went

¹²³ Manganaro, p. 6.

¹²⁴ Cited in Susan Rintoul, 'The Inaugural David Unaipon Lecture', *South Australian Teacher's Journal*, 21.10 (1989), p. 14.

to such lengths to erase returns as the colonial voice anyway, under the guise of being Aboriginal, removing it even further from the Aboriginal immediacy it seeks to embody. Ramsay Smith's *Myths and Legends* can be read as, in a rather complicated formulation, the attempt to produce an unmediated Aboriginal voice as object of anthropological knowledge, by rewriting myths written by a Western-educated Aborigine who was emulating the culture from which Ramsay Smith himself had emerged. Ramsay Smith's myths are mythological in the sense that they do not lead back to Aboriginal voices as he suggests, but to other texts, and those are the textual practices and methodologies of his own cultural inheritance. The question of how Aboriginal these myths actually are and where they come from which, as we will see, has dominated much Unaipon criticism, is one that I am not concerned with here, partly because I am incapable of answering it, but also because it reproduces the kind of 'apostolic' methodological inquiry that desires to know and believes that it can find the truth at the origin.

The nature of the changes that Ramsay Smith made to Unaipon's manuscript are worth examining in detail, and such an examination has never been undertaken. I will merely give a general idea of the way in which Unaipon's versions of the myths were transformed by Ramsay Smith. What is most striking about such a comparison is Ramsay Smith's removal of Unaipon's interpretative voice and cross-cultural comparisons, comparisons that, in Unaipon's version, are an integral part of the project. Ramsay Smith's rewriting maintains the illusion that there is no interpretative voice. It would be difficult to argue, however, that, in Ramsay Smith's re-writing, there was anything like a coherent strategy at work. Unlike Unaipon's manuscripts, which used and translated into English Aboriginal vocabulary, in Ramsay Smith's rewriting, the process of translation has been hidden, and all Aboriginal vocabulary has been removed. Much is merely copied verbatim straight from Unaipon's manuscript.

In his preface, Ramsay Smith states: 'A certain amount of information on these subjects is required for an intelligent understanding of the mythology and a proper appreciation of its meaning and its moral value. This desideratum is supplied partly in the narratives and partly in the notes.' For Ramsay Smith, once again, it is the task of

the anthropologist to produce meaning out of Aboriginal myths. What Ramsay Smith refers to as desideratum, which, to cite the *Oxford English Dictionary*, can be defined as ‘a thing for which desire is felt, a thing lacked and wanted’¹²⁴, are actually notes taken from within Unaipon’s own narratives and placed as footnotes in Ramsay Smith’s.

The opening chapter of Ramsay Smith’s *Myths and Legends*, entitled ‘Origins: The Customs and Traditions of Aboriginals’, although repeated almost word-for-word from the introduction to Unaipon’s manuscript, was also published in the *Daily Telegraph* in 1924.¹²⁵ Although Unaipon refers throughout to either ‘my race’ or, when referring to historical instances, ‘my ancestors’, Ramsay Smith replaces, as scientific observer, both these terms with the ahistorical ‘they’, thereby erasing the temporal differentiation that Unaipon’s narratives seek to maintain. What in Unaipon is historically specific becomes, in Ramsay Smith’s rewriting, timeless. In this way, in a movement reminiscent of Freud, Ramsay Smith is relegating contemporary myths to a kind of unconscious and primitive space. According to Freud, the processes of the unconscious are timeless, ‘i.e. they are ordered temporally, are not altered by the passage of time; they have no reference to time at all’.¹²⁶

The political implications of such an ahistorical perspective can be seen in the changes Ramsay Smith makes to Unaipon’s story ‘Yara-ma yha-who’ which retains that title in Ramsay Smith’s version. Unaipon opens: ‘There were many strange beings who lived along while ago, many, many years before Captain Cook found a landing at Kernell.’ Ramsay Smith, who prefers the ahistorical, mythical mode, writes: ‘There were many strange beings who lived along while ago, many, many years before the white man came to Australia’ (342). This is the kind of transformation of history into nature that Barthes claims myth is characterized by. Unaipon’s version, on the other hand, incorporates aspects of both the mythological ‘many, many years’ and the historical ‘Captain Cook found a landing at Kernell’. In Unaipon’s version, myth does not oppose history in the way that Rahv and Barthes suggest.

¹²⁴ *The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, p. 645.

¹²⁵ Unaipon, ‘Aboriginals: Their Traditions and Customs’, *Daily Telegraph*, 2 August 1924, p. 13.

¹²⁶ Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, p. 191

Unaipon's version of the arrival of Aborigines in Australia in 'Origins', in both the manuscript and the newspaper article, also deals with another figure who 'found a landing' :

The tradition implies that we arrived in Australia from another land in the North-West. The way of our coming was probably over an isthmus that has long since been sunk under the sea... This seems to agree with science, that Australia was once part of a large and ancient continent called Lemuria... The traditions also relate that the aborigines were driven into Australia by a plague of fierce ants, or by a pre-historic race as fierce and innumerable as ants... Like the Israelites, the aborigines seem to have had a Moses, a law-giver, a leader, who guided them in their Exodus from Lemuria. His name is Nar-ran-darrie.

Adam Shoemaker argues that the 'obvious aim' of this passage 'is to achieve a synthesis with Christian—specifically Old Testament – narrative'.¹²⁷ I am less certain of the obviousness of this aim, which strikes me as less an attempt at synthesis, than an act of comparative anthropology, which is why, perhaps, Ramsay Smith erases this from his version. Unaipon's reference to the entry of a law-giver, a leader, seems to indicate, in a way that Ramsay Smith erases, that all myths of the origin of the state require the arrival of a legislator. Geoffrey Bennington refers to this necessity in an article on, among other things, Freud's *Moses and Monotheism*: 'As the legislator is the necessary moment of the foundation of any state whatsoever, and as this must be therefore be true of the *first state* too, then the legislator is not so much an empirical foreigner as a figure of absolute exteriority.'¹²⁸ Ramsay Smith merely writes: 'Traditions say that Aborigines came to Australia from another land in the north-west'(17). Ramsay Smith not only needs to erase the 'scientific' aspect of Unaipon's narratives, and Unaipon's discussion of the relation between ancient tradition and modern scientific opinion, but he also needs to erase the narrative of a prior law-giver, even a prior state, because, in Ramsay Smith's version, he turns himself into that figure of absolute exteriority that founds the law, the law of the anthropological colonizer. In spite of this erasure, Ramsay Smith, somewhat strangely, retains much of Unaipon's archaic language, and,

¹²⁷ Adam Shoemaker, *Black Words, White Page, 1929-88* (St. Lucia, Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 1989), p. 46

¹²⁸ Geoffrey Bennington, 'Mosaic Fragment: If Derrida were an Egyptian', in *Legislations: The Politics of Deconstruction* (London: Verso, 1994), p. 219.

following Unaipon, refers to young Aboriginal men and women as ‘youths and maidens’.

A few more comparisons will suffice to make the point. In a story entitled ‘Why Frogs Jump into the Water’, Unaipon writes that: ‘My people delight to give a reason for everything they observe as well as to draw a moral lesson from it all.’ Unaipon’s version begins: ‘This is one of the many stories of a strange being who came into existence through the agency of a spirit of water.’ Ramsay Smith’s version, which shares the same title, begins: ‘This is the story of the green frog, who came into existence through the agency of a spirit of water’(111). In an accompanying footnote, what might, in Ramsay Smith’s words, be referred to as ‘desideratum’, he writes: ‘This is one of several stories of a strange being that came into existence’. Ramsay Smith seems to hope to retain the illusion that it is his own anthropological work, as opposed to the myth’s narrator, that produces knowledge of variations, multiplicities that Unaipon, in his own cross-cultural methodology, has reproduced within the text. What Ramsay Smith implies, through the use of footnotes, is lacking but desired, he actually dissimulates as lacking through his own desire. It is this lack that he, through his anthropological methodology, is able to fill with the reasoned interpretative analysis that he can only to attribute to the anthropologist.

One of Unaipon’s longest stories, ‘The Mischievous Crow and the Good he Did’, also opens comparatively:

I suppose our ancestors in those times immemorial always experienced the ruling forces of Good and Evil. According to the Bible story, there was a time when our first parents were only conscious of all good, and evil was foreign to their nature, which was perfect in all ways... The Great Author of life and creation was pleased with His work, that he declared it was good. And it was His delight to come into the Garden of Eden in the cool of the evening and converse with Adam and Eve, and to inform him that... he shall eat of all the fruit of the garden, except the one in the midst of the garden. ... But somewhere out of space there arrived in that beautiful and happy home a visitant.... The visitant did not tell from whence he came or what his mission was, but simply looked on with envy upon the beautiful work of the good spirit. Then one day he took upon himself the form of a serpent, and waited by the forbidden tree. Presently Eve came along, happy to be enjoying life...

The outcome of story is well known, and Unaipon briefly rehearses it before coming to his point:

And since this allegorical teaching, we inherit not only the voice of the Good Spirit, but the evil whispering of the Serpent to-day.... Now to an enlightened age Evil still presents himself as the Serpent. He comes to us with that fascinating power and cunning of the snake. Sometimes he comes as an angel. To each nationality he comes in all kinds of forms. But to the Aborigine he comes as a Crow, or, in other words, he is personified to us in the bird body of the Crow... Now the crow plays an important part in the tradition and legend of my race. Although he is the embodiment of all that is evil and mischievous, yet there are some very good and great things he has taught us, and one of the greatest teachings of the Crow was the immortality of the soul.... There are many different stories of the Crow as a legend or a nursery story. There are many stories told of the crow by different tribes. I shall attempt to deal with him from the Narrinyur tribe's standpoint.

What is most fascinating about this introduction is that Unaipon insists on the allegorical nature of both the Bible and Ngarrindjeri stories. He does, moreover, suggest that the enlightened age is chronological, not geographical, undoing that theoretical manoeuvre discussed in the previous chapter whereby Europe's past is displaced on to a geographical axis. According to Unaipon, both Christians and Aborigines understand, because of the age we *all* live in, that we are dealing with allegories, with cultural narratives to explain the nature of evil, and that these, like cultures, vary. It is almost too obvious to mention the radically different conception of evil that Unaipon's story points to. It is hard to imagine the Biblical Satan being referred to as just a bit cheeky.

Ramsay Smith's rewriting of this story begins at the point after Unaipon's cross-cultural introduction, but, once again, a cross-cultural analysis similar to Unaipon's is made via a footnote. Such a transformation is again seen in the re-writing of Unaipon's narrative, 'Belief of the Aborigine in a Great Spirit', which opens:

The belief in a Supreme Being and the religious instruction, as well as religious ceremonies and worship, are not the experience of the Jew and Mohammedan alone. Neither did it belong to one particular age or place, but it is universal and belongs to every age. This wonderful experience of a longing for something beautiful and noble, something spiritually Divine, lives within the bosom of the nations of the past as it does to-day.

Wonderful is the soul of man. A capacity for the Great Spirit of the Eternal God. Go back into those ancient civilizations and review the wonders. Those sensational discoveries in the valley of the Nile or in the jungles of Indo-China, or let your mind be carried away to far-off Peru or Yucatan, or think of the grandeur that once was Rome's, the glories that once belonged to Greece. Amongst these ruins are

monuments and fragments of magnificent temples erected to their gods. These are evidences that go to prove that man is a worshipping creature irrespective of colour, language or clime. The only difference is, as a nation's conception of the Great Spirit, so is their form of worship.

Unaipon then goes on to describe synagogues, mosques, churches and cathedrals, before stating that 'we build no places of worship, nor do we erect altars for the offering of sacrifice'. This, as it turns out, is Ramsay Smith's opening line, again replacing the 'we' of Unaipon with 'they'. Once again, Unaipon's voice is erased, as is his attempt to analyze Aboriginal cultural practices in relation to other systems of belief.

Unaipon's *Legendary Tales* also contain a range of stories that might be called 'ethnographic'. One is titled 'Sport', another 'Hunting', and another 'Fishing'. In 'Sport' Unaipon's version opens:

The Spirit of sport is universal you will witness it among all nationalities and colour and language and in all climes. There are many different forms of sport. The English speaking race, the school boy's and girls, youth and maiden with their cricket outfit, their tennis balls and racquet, Lacrosse, Golf, Football, rowing and yachting... Wrestling and running I suppose are the most ancient of sport. These two forms of sport can be traced right back to the Roman; (sic)

At this point, Unaipon begins to talk about Aboriginal sporting events, which is the same point at which Ramsay Smith's narrative begins. A similar thing happens in Unaipon's story entitled 'Hunting'. Ramsay Smith's repeats Unaipon's claim that the aborigine 'has developed the art of tracking the human footprint to the highest degree. There is a whole science in the footprint'. Ramsay Smith, however, excludes Unaipon's following sentence: 'Footprints are the same evidence to a bush native as fingerprints are to a court of law.' Like his erasure of reference to law-givers, Ramsay Smith usually erases references to the law, which are often replaced by the word 'custom'. Aborigines, it seems, are not subject to laws in the same way, Ramsay Smith is suggesting, including, one supposes, laws governing copyright.

My final example of Ramsay Smith's rewriting is of the story 'Pan Parl Lowa'.

Unaipon opens this story as follows:

Several traditional customs stand out more prominently than others. The first is 'Pan Parl Lowa' which may be literally translated as 'Do unto others as you would that they do unto you.' I feel safe in stating

that this golden rule is taught by people irrespective of colour, creed, or religion, primitive or civilized. As in my Race, that rule exists.

According to Freud, in *Civilization and its Discontents*, the 'greatest hindrance to civilization' is 'the constitutional inclinations of human beings to be aggressive towards one another' (336). In thinking through the implications of such a hindrance, and the possibility of over coming it, Freud writes:

The clue may be supplied by one of the ideal commands, as we have called them, of civilized society. It runs: 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.' It is known throughout the world and is undoubtedly older than Christianity, which puts it forward as its proudest claim. Yet it is certainly not very old; even in historical times it was strange to mankind. (299)

What Freud refers to as 'probably the most recent of the cultural commands of the super-ego' (336), becomes in Unaipon's story a 'golden rule [that] is taught by people irrespective of colour, creed, or religion, primitive or civilized'. Little wonder, then, that Ramsay Smith would turn Unaipon's musings into a footnote, take away the cross-cultural aspect, and rename the story, which otherwise remains the same, 'The Spirit of Help Among the Aborigines'.

Ramsay Smith and the Colonizing Oedipal Subject

How are we to think about Ramsay Smith's appropriation of Unaipon's stories, and the changes that he makes to them? How might we explain the complete erasure of Unaipon's name in the text? Certainly, Ramsay Smith was not always an ungenerous man regarding attributions, and in closing one article he writes: 'I undertook to write the paper because I was asked to do so, and because I thought it required to be done; not because I was infatuated with the subject. It has entailed much work on me, and a great deal of inconvenience on others—particularly Dr. Rogers, who, I think, deserves to be regarded as a joint author.'¹²⁹

It is certainly Ramsay Smith's dissimulation that produces his anthropological authority in *Myths and Legends*, yet as I tried to suggest in my previous chapter, such anthropological authority is an effect of a specifically Oedipalized psychic economy.

¹²⁹ Ramsay Smith, 'The Place of the Aboriginal in Recent Anthropological Research', p. 576.

Freud suggests, in *Moses and Monotheism*, that '[I]n its implications the distortions of a text resembles a murder: the difficulty is not in perpetrating the deed, but in getting rid of its traces' (283). Perhaps psychoanalysis, and Freud's concepts of identification and distortion, provide us with a possible way of thinking about Ramsay Smith's appropriation, and his desire to get rid of the traces of the deed.

In my re-reading of *Totem and Taboo*, I considered Weber's re-reading of the Freudian idea of distortion (*entstellung*), an idea that is also central to mythology. Samuel Weber, you will recall, argued that interpretation, as a movement of distortion, 'must be conceived not as a more or less faithful reproduction or re-presentation of an antecedent, self-identical object, meaning or "presence," but as a process of repetition and dislocation'.¹³¹ The role of distortion in the production and interpretation of mythology is something that myth critics have often attempted to deny, a position that is exemplified by Susanne Langer: 'Myths are not bound to any particular words, not even to language, but may be told or painted, acted or danced, without suffering degradation or distortion.'¹³²

Certainly, the example of Unaipon and Ramsay Smith, and the necessity of examining the historical relation between versions of myth, in order to try to understand the specific conditions of retellings of myths, makes Langer's position untenable. Furthermore, Ramsay Smith's erasure of the historically specific moment of invasion in the form of the name of Captain Cook landing at Kernell Bay, belies a similar desire to the one motivating Langer, even if he claimed the 'task of anthropology' was to distinguish 'Gospel from old wives' fables'. Ramsay Smith, in retelling Unaipon's myths, is, as I have argued at the beginning of this chapter, using the language of myth/truth to avoid the problem of history. This is not to claim that Unaipon's mythography is the 'truer' of the two. Indeed, Unaipon's own re-tellings of the stories are inescapably distorted as well, as I have already tried to demonstrate. In this way, Ramsay Smith, the committed and objective scientist, attempts to escape his own history and culture, only to be returned back there in a distorted form.

¹³¹ Weber, *Institution and Interpretation*, p. 80.

¹³² Suzanne K. Langer, *Feeling and Form* (New York: Scribner's, 1953), p. 160.

To reiterate from the previous chapter, Freud uses the term distortion in two senses: to change the appearance of something, and put in another place, displace. Interpretation, moreover, on which both the practices of psychoanalysis and anthropology depend, is always a process of repetition and dislocation. Myths, as I tried to argue earlier, offer the illusion of a stability and transparency unaffected by this process, which can be seen at work in Ramsay Smith's preface. Just as myths embody the desire for the wholeness of the point of the origin, Ramsay Smith's preface, and his systematic erasure of Unaipon's cross-cultural analysis attempts to place him in that originary place. As with the manifest content of dreams, the distortion of Ramsay Smith's 'timeless' myths, one might say his secondary elaboration, is camouflaged by a representational facade which smoothes over the processes of history and colonization, and the figure of Unaipon himself, that Ramsay Smith seeks to hide. Myth, and the textual search for origins that accompany it, like the spectre of the savage analyzed in my reading of *Totem and Taboo*, are characterized, in both Unaipon's and Ramsay Smith's myths, by the absence of the foundational object desired. Myth, then, like the savage, functions in Ramsay Smith's own work as a site of displacement.

According to Freud, an understanding of displacement can always be found, in the Oedipalized subject at least, in an ambivalent relation to the father. Given that, for Ramsay Smith, Unaipon was his father, in an evolutionary sense, perhaps we can think about Ramsay Smith's appropriation of Unaipon's myths by thinking about his relationship to Unaipon as identificatory in the Oedipal sense in which Freud uses it in *Totem and Taboo*, where the son's ambivalent identification with the father involves both feelings of love and hate, but also desires to replace the father. For the Oedipal subject, the desire to acquire an identity is directed towards the incorporation and assimilation of the other. In this sense, Ramsay Smith's anthropological dedication to exploring Aboriginality, and his elimination of Unaipon's name from his work, can perhaps be thought of as the same kind of exploration and annihilation that marks the Oedipalized subject.

It is interesting that even in Ramsay Smith's anthropological writings, Unaipon's name seems to be repressed. In 'The Aborigines of Australia', for example, he writes:

The ordinary blackfellow is as good at figures as his white brother. Some become great in oratory and speak English chastely and beautifully. Some train themselves in music and can play classical choruses and such-like pieces on the organ with great skill and expression. Some show great mechanical ingenuity, and read and understand books on mechanics and physics. (164)

This seems to be a description of Unaipon, whose name is repressed. In a sense, just as the primal sons divided up the body of the father, so that they could each incorporate a piece of him, and to ensure that the absolute authority that he held could not be transferred to a single individual, Ramsay Smith divides up all the characteristics that Unaipon was most known for, into different individual Aborigines, to neutralize Unaipon's power, and to also cover up the traces of his own incorporative deed.

Ramsay Smith's desire to both preserve and eliminate Aboriginality can be seen not only in his preservation of Unaipon's myths while simultaneously repressing Unaipon's name, it can also be thought about in terms of what James Clifford, in *Writing Culture*, describes as the 'allegory of salvage' which perpetuates the value of anthropology by saying 'the other is lost, in disintegrating time and space, but saved in the text'.¹³² In this context, Ramsay Smith's reference to Sybilline books is noteworthy, as are his calls for the increasing professionalization and institutionalization of the discipline of anthropology through which Ramsay Smith, as collector of Aboriginal myths, takes the place of authority, the place, in the case of *Myths and Legends*, of Unaipon. Just as the son, in Freud's schema, desires to usurp the place of the father, Ramsay Smith desires to usurp the place of, and supercede Unaipon, his evolutionary forefather. In a sense, this act of Oedipalized identification, which, I have argued, is necessarily colonizing, is distorted through the lens of anthropology, which makes

¹³² James Clifford, 'On Ethnographic Allegory' in *Writing Culture: the Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, ed. James Clifford and George E. Markus (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), p. 112.

claims to be representing knowledge, reason and the progress of civilization which enables its own inherent cannibalization of the other to be disavowed and repressed.

Unaipon's Myths

In 1929, the year before the publication of Ramsay Smith's *Myths and Legends*, Unaipon published a 15-page AFA-sponsored booklet called *Native Legends*.¹³³ There is some confusion about the eventual publication date, but it is presumed to be in 1929.¹³⁴ *Native Legends* comprises two 'legends', 'The Release of the Dragon-Flies by the Fairy Sun Beam' and 'Youn Goona the Cockatoo'; two shorter pieces that could be considered more anthropological and mythological, 'Totemism' and 'Pah Kowie—the Creature Cell of Life and Intelligence'; and a piece called 'Hungarrda—Jew Lizard' which is a psalm-like vision of creation and evolution, and which is partly reprinted, under the name 'Ngunaitponi', in Les Murray's edition of *The New Oxford Book of Australian Verse*.¹³⁵

In the light of the events just described, it is interesting to look at just one story in particular in this booklet. 'The Release of the Dragon-Flies by the Fairy Sun Beam' relates the story of the release from captivity of the water grubs by the fairy sun beam, enabling them to 'fulfil their mission by transformation [into Dragon-flies] and so demonstrating the greatness and wisdom of their Designer'(3). Its opening description is of an idyllic pool that is also 'the prison home of the Dragon Flies. It was wonderfully designed by the cunning and wicked old Froggies'(1). The pool is guarded by a 'well-equipped' army of 'Bull Froggies', and there is also a band of Frog Ventriloquists producing 'unearthly sounds' like the 'voice of the Bunyip in rage, a Mythological Monster and Beast which no one has ever seen which nevertheless is greatly feared'(1). This serves successfully to scare all the other animals away from what they believe is a haunted country. After a while, the Bull Frogs realize their plan has been successful, and that they 'need no longer... strictly guard the Water Grubs'(2). The Fairy Sun

¹³³ Unaipon, *Native Legends* (Adelaide: Hunkin, Ellis and King Ltd, n.d.). Future page references are to this edition, and are included in parentheses in the text.

¹³⁴ See Beston, p. 337, n.6.

¹³⁵ Ngunaitponi, 'The Song of Hungarrda', in *The New Oxford Book of Australian Verse*, ed. Les Murray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 94-94.

Beams sing the Frogs to sleep, and the Queen Sun Beam releases the spirits of the Dragon Flies trapped within the bodies of the Water Grubs, and sets them all free. When the Frogs wake up and see the 'liberated Dragon Flies'(2), they 'seized their boomerangs to slay the harmless Dragon Flies'(2). At this point, the Fairy Sun Beams stir up a 'great whirlwind... The Frogs in their terror beheld the anger of the mighty Wind. Then for the first time in their history they saw a Force and Power greater than they possessed, which came to intervene and protect the weaker ones'(3). 'Then a guilty conscience smote them one and all; for the wrong they did unto the helpless, harmless Water Grubs who did need the help; the strong should give'(3).

Just as stories of Unaipon's life vary widely, so too do responses to his work. For the few people that have actually written about Unaipon's work, the experience of reading is clearly disturbing, and raises a number of extremely complex questions, most of which get resolved in one of two positions exemplified in the work of John Beston and Adam Shoemaker. I hope to avoid either of these positions, while still trying to maintain a sensitivity to the very unsettling, uneven and contradictory quality that pervades Unaipon's work. Beston's work, the earlier of the two, dates back twenty years to an article on Unaipon in a journal called *Southerly*. Beston recognized Unaipon's style as that of the 'seventeenth century, suggestive of the King James Bible, Bunyan, and Milton'(345). Yet he also claimed that his 'Christianizing of the legends somewhat obscures his strong underlying sense of Aboriginal identity and allegiance. Unaipon was by no means a white man's puppet'(345).

For Shoemaker, in marked contrast to Beston, there is no underlying sense of Aboriginal identity and allegiance, and he dismisses Beston's assessment as 'limited and too forgiving'.¹³⁷ Rather, Shoemaker's question is: 'Was Unaipon so fully indoctrinated into the Western, Christian lifestyle that he renounced his independence and his Aboriginality?' Shoemaker's answer to this rather complex question seems to be yes, and he finds:

Beston's contention that '[Unaipon's] Christianizing of the legends somewhat obscures his strong underlying sense of Aboriginal identity

¹³⁷ Shoemaker, p. 49.

and allegiance' somewhat difficult to accept. Beston implies that, at base, Unaipon was faithful to his Aboriginal heritage above all else, whereas the evidence seems to indicate that he was so fully indoctrinated by the AFA that an Aboriginal world view was encouraged and permitted only so long as it did not conflict with Christian religious tenets. (44)

Shoemaker does, however, acknowledge the contradictory nature of Unaipon's work:

When one examines Unaipon's entire corpus of work, it becomes clear that his story-telling is uneven, inconsistent, and is frequently fraught with tension between the Aboriginal and white Christian worlds. One receives the impression that Unaipon did not have a very great knowledge of traditional Aboriginal matters, and this might partly explain why his legendary stories often take such a sanitised, European form. (49)

For Shoemaker, the mixture of the European and the Aboriginal is unsuccessful: 'the atmosphere of his stories occasionally borders upon the *schizophrenic*, for the Christian/Aboriginal synthesis which he repeatedly sought is not always achieved without considerable effort and is sometimes realised at the expense of logic'(45). Yet to think about the Christian / Aboriginal synthesis as schizophrenic seems to me to miss the point. The way in which Deleuze and Guattari use the term schizophrenia might be helpful here. For Deleuze and Guattari, schizophrenia is not a psychiatric diagnosis, nor a disease characterizing schizophrenics, it is a broad socio-economic and historical phenomenon that is fostered by capitalism's quantitative calculations replacing belief systems. It is this, I argued earlier, that might explain Unaipon's belief in the 'missionary enterprise, which... gives [Aborigines] the inner power to reconstruct their lives which have become shattered by contact with white civilization.'¹³⁷ From this perspective, it is not so much the Christian/ Aboriginal synthesis that produces schizophrenia, but rather that the Christian/Aboriginal synthesis is an attempt to reinstate values and meanings that were being continually shattered as colonialism (as a territorial off-shoot of capitalism) extended further and further, both geographically and psychically, into Aboriginal territory, acting as a palimpsest over all previous meanings that lay in its path, in very much the same way as Ramsay Smith had written over Unaipon's meaning to produce an anthropological commodity. Colonialism introduced

¹³⁷ Unaipon, 'My Life Story', pp. 13-14.

into Australia the idea of labour power as a commodity, and then, in the case of Ramsay Smith's appropriation of Unaipon's myths, takes away the only things that labour power, as commodity, is worth, that is, money.

Both Beston and Shoemaker also note the similarity of these legends to the fairytale. Beston, for example, writes:

Not only has 'The Release of the Dragon Flies' been Christianized, but it has also been 'Marchenized', made to fit the mould of the Germanic Marchen or fairy tale: the reference to the Queen of the Sun Beams (who are all Fairies) is in the manner of the Grimm Brothers, not at all in the manner of Aboriginal legends. Again one is struck by the power of the white culture to dominate the indigenous culture. Unaipon takes the 'Marchenizing' process still further when he refers a number of times to the Frogs as 'Froggies', thereby directing the tale to children. Of all treatments of Aboriginal legends, this reduction of the legends to children's stories is the most unfortunate... Such a presentation of these legends perpetuates the notion of the Aboriginals as a primitive and childlike people, a notion that the Aboriginals themselves have at time accepted. (342-3)

According to Shoemaker, 'Unaipon's more juvenile stories often owe as much to Aesop and Kipling's 'just-so' stories as they do to the Brother's Grimm'(48). Certainly the influence of the European folkloric tradition is evident in 'The Release of the Dragon Flies' but, perhaps a hermeneutic that seeks to discover the extent of the Aboriginality of Unaipon's myths, or the extent of non-Aboriginal influences, is an exercise in futility. Rather, the legend of 'The Release of the Dragon-Flies by the Fairy Sun Beam' can be read as the mythologizing of the appropriation of Unaipon's own myths, and contemporary conditions of Aboriginal people in Australia. The motif of imprisonment and release is a recurring one in Aboriginal literature, as is the function of well-equipped bullies, and constant surveillance. The description of 'well-equipped bullies' certainly is one that could be applicable both to the colonizer in general, and to Ramsay Smith and Angus and Robertson in particular. Such a reading is further enhanced by the weapon that the bullies used to such effect; their talent for deception, and their ability to dominate the scene, lay in ventriloquism. In this reading, Unaipon's story is not merely an unfortunate example, as it is for Beston and Shoemaker, of the 'power of the white culture to dominate the indigenous culture'; Unaipon's story enacts and performs that domination.

Dismembering Aboriginality

Even as Ramsay Smith was considered one of Australia's most respected authorities on Aboriginality, the erasure of Unaipon, and the regulative dissection of his mythical work, has a precedent in his own history. In August 1903, Ramsay Smith, then Adelaide City Coroner and Inspector of Anatomy, was suspended from his coronial duties following charges under the Anatomy act, of 'several counts' of mutilating corpses, which included the 'illegal despatch' of the bodies of a Chinese man, an Aborigine, and a 'negro' which had been 'taken contrary to law and not for the purposes of aiding medical students in the state'.¹³⁸

Although these were reported in the local papers, and the South Australian Government set up a board of enquiry, the details of this inquiry are shrouded in secrecy. The *Advertiser* reported it in the following way:

A gentleman who professed, like 'Sergius, the High Pontiff for wisdom far renowned', to be thoroughly acquainted with all the facts, shook his head in a mournful way, and not only answered in the words of the classic authority quoted, 'I know but may not tell' but hinted that the exact story was of 'too awful a kind to be repeated'.... A city undertaker, when asked, protested that he had 'given a sacred pledge not to utter a word of what had occurred.'¹³⁹

The *Adelaide Register* later reported that the Board of Enquiry had decided 'to acquit that officer of anything more serious than the display of undue zeal in dealing with the corpse of the Aboriginal Tommy Walker'.¹⁴⁰ While remaining coroner and head of the Health Department, however, Ramsay Smith had to relinquish his hospital and other duties because of a possible conflict of interests.

What might be the relation between the preserving of Aboriginal specimens and the recording of Aboriginal customs? Certainly Ramsay Smith was not alone in thinking about Aboriginal people as specimens, and in the *Observer* article, Unaipon himself is referred to in this way: 'A full-blooded aboriginal, Mr. Unaipon presents in physical structure an unmistakable resemblance to those reconstructions of the older human types which scientists have sometimes supplied with the help of a tooth and a

¹³⁸ 'Corpses for Dissection: The Ramsay Smith Inquiry', *Australasian*, 12 September 1903, p. 610.

¹³⁹ 'Dr Ramsay Smith: Suspended from Duty', *Advertiser* [Adelaide], 14 August, 1903, p. 4.

¹⁴⁰ 'The Ramsay Smith Inquiry', *Adelaide Register*, 23 September, 1903, p. 4.

mouldering jawbone.’¹⁴¹ That the two events, the appropriation and dissection of Aboriginal bodies and the appropriation and dissection of Aboriginal myths, are somehow linked is revealed in Ramsay Smith’s dedication in his *Myths and Legends of the Australian Aborigines*:

TO THE MEMORY OF
GREATLY VALUED AND REVERED FRIENDS
PRINCIPAL SIR WILLIAM TURNER
AND
PROFESSOR D. J. CUNNINGHAM
WITH WHOM I WAS PRIVILEGED TO BE A FELLOW-WORKER
IN AUSTRALIAN ANTHROPOLOGICAL RESEARCH
THIS REGARDFUL OFFERING IS DEDICATED

Sir William Turner, whom he at one stage refers to as his teacher, and Professor Cunningham were both comparative anatomists with whom Ramsay Smith regularly exchanged skulls and information, and he quotes both of these men in abundance in his anthropological writings. This ‘regardful offering’ can be seen as an extension of this relationship, and the religious tone of the dedication to the memory of the dead serves as a means of forgetting the dead whom they dismembered, as well as Unaipon himself, whose own offering of myths is erased. In his 1907 article, ‘The Place of the Australian Aboriginal in Recent Anthropological Research’, he writes, in a seeming attempt to justify his collecting of corpses: ‘Some years ago it became known, in connection with certain criminal trials in Adelaide, that I had more than a general interest in skulls’ (559). In this article, Ramsay Smith reveals that he sent skulls to Turner, adding:

I hardly need remind you that it was he who was entrusted with the task of describing the *Challenger* collection of osteology, and that the investigations he made and the result he published then and since then have become landmarks in the field of anthropological research and models for future investigation. It will be evident that any opinions or inquiries coming from such an investigator are entitled to the highest respect and consideration. (558-59)

Like the staged dialogue he cites between himself and Unaipon in his correspondence with George Robertson, Ramsay Smith then goes on to quote a letter from Turner, dated July 1899, in which he is procuring ‘specimens’: ‘Anything you can send illustrating the

¹⁴¹ ‘Aboriginal intellectual: David Unaipon’, p. 46.

osteology of the Australian will be very acceptable... I shall be glad to be made the custodian of such specimens as you may be able to send' (559). He also quotes from letters between himself and Cunningham, and his mentors' words pervade his own.

It seems to me that both the processes of specimen collection and myth collection, and the analogous dismemberment of both kinds of artefacts, reveal the ambivalence at work here. Both activities are marked by the promise of and desire for a return to the origin; Ramsay Smith's revealing phrase is that there is a 'universal craving' for specimens.¹⁴² Both his descriptions of skulls and his descriptions of myths erase the pre-collection existence of the stories and people as well as the conditions under which they came into being as objects of anthropological knowledge. It is the anthropologist that dissects and dismembers, and then, through his own work, it is the anthropologist that re-members, but it is a specific form of re-membering that aids forgetting. What gets remembered is the work of the anthropologist, and his glory, as can be seen in Ramsay Smith's dedication, and in the fact that eventually the Board of Inquiry set up to investigate the initial claims ultimately commended Ramsay Smith for his work.¹⁴³

In Freudian psychoanalysis, dismemberment inevitably produces an uncanny (*unheimlich*) effect. Freud's essay, 'The "Uncanny"', defines in detail the range of meanings to which the 'Uncanny' lays claim, before concluding that: '*heimlich* is a word the meaning of which develops in the direction of ambivalence, until it finally coincides with its opposite, *unheimlich*'.¹⁴⁴ Other uncanny effects, according to Freud, include secrecy (concealment and revealment) and doubling. Certainly, the secrecy surrounding the Inquiry as reported in the newspapers, and Ramsay Smith's subsequent public justification of his actions in an anthropological context, reveal such a process of concealment and revelation. Furthermore, the doubling effect characteristic of the 'uncanny' can be seen in Ramsay Smith's analogous appropriation and dismembering of both human and textual bodies.

¹⁴² Ramsay Smith, 'Ethnology and Anthropology', p. 374.

¹⁴³ 'The Ramsay Smith Inquiry', p. 4.

¹⁴⁴ Freud, 'The "Uncanny"', p. 347.

Given my argument that Ramsay Smith's appropriation of Unaipon's myths can perhaps be seen as an act of Oedipalized identification that seeks to incorporate the other (the father) in order to take his place, Freud's conception that the uncanniness of dismembered limbs 'springs from its proximity to the castration complex' is indeed noteworthy.¹⁴⁶ The threat of castration is, for Freud, the threat of the authority of the father, itself a phantasy that relies on the discovery of anatomical differences that Ramsay Smith, as a comparative anatomist, devoted much of his life to.¹⁴⁷ It is the discovery of anatomical differences that actualizes the threat—real or phantasized—of castration. According to Freud, it is this threat that marks the terminal crisis of the Oedipus complex, inaugurates the period of latency, and precipitates the formation of the superego: 'Under the impression of the danger of losing his penis, the Oedipus complex is abandoned, repressed, and, in the most normal cases, entirely destroyed, and a severe super-ego set up as its heir.'¹⁴⁸ Although, for Freud, the child cannot transcend the Oedipus complex and achieve identification with the father without first having overcome the castration complex, 'fear of castration is one of the commonest and strongest motives for repression and thus for the formation of neuroses'.¹⁴⁹

Perhaps one way of thinking about Ramsay Smith's dismemberment of corpses is as the neurotic manifestation of castration anxieties, anxieties that are repressed and enacted through his own dis-memberment of those he considers to be his evolutionary forefathers. From this perspective, Ramsay Smith's dismemberment of bodies is an expression of a castration complex which will then develop into the Oedipalized identification that, I have tried to argue, characterizes his relationship to Unaipon, a relationship, moreover, that characterizes more generally the processes of colonization.

¹⁴⁶ Freud, 'The "Uncanny"', p. 366.

¹⁴⁷ The anatomical differences that Freud refers to are, of course, between boys and girls. Even still, it is interesting that comparative anatomy and the Freudian concern with anatomical differences share such fundamental epistemological territory. See Freud, 'Some Psychological Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction between the Sexes' (1925), in *The Essentials of Psychoanalysis*, pp. 402-10.

¹⁴⁸ Freud, 'Femininity', p. 163.

¹⁴⁹ Freud, 'Anxiety and Instinctual Life' (1933 [1932]), *PFL*, 2, p. 119.

Unaipon and the Coronation Medal

The questions raised here, about the nature of collecting, preserving and memorializing are again raised in a different context in relation to Unaipon's life. One of the things Unaipon was most famous for was that, in 1953, at the age of 81, he was awarded a Queen's Coronation Medal. Coronation Medals, to commemorate the crowning of Elizabeth II, were presented on 2 June 1953, to 138214 'selected persons' as personal souvenirs. They were awarded to the Royal Family, officers of state, officials and servants of the royal household, ministers, government officials, mayors, public servants, local government officials, members of the navy, army, air force and police in Britain, her colonies, and in Canada. To give a brief physical description, on the obverse of the medal is a crowned effigy of Queen Elizabeth II, in a high-collared ermine cloak and wearing the collar of the Garter and Badge of the Bath, and facing right. The reverse shows the Royal Cypher EIIR surmounted by a large crown. The legend around the edge reads: QUEEN ELIZABETH II CROWNED 2nd JUNE 1953 (see Appendix 5).

Louis Marin's work on French Royal Medals is pertinent here, and particularly his discussion of the effects of uniting both portrait and discourse, effigy and legend, 'picture' and 'narrative' in an inscription of Royal power. According to Marin, Royal Medals are 'situated at the frontier of the readable and the visible, which might, as such, realize this locus of contact and interference. Such a product would bring about a double effect, inverted and reciprocal, of one apparatus in the other and would thereby be the monumental sign of absolute political power in its representation'.¹⁴⁹

For Marin, commemorative medals, such as the one issued to Unaipon in 1953, in their double representation, become a monument for making one remember a glorious imperial and monarchical moment, while simultaneously constituting it as such a moment. 'In representing the event, the representation represents itself in the process of auto-constitution and self-sufficiency: the reflexive dimension of auto-foundation

¹⁴⁹ Louis Marin, 'The Inscription of the King's Memory: On the Metallic History of Louis XIV', *Yale French Studies*, 59, (1980), p. 22. Future page references are to this edition, and are included in parentheses in the text.

appears in and through its transitive dimension. It is an act that brings the event into being through its grandeur. To erect the monument of history is to give history a monumental being.¹⁵⁰ Certainly, such meanings were ascribed to this moment as a glance at the 'Approved Souvenir Programme' reveals:

A Coronation is a nation's birthday. It is the day on which its people celebrate the union that makes them one. Of that union the crown is the symbol... In this ancient nation—one in which deep-rooted patriotism has again and again saved both us and others—the Crown has played the chief part in keeping us one... For a nation is a union in both time and space. We are not compatriots only of those who live a long way away, but of those who lived before us and of those who will live after us... Our Queen is not only the symbol of a union in time. She is the symbol of one in space. The Coronation of the first Elizabeth was of the Sovereign of one Nation. The Coronation of Elizabeth II is of the Sovereign of many Nations... And as head of the Commonwealth she is the sole symbol of the free association of the eight Sovereign nations that form the largest political group in the world. In that great union... there is no binding or coercive force: only the free will of its members to be associated with one another and their acknowledgement of that solitary and seemingly powerless, but beloved, human figure as its Head.¹⁵¹

The Coronation is conceived of as a moment that unifies the Commonwealth of Nations, and this unity takes place across time and space. This bringing together of all the past and all the future over this global geographical space effects the erasure of the pre-imperial past of contemporary commonwealth nations. The commemorative medal as a monument further constitutes a memory of the Queen that would transcend both time and space. To refer, in 1953, to no coercive force in the context of Australia is, moreover, to deny a pre-imperial past, but also to deny that Australia's colonization was the effect of an invading and colonizing force.

The Queen's power in a parliamentary monarchy however, is more complicated than the instances of French monarchical power on which Marin's analysis focuses. The *Souvenir Programme*, for example, refers to the 'seemingly powerless' figure of the Queen. What this phrase suggests is that although, in the narrowly political sense of the word, the Queen does not have power, such powerlessness is only 'seeming' because the love the Queen's subjects have for her; the love that both constitutes her power over

¹⁵⁰ Marin, p. 30.

¹⁵¹ Arthur Bryant, 'The Queen's Majesty', in *The Coronation of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, 2 June 1953—Approved Souvenir Programme* (London: King George's Jubilee Trust, 1953), pp. 8-9.

her subjects, and its seeming powerlessness. It is the power of love that is enacted through the Queen's gratuitous gift, and it is love and devotion that is exchanged: 'the counterpart of this gratuitous gift is the contemplation of royal history's event on its reverse and, obverse, the contemplation of the subject of this act in his feature and name; a contemplation in which recognition is acquired thanks to the beauty of the product'.¹⁵²

Why might such a gratuitous gift be given to Unaipon, as a representative of his race? According to Marin, 'to have a medal is to be constrained to recognize the [Queen] as the subject of history and the historical event as the present manifestation of [her] power' (29). The commemorative royal medal, then, simultaneously constitutes and perpetuates the power of the sovereign, a sovereignty that over-rides everything else, including colonization which is effaced in the act of incorporating Aborigines into Britain's imperial history, with the Queen as its subject. In receiving commemorative medals, the Queen's subjects recognize the monumentalized truth of this history, and its authentication: 'Medals provide the true legitimate and fixed representation for the transmission of historical events to the authority's subjects, present and future.'¹⁵³

This is where the contradiction resides, because in 1953, as an Aboriginal Australian, Unaipon was not even an Australian citizen, nor, in effect, the Queen's subject. It was not until 1967 that Aborigines were awarded citizenship. Unaipon thereby becomes subject to British imperial history, even if this very history, and his non-constitution as a subject of it, are denied.

Just as Unaipon's own *Legendary Tales* became a palimpsest for Ramsay Smith's *Myths and Legends*, the Queen's legend on the Coronation Medal, and what it represents, becomes a palimpsest for Australia's pre-invasion history that is written over through the linking of Australia, as part of a commonwealth, to the enduring memory of a Queen who is unified through, and thereby transcends, time and space.

The commemorative medal, though similar to the function of the coin, is also different. It is, Marin argues, like the coin in so far as it bears the imprint of sovereign

¹⁵² Marin, p. 29.

¹⁵³ Marin, p. 28.

authority, and it is this same effigy of Queen Elizabeth II that is still on contemporary Australian coinage. It is the effigy of the Queen, in other words, that ensures the public value of the coin. On the reverse side, however, the mark of the coin and its value is substituted with the representation of the singular historical moment of the event, which is thereby constituted as all-valuable and simultaneously beyond valuation because such value is incalculable. Although the historical event being memorialized is given the nationally recognized value of the coin, this value is not the stable and constant value of exchange: 'It is now a matter of a singular historical event valued for its difference from others, incomparable, but its truth and authenticity will be universally and identically recognized by their inscription in a similar form to that of money.'¹⁵⁴

Unaipon as Currency

Marin's analysis assumes that it is the sovereign that retains the right to both mint coins and assign them their value; Australian coinage is minted, and its value set, by the Australian Reserve bank, under the Reserve Bank Act of 1959. The Reserve Bank is not only responsible for issuing bank notes, but also for their design. In the early 1990s, in the midst of Australia's increasing push towards republicanism, the then Labour Government issued a new series of Australian bank notes. According to the Reserve Bank of Australia's web-site:

In deciding themes, the Bank, with the assistance of design consultants, uses the opportunity of a new series to honour past Australians who have made an important contribution to Australia. Along with the portrait of the person, other design elements are included that relate to the person's particular achievements.¹⁵⁵

In keeping with this sentiment, the Australian \$50 note, issued on October 4, 1995, contains, in the place where Queen Elizabeth II's effigy once was, a portrait of David Unaipon.

The legend on this note, which 'relate the person's particular achievement', is a small extract from the hand-written manuscript held in the Mitchell Library in Sydney,

¹⁵⁴ Marin, p. 28.

¹⁵⁵ 'How are Australia's Currency Notes Made?' [online], Available: http://www.rba.gov.au/poly/po_1_4.html (19 July 1999)

Legendary Tales of the Australian Aborigines, that still remains unpublished in his own name. This legend, like the legend on the Coronation Medal, also marks an important historical event. The legend is the final line of his unpublished preface, and it includes both the spelling error, and its correction that accompanies the original: 'As a full-blooded member of my race I think I may be the first, but I hope not the last, to produce an enduring record of our customs, belief and imaginings' (see Appendix 6).

Given that this legend, and the text it prefaces, have never been published as Unaipon's work, it is hard to believe that Unaipon's own writings are the historically significant contribution that the Reserve Bank refers to. It seems to me that the event being commemorated here is less Unaipon's contribution as a writer, and more the successful production, under colonization, of an Aboriginal subject that functions as a mirror image of the colonizer. It is not only a particular kind of inscription that is being commemorated here, but also a particular kind of subjectivity, the very Oedipalized autobiographical self-reflexive subject, the subject, I have argued, that enabled the successful colonization of Australia. And, if it seems rather far-fetched to suggest that the psychoanalytic familial structure would pervade the production of something as banal as bank-notes, the Reserve Bank's web-site will dispel such hesitation. As the site proudly asserts: 'Once themes have been established, designers are commissioned to develop the designs. Through collaboration, various common threads are established to create a "family" feel to the series, yet still allow each design to *have its own character*.'¹⁵⁷

In this way, the Reserve Bank's web-site enacts and encapsulates that segregation and re-integration of the private and public spheres that, as I hoped to demonstrate in my first chapter, have characterized capitalist relations since their emergence. On the one hand social production takes place in the public sphere; on the other biological reproduction takes place in the private or domestic sphere. In the public sphere the term governing social relations is abstract, that is money; in the private sphere, the training ground for capitalist relations, individual egos (with 'their own

¹⁵⁷ 'How are Australia's Currency Notes Made?'

character'), are produced within the nuclear family which will then be commodified as labour power upon entry into the public sphere.

The historical event that Unaipon's portrait on money both represents, commemorates, and is an example of, is the substitution of qualitative codes, based on meanings and beliefs, that organized pre-invasion social life symbolically with an abstract quantitative calculus based on necessarily temporary valuations which are calculated economically to produce surplus-value. Unaipon's portrait on money represents the success of contemporary capitalism as the most highly advanced system of exchange, over pre-existing forms of exchange, as well as the erasure of these forms of exchange, and the history of colonization that was both motivated by capitalism and enabled it.

The image of Unaipon on the Australian 'money form of value' which, to use Marx's formulation, confuses the means of exchange (money) with the thing to be exchanged (commodities with a certain use value), and the 'form' of exchange (commodities) with the 'content' of the thing exchanged (their labour-value which gives them their use-value), is particularly ironic because, while Unaipon was alive his capacity to produce commodities, by his own labour, with use values, like, for example, educative myths and legends, was continually denied to him.

None of this, of course, appears in the biography of Unaipon on the Reserve Bank of Australia's web-site. Although it mentions that in 1909 'he patented an improved handpiece for sheep-shearing', and that his 'writings were included in *Myths and Legends of the Australian Aboriginals* (London, 1930)', it does not mention that he neither has ownership of these commodity-producing labours, nor did he benefit materially from their exchange for currency. The biography, however, still hopes to constitute Unaipon as a symbol of reconciliation: 'While on his travels, Unaipon lectured on his ideas, preached sermons and spoke about Aboriginal legends and customs. He also spoke of the need for "Sympathetic co-operation" between whites and blacks, and for equal rights for both black and white Australians.'¹⁵⁷ Unaipon's portrait

¹⁵⁷ Reserve Bank of Australia, 'Australians On Our Notes [online]', Available: http://www.rba.gov.au/poly/po_1.who.html (19 July 1999)

on the \$50 note can perhaps also be seen, less optimistically, as a commemoration of the historical victory of colonization, not merely economically and territorially, but also psychically, where the colonizer looks with success on the production of the colonized subject in its own image.

Chapter 3: Re-Reading *My Place*

The Reception of *My Place*

If David Unaipon's narratives have been all but neglected in contemporary Australia, Sally Morgan's *My Place*, published in 1987, has rapidly entered the Australian psyche. It has become, as David McCooey argues, 'a national text; a spoken account of 'unspoken' history'.¹ Commercially, it is the most successful Australian autobiography ever published, and it has come to take a central place in the history of Aboriginal writing in Australia and Michelle Grossman has argued:

since its publication, this narrative of origins has in turn come to figure centrally in a meta-textual narrative of origins about both the 'birth' of contemporary Aboriginal women's writing and the increasing profile such work has developed among non-Indigenous readers, both domestically and internationally.²

Published the year before Australia's bi-centennial, a time of national reflection and celebration, *My Place* has been credited with 'creating a new space within Australian literary culture for discovery of Aboriginality and for repudiation of all that has obliged its invisibility and silence'.³

A cursory glance at the fragments of the selection of reviews on its back cover reveals just how firmly *My Place* has been situated as a narrative of redemption for a traumatized culture where, in the words of Leo Bersani, '[t]he catastrophes of history matter much less if they are somehow compensated for in art'.⁴ In the case of *My Place*, the history of Australia is redeemed by Morgan's self-representation through autobiography:

...a celebratory work and profoundly moving...all Australians should read this... *Helen Daniel, The Age*.

¹ David McCooey, *Artful Histories: Modern Australian Autobiography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 104. Future references are to this edition, and are included in parentheses in the text.

² Michelle Grossman, 'Out of the Salon and into the Streets: Contextualizing Australian Indigenous Women's Writing', *Women's Writing*, 5.2 (1998), p. 169.

³ Tim Rowse, 'The Aboriginal Subject in Autobiography: Ruby Langford's *Don't Take Your Love to Town*', *Australian Literary Studies*, 16.1 (1993), p. 14.

⁴ Leo Bersani, *The Culture of Redemption* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 1990), p. 1.

...a triumphant story that makes you glad it's at last been told... *Mark MacLeod, Times on Sunday.*

...the sort of Australian history which hasn't been written before, and which we desperately need... *Barbara Jefferis, The Weekend Australian.*

...a moving and quite remarkable account of personal discovery... *Dianne Johnson, Sydney Morning Herald.*

A gift to the reader...(that) one feels enormously privileged to receive... *Judith Brett, Australian Book Review.*

This book is great...a triumph...Moya Costello, Author's Proof, Radio 5UV.

This text, the back cover, provides an abundance of significations which prefigure the framework into which *My Place* has been inserted. The back cover of *My Place* tells a story of personal discovery, that gives rise to a redemptive national celebration. Yet the word 'triumph', with its etymological resonances of imperial victories, is cause for caution, a cause to question why Morgan's *My Place* has taken on the position of national homecoming, where not just Morgan and Aboriginal communities, but all Australians have a place and are also, somehow, redeemed by Morgan's act of generosity.

In the light of this, it is not surprising that some critics have been uncomfortable with the reception of *My Place*. This has meant that while, in some cases, *My Place* occupies a valorized position, it is simultaneously criticized for occupying that same position. Stephen Muecke exemplifies this in his assertion that the 'ease of acceptance [of *My Place*] can only make the radical critic uneasy'⁵, a position that Eric Michaels, Arlene Elder and, more recently, Bain Attwood and Jackie Huggins subscribe to.⁶ While I think there are good reasons to be wary of the hyperbolic admiration that Morgan's story seems to have inspired, this wariness has always been directed against Morgan

⁵ Stephen Muecke, *Textual Spaces: Aboriginality and Cultural Studies* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press: 1992), p. 135. Future references are to this edition, and are included in parentheses in the text.

⁶ See Eric Michaels, 'Para-Ethnography', *Art and Text*, 30, Sept-Nov (1988), 42-51; Arlene E. Elder, 'Silence as Expression: Sally Morgan's *My Place*', *Kunapipi* 14.1 (1992): 16-24; See also the ongoing debate that took place in *Australian Historical Studies*. Bain Attwood, 'Portrait of an Aboriginal as an Artist: Sally Morgan and the Construction of Aboriginality', *Australian Historical Studies*, 25.99 (1993) 302-18; This article provoked a range of responses, which included Jackie Huggins, 'Always was Always Will Be', *Australian Historical Studies* 25.99 (1993), 459-64; Tim Rowse, 'Sally Morgan's Kaftan', *Australian Historical Studies* 25.99 (1993), 465-8; Tony Birch, 'Half-Caste: A Response to Bain Attwood', *Australian Historical Studies*, 25.99 (1993) 458. Elizabeth Reed, 'Sally Morgan: A Black Tall Poppy?', *Australian Historical Studies* 25.101 (1993): 637-9; Isobel Tarrago, 'Response to "Sally Morgan and the Construction of Aboriginality"', *Australian Historical Studies* 25.100 (1993): 469. Future references are to these editions, and are included in parentheses in the text.

and her text, making her fully responsible for ways it has been read. Ironically, these textually-minded critics tend to reproduce Author-centred readings of *My Place* that turn a text that, for me, is extremely disturbing into something sentimental and uncontentious. I would argue that the overwhelming acceptance of *My Place* can also be thought of as masking the profound anxieties generated by its implications, implications that its critics have also ignored. In this chapter, I hope to offer a less comfortable reading of *My Place*, a reading, I think, *My Place* invites us to perform, and a reading which cannot be readily recuperated into a celebratory, nationalist narrative. My reading, however, makes no claims as to whether or not my own interpretations are 'true' reflections of Morgan's and her family's historical reality.

My Place tells the story of a young woman and the discovery of her Aboriginality, something that she only came to know, after years of denial, in her early twenties. It is a multi-layered and fragmented autobiography in that it tells four people's stories, all in the first person. The first is Sally Morgan's own story which occupies most of the book. This is followed by Morgan's great-uncle's story, Arthur Corunna, the full brother of Morgan's maternal grandmother Daisy. Then Morgan's mother, Gladys Milroy, tells her story. Finally, the shortest story is that of Daisy Corunna, or Nan. All these narratives are separated and held together by Morgan's narrative which is self-referential in so far as it tells the story of how the stories came to be articulated. In this sense, Morgan's narrative is not just the story of her gradual identification with Aboriginality, but also the story of writing the story of this identification. In this sense, identification and textualization are concomitant events that mutually constitute and enable each other. It is half way through the narrative that Morgan's character states: "I'm going to write a book." It was the beginning of 1979, a good time for resolutions' (150). *My Place*, the story we are reading, is that book. *My Place*, then, is a part of that complex self-reflexive process through which stories of selfhood are remembered and repeated.

The complexities surrounding autobiography are many, and readings of *My Place* are generally located within debates about the status of autobiography which focus on the tension between historical experience, or the real, and its mediation

through language, narration, and structures of fiction. The genre, if it can be called that,⁷ makes it possible to assume a unified and authoritative 'I' who holds the details together. However, as I have tried to outline in the previous chapter, this 'I' can itself be seen as an historical effect.

Redemptive readings of *My Place* have generally read it as a transparent account of reality by a unified self. Critical readings, rather than reading it differently, suggest that such a transparent account and such a unified self are Western constructs, thereby problematizing the Aboriginality and authenticity of Morgan's story. Certainly Morgan's autobiography shares the strategies of autobiography in general, and it is possible to trace a trajectory from that historical juncture some time in the 12th century, discussed in the previous chapter, to Morgan's reflection upon herself through the medium of a text. As you will recall, autobiography is, among other things, framed in relation to the theme of knowing oneself, that is, one's interiority, and that it is enabled by certain technological and institutional conditions of reproducibility. As I have tried to argue, autobiography, and the subject that it supports, is an effect of, to use Foucauldian terminology, power/knowledge, and if Morgan's text speaks to more readers than other less self-reflective Aboriginal narratives (and its international success would suggest that it does) it is less because of its universalism, than because of its particularity as an effect of historical events. This includes the event of colonization that, as I have suggested, seeks to constitute and reproduce in the colonies the very historically specific Western subject.

Reading *My Place* is both complicated and fragmented by the fact that the three additional first-person narratives are oral histories transcribed from tape-recordings, blurring the boundaries between orality and writing. This not only situates *My Place* within a growing interest in Aboriginal culture and autobiography, but also within the methodological work of anthropology and the social sciences which deals with the use of life-history and biographical materials. As can be seen in the quotations that I opened

⁷ See Paul de Man, 'Autobiography as De-facement', *Modern Language Notes*, 4.5 (1979), pp. 919-30. De Man argues that 'the distinction between fiction and autobiography is not an either/or polarity but that it is undecidable' (921).

with, radical political claims are made for oral histories of this kind and these excerpts reinforce a reading of *My Place* that sees it as providing a hearing for the previously unheard. It is this tension between history and its constitution by accepted myths that I explored in the previous chapter. It is interesting that the reception of the oral in *My Place* usually ignores the technological conditions of existence (the tape-recorder, for instance) of its transcription and reproducibility, and the impact of this on our conception of what oral literature is, and the kinds of subjects it produces.

Significantly, the location of *My Place* as a part of Australia's *literary* inheritance is denied in the process of anthropological claims about its challenge to history. Joan Newman exemplifies this position when she writes that 'it seems likely that Sally Morgan's *My Place* will long be regarded as a landmark text in Australian writing. Why should this be so? *My Place* is not a majestic narrative on a grand canvas, nor is it a work of intellectual brilliance or dazzlingly experimental'.⁸

Newman's reading assumes, as is common in responses to autobiography as a narrative account of the past, that textual mediation and even construction are rendered unproblematic and that the language employed is literal.⁹ Yet, as Hayden White has suggested, histories 'ought never to be read as unambiguous signs of the events they report, but rather as symbolic structures, extended metaphors, that liken the events reported in them to some form with which we have already become familiar in our literary culture'.¹⁰ To read *My Place* literally, where its meaning is simply taken for granted, constitutes a failure of interpretation, or a failure to recognize that such a reading is already an interpretation. What I want to suggest here is that to read *My Place* is to participate in the process through which its meanings are constituted; to read it, in other words, is to interpret it, and to interpret is to lead us not only to the self (*auto*) and

⁸ Joan Newman, 'Race, Gender and Identity: *My Place* as Autobiography', in *Whose Place? A Study of Sally Morgan's My Place*, ed. Delys Bird and Dennis Haskell (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1992), p. 66. Future references are to this edition, and are included in parentheses in the text.

⁹ See John Murphy, 'The Voice of Memory: History, Autobiography and Oral Memory', *Historical Studies*, 22.87 (1986), pp. 157-175.

¹⁰ Hayden White, *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), p. 91.

to the life (*bios*), but into language (*graphie*), and language is both inescapably figurative and unavoidably mediated.¹¹

My interpretation, then, reads *My Place* figuratively, where events are not only given importance in themselves but in the metaphors that reading them might produce.¹² This is where the potential for an alternative reading lies, that does not rehash the same old question of whether *My Place* is true or not and whether, by extension, Morgan is a real Aborigine or not. Sally's mother, Gladys, in her narrative within the narrative, points to the inevitability of proliferation and the movement away from the self as the basis of knowing when she alludes to anxieties about the dispersal of meaning that language inevitably instigates:

It hasn't been an easy task, baring my soul. I'd rather have kept hidden things which have now seen the light of day. But, like everything else in my life, I knew I had to do it. I find I'm embarrassed sometimes by what I have told, but I know I cannot retract what has been written, it's no longer mine. (306)

My Place and Psychoanalysis

One possible reading of *My Place*, a reading that has been performed by Fran de Groen, is modelled on psychoanalysis. This, it would seem, is particularly valid, and there are many aspects of the narrative that lend themselves to such a reading. To speak of memory and redemption in the autobiographical mode is, as I tried to suggest in my reading of *Totem and Taboo*, to bring us into recognizably psychoanalytic territory, the realm of the 'talking cure', as it was so famously baptized by Freud's first patient, Anna O. Like psychoanalytic therapy, autobiography is a textually-constituted self-reflexive form of self-narrativizing, and it is significant that *My Place* is often read as a therapeutic exercise, thereby conforming to a certain psychoanalytic model of knowledge as self-knowledge, and self-knowledge as healing, a model, I tried to suggest in the previous chapter, that also pervades the anthropological exercise manifest in

¹¹ As Paul de Man remarks, tropes are not 'a derived, marginal, or aberrant form of language but the linguistic paradigm par excellence'. Figurative language 'characterizes language as such.' Paul de Man, *Allegories of Reading: Figurative Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke and Proust* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), p. 105.

¹² As Paul Ricoeur has asserted, 'metaphor creates the resemblance rather than finding and expressing it.' Paul Ricoeur, *Rules of Metaphor: Multi-disciplinary Studies in the Creation of Meaning in Language*, trans. Robert Czerny with Kathleen McLaughlin and John Costello (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986), p. 74.

Ramsay Smith's injunction of the Delphic oracle—'Know Thyself'. Psychoanalysis, and the psychoanalytic subject, in my reading, emerged out of, and were enabled and constituted by their autobiographical predecessor.

The relation between the psychoanalytic/therapeutic and the autobiographical modes is made explicit in many readings of *My Place*. As de Groen asserts: 'The notion of social healing has been an important element in the critical reception of *My Place*.'¹³

Robyn Dizard, moreover, claims:

The book is curative and enlightening, because the author uses home truths to heal colonial schizophrenia. In individual pathology, schizophrenia is manifested by withdrawn, bizarre and sometimes delusional behaviour. When a society acts schizophrenically, the pathology lodges in its institutions.¹⁴

Like Dizard, de Groen extends the therapeutic model to the role of the reader, exemplifying that movement described in the opening of this chapter where both Morgan and her readers are redeemed by her text: 'Reading *My Place* involves us imaginatively in this same process of renewal. The book's redemptive power lies in the way it makes the experience of the characters' psychic healing available to the reader' (34). For de Groen, what characterizes *My Place* as particularly therapeutic is the recovery of traumatic memories: 'The recovery of the lost or suppressed aspects of personal identity can be a healing process, as *My Place* so movingly documents. Like some forms of psychotherapy it involves the passage from silence about troubling experiences to story' (33).

What is lacking in these kinds of readings is the recognition of the problematic status of the 'I' and its constitution through memory. If we are to take seriously the psychoanalytic model, we must also accept that the notion of the 'I' is extremely troubling. As I have already argued, the medieval tradition of methodological skepticism that characterized the emerging self-reflexive subject meant that the subject was never as sure of itself as it would like to believe. Although autobiography demands the production of a transparent voice, such a voice always strains coherence and is

¹³ Fran De Groen, 'Healing, Wholeness and Holiness in *My Place*,' in Bird and Haskell, p. 32.

¹⁴ Robyn Dizard, 'My Place and the Healing Art of Autobiography', *Australian Studies*, 4, (1990), p. 134. Future references are to this edition, and are included in parentheses in the text.

always associated with the possibility of incoherence and fragmentation. It is this fundamental contradiction within the modern Western self-reflexive subject that Freud has attempted to theorize, thereby dismantling the illusion of the sovereignty of the self, and access to the truth of the self, that redemptive readings of *My Place* adhere to.

The Quest Narrative

Related to this psychoanalytic reading, the reading of *My Place* that has received most prominence, a reading which is itself metaphorical, is that of the Quest. As Bob Hodge and Vijay Mishra have argued, *My Place* 'is organised by the classic theme of the Quest... in search of a Secret that is nothing less than the key to personal identity and establishment of genealogy and inheritance'.¹⁵ Once again, the narrative can be said to support this reading. When, in her final year of high school, Sally's mother asks her what she has to worry about, Morgan, as narratorial voice, replies:

How could I tell her that it was me, and her and Nan. The sum total of all the things I didn't understand about them or myself. The feeling that a very vital part of myself was missing and that I'd never belong anywhere. Never resolve anything.
I suppose it wasn't surprising that I returned to my final year in high school with a rather depressed attitude. This naturally led to a great deal of initial truanting, which both helped and hindered the inner search I seemed to have unwittingly begun on. (106)

In the last third of the book, and at this stage the writing of the book as part of the narrative action is well under way, the quest narrative that *My Place* follows comes to a moment of temporary conclusion. Sally, her mother Gladys, and her partner and children go on a trip to Corunna where Daisy, Sally's grandmother, was born. This trip enacts an epiphany where Morgan declares: 'It was like all the pieces of a huge jigsaw were finally fitting together'(232). Significantly, it is from this section of the book, that the epigraph of *My Place* comes:

We were... overwhelmed at the thought that we nearly hadn't come.
How deprived we would have been if we had been willing to let things stay as they were. We would have survived, but not as a whole people.
We would never have known our place. (233)

¹⁵ Bob Hodge and Vijay Mishra, *The Dark Side of the Dream: Australian Literature and the Postcolonial Mind* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1990), p. 98-99. Future references are to this edition, and are included in parentheses in the text.

It is unusual that a story's epigraph comes from the story itself, and it suggests perhaps that straining of coherence and the threat of fragmentation that I will argue permeates the entire book. This threat can also be seen in the movement from the plural possessive pronoun 'our' in the passage, to the singular possessive pronoun, 'my' in the text's title. Stephen Muecke argues that '[t]he text's rhetoric is based on a slippage between "my" and "our" such that the autobiographic account of self-discovery is joined to the liberation of the race or at least the family' (126). However, this movement can be read more ambivalently as a tension between the singular and stable subject of the autobiographical 'I', and the more fragmented effect of the text's collaboration and the multiple and intertwined articulations that comprise and pervade it. This tension between singularity and multiplicity is re-enacted in the odd phrase, 'a whole people', which incorporates the singular indefinite article 'a', and a collective noun. This moment of wholeness, arriving two-thirds of the way into the book, is already, in its very articulation, under threat.

It is this quest for Morgan's past that has led many commentators to describe *My Place*, generically, as a detective story. Nancy Kessing, on the inside cover of *My Place*, is quoted as saying that the story is 'as compelling and impossible to put down as a detective story'. Hodge and Mishra state that the Quest structure 'underlies the genre of detective fiction, so Sally Morgan's story makes sense to nonAborigines as a satisfying version of that familiar form' (100). Bain Attwood argues, quite systematically, that *My Place* can 'be likened to a detective novel' (305). He elaborates on this by claiming there are three senses in which this is true. First, there is a mystery about individual identity; second, there are obstacles and false clues which hamper the detective in the search for 'the truth' behind the mystery; and third, there is 'an ending in which all the loose ends are tied up and all the disturbing questions answered' (305). Although more will be said of this detective story structure later, it is significant that Attwood's proof of his third assertion comes from the jigsaw metaphor cited above, which occurs two-thirds of the way into the story.

It is these arguments that enable David McCooey to conclude that '*My Place* figures the tension between different versions of the past in apparently "novelistic"

terms'(102). It begins 'with an original secret; the secret is revealed in the telling of the story, thereby transfiguring, or disfiguring, the protagonist'.¹⁶ But McCooey also admits, as have many other commentators, that 'the "silence" of the hidden past comes as no surprise to the reader who has been attending to the clues Morgan leaves'(102). This raises the question: is *My Place* no more than the story of a discovery that the reader already knows from the beginning? Is it merely the telling of a secret that was never really a secret after all?

History and Secrets

I would argue that it is not, and that the discovery of Morgan's Aboriginal heritage, as the supposedly central secret of the story, the telling of which redeems Morgan (and Australia), is constantly undermined by the secrets that remain secret, the secrets the reader is never fully told. Just as the back cover of the text of *My Place* is, as we have seen, full of redemptive significations, it is also characterized by ellipses which signify the gaps, the silences, the unsaid and the unsayable that constantly subvert the redemptive possibilities inscribed within the text.

Much has been made of the status of secrets in *My Place*. It has been argued, by Stephen Muecke and Arlene Elder in particular, that the trope of secrecy functions to authorize the text's and, in particular, Nan's Aboriginality, and that through secrecy, 'the genuine Aboriginal nature of this narrative' may emerge.¹⁷ Elder argues that Nan's silence is an instance of Aboriginal decorum and what she calls the 'secret-sacred'. Muecke interprets the secret as being to traditional Aboriginality what the confessional is to contemporary Western culture:

On the surface it would seem that the difficulty would once more be an index of liberation, as well as a delaying device in the narrative. But if we take into account the fact that the shift from Sally to her grandmother represents a shift to more traditional Aboriginality, then could it be the case that the grandmother is resisting the very form of the confessional (a non-Aboriginal genre) and the very power relations that it implies? And there is yet another more positive angle on this—a possible Aboriginal discursive strategy which would take the form of non-disclosure in the face of the demand to speak. (128)

¹⁶ McCooey, p. 102.

¹⁷ Elder, p. 20.

Elder, following on from this, maintains that 'Nan's insistence on secrecy' rather than being seen 'as evidence of her continuing fear of white authority and her socially-induced shame of her Aboriginal origins' can, 'most fruitfully' be seen as 'representative of the older tradition that she represents'(22):

My argument is that Daisy considers her known life every bit as sacred, therefore parts of it secret, as Sally considers her previously unknown life psychologically and politically important and, because of her western schooling, appropriate as the subject of public scrutiny.
(22)

Following Muecke, Elder argues that the silence of Sally's grandmother, Nan, 'represents most surely the traditional Aboriginal heritage that Morgan wishes to uncover and convey'.¹⁸

These arguments, like the secrets they refer to, are compelling. There is, however, little by way of textual evidence to support this view and it can even be thought of as a form of romanticization that denies the effects of the trauma that the secrets are concealing. Despite the obvious impact, in the narrative structure, of silences and repression on Morgan and her mother and even sister, within a formulation like Elder's and Muecke's, the very act of telling the story denies not only the validity of Morgan's Aboriginal heritage, but also the effect of her family's repression. Such denial is present in many, particularly academic, responses to the text. Bob Hodge and Vijay Mishra state that some have said Morgan's Aboriginality is 'more vicarious than real' and Muecke asserts that 'Aboriginality in the case of this novel [sic] is more a genetic inheritance than a set of social practices to be engaged with'.¹⁹ Bain Attwood's reasoning of why Morgan's 'forbears' past lacks valency for Morgan—and it is a rather obvious one—is that it is not particularly relevant to the conditions of her own life. Their histories explain their lives, not hers'(314).

Yet, the dichotomy between history and silence that the text sets up, and that readers of the text have been quick to reproduce is, I would like to suggest, a false one. The two are not as mutually exclusive as Arthur seems to suggest when he claims that

¹⁸ Elder, p. 17.

¹⁹ Hodge and Mishra, p. 98; Muecke, p. 129.

Nan ‘is funny about secrets. She doesn’t understand history’(165). Rather, secrets and history are deeply interwoven in the narrative. I want to suggest that the history that *My Place* elaborates is a history of secrets within Australian history, and it is this very secrecy, and its effects, that Morgan inherits—the repression of the secret sexual abuse of Aboriginal women by settler men. When Gladys Milroy defends her daughter’s project of writing a book, she argues: “‘Why shouldn’t she write a book?... There’s been nothing written about people like us, all the history’s about the white man. There’s nothing about Aboriginal people and what they’ve been through’”(161). Of course, Gladys Milroy has a valid point, but what is also of interest is Gladys’ slippage between the first person plural (us), and the third-person plural (they). This acts as a reminder that Aboriginal history and settler colonial history are more intimately connected than traditional Australian history, with its silence on the question of the impact of invasion on indigenous Australians, and the mixed-race offspring that invasion produced, has wanted to acknowledge.²⁰

The tension between secrets and history is most clearly elaborated in the role of Sally’s great-uncle and Nan’s brother, Arthur. He is portrayed as being extremely eager to tell his stories, and his role functions in opposition to Nan’s reluctance:

Nan maintained a position of non-co-operation, insisting that the things she knew were secrets and not to be shared with others. Arthur always countered this statement with, ‘It’s history, that’s what it is. We’re talking history.’ (163)

Yet Arthur’s own faithfulness to the role of history is problematized by his insistence that he does not want his story “‘mixed up with the Drake-Brockmans’. If you’re goin’ to write their story as well, I’ll have none of it. Let them write their own story’”(164). What the reader comes to learn, however, is that Howden Drake-Brockman is Arthur’s father, thereby confronting Arthur with a difficulty. How do you tell your story without it getting ‘mixed up’ with the story of your father? Colonialism has made it impossible for the stories of Arthur and Drake-Brockman not to be mixed up, which is what the

²⁰ Henry Reynolds, *The Other Side of the Frontier* (Ringwood, Victoria: Penguin, 1983) can be thought of as marking a major shift in Australian historiography towards considering Aboriginal history and Aboriginal responses to invasion.

narrative proceeds to both reveal and repress. Arthur's story is just as surely the story of Drake-Brockman as it is the story of his Aboriginal mother, Annie Padewani, and Arthur's story unfolds from this relation. Morgan is right to claim, in her conversation with Arthur, that:

there's almost nothing written from a personal point of view about Aboriginal people. All our history is written about the white man. No one knows what it was like for us. A lot of our history has been lost, people have been too frightened to say anything. There's a lot of history we can't even get at. (163)

Yet, this 'Aboriginal' history is also the history of the white man, and the desire of white men for Aboriginal women is part of the history of colonialism in Australia, an aspect of colonial relations that history has served to repress.

Repression, and the burden of secrets, run all the way through the text, and in one sense, the narrative of *My Place* can be read as an effect of that repression. For although Morgan's Aboriginality is only repressed early in her life, and although the text in many ways is about the undoing of this repression, a strain of denial runs through *My Place* which is never fully resolved. After reading the story, it is difficult to accept that, on some level, Sally was not aware of her Aboriginal inheritance, an inheritance that her younger sister Jill was acutely aware of. This ambivalence between knowing and not knowing can be seen in Sally's description of herself as a young child at school as a 'non-descript brown face amongst a sea of forty knowing smiles'(25). It is striking that Morgan would use a 'descriptor' of racial difference (brown) immediately after the claim that she had no distinguishing features (non-descript).

In the narrative, it was only in her early school life that Sally realized that she exhibited the signs of difference: 'The kids at school had also begun asking what country we came from. This puzzled me because, up until then, I'd thought we were the same as them'(38). Sally then asked her mother where they were from, and her mother replied: "Tell them you're Indian"(38). But even at this early stage, there is some textual evidence to suggest that the young Sally is aware that things are probably not as simple as she claims she believes. Early in the book, Nan's brother Arthur, whose narrative will later form part of the story, visits Sally's family, bringing with him some of their

cousins who are described as ‘a small group of dark children’(47). This visit clearly had an impact upon Sally, or her reconstruction of the events:

I don't remember ever seeing them again while I was a child, but the image of their smiling faces lodged deep in my memory. I often wondered about them. I wanted them to teach me Indian. I never said anything to Mum. I knew, instinctively, that if I asked about them, she wouldn't tell me anything.(47)

This ‘instinctive’ knowledge that Sally remembers possessing even as a young child, combined with the ambivalent metaphor of lodging, reveals the extent to which Sally's sense of who she is is constituted through repression.

It is nearly a third of the way into the book in a chapter called ‘A Black Grandmother’, that a turning point takes place in the narrative. It is when Sally first realizes that her grandmother is black, although it will be some time again before she makes the further connection between blackness and Aboriginality. One afternoon, when she is fifteen, Sally arrives home from school to find her grandmother crying, a scene she has never witnessed before. When the young Sally asks her why she is crying, she replies: “‘You bloody kids don't want me, you want a bloody white grandmother, I'm black. Do you hear, black, black, black!’” (97).

Sally's response to this outburst is astonishing: ‘For the first time in my fifteen years, I was *conscious* of Nan's colouring. She was right, she wasn't white. Well, I thought logically, if she wasn't white, then neither were we. What did that make us, what did that make me? I never thought of myself as being black before’ (97; Emphasis added). The tension in this section resides in the word ‘conscious’. It implies an unconscious that was aware of her grandmother's, and, by extension, her own blackness. Blackness then, in this context, signifies not only what Nan and Sally's mother refuse to tell her, but also what she ‘knows’ (and I use this term tentatively, tied up as it is with the rational *cogito*) but refuses to admit to consciousness.

This impression that Sally ‘knew’ but denied her Aboriginality is reinforced by a conversation that Sally has with her sister that evening:

‘Jill...did you know Nan was black?’
 ‘Course I did.’
 ‘I didn't, I just found out.’

'I know you didn't. You're really dumb sometimes. God, you reckon I'm gullible, some things you just don't see.' (97)

Jill's response of an almost nonchalant understanding of the obvious ('Course') functions in contrast to Sally's lack of consciousness. The passage that follows reveals the extent to which Sally has repressed her knowledge of her family's heritage and its broader implications in an institutional setting. Jill goes on to explain to Sally:

'You know what we are, don't you?'

'No, what?'

'Boongs, we're Boongs!'....

'What's a Boong?'

'A Boong. You know, Aboriginal. God, of all things, we're Aboriginal!'

'Oh.' I suddenly understood. There was a great deal of social stigma attached to being Aboriginal at our school.

'I can't believe you've never heard the word Boong', she muttered in disgust. **'Haven't you ever listened to the kids at school? If they want to run you down, they say, 'Ahh, ya just a Boong'. Honestly, Sally, you live the whole of your life in a daze!'**

Jill was right, I did live in a world of my own. (98)

How, one might ask, was it possible for Sally to get to this stage of her education (age 15) without being aware of a common term of racial abuse used against Aborigines, even as she understood that there was 'social stigma' attached to being Aboriginal. How, moreover, was she not aware that this term had been directed against her and her sister? I suspect there is something more than mere vagueness at work here, as signified by the use of the word 'daze' which provokes her sister's disgust. Sally's acknowledgment that she lives in a world of her own may well be a symptom of her extreme detachment from a situation that her sister is only too aware of. Perhaps it has something to do with the uncertain memory that Sally is haunted by that evening:

I settled back into the mattress and began to think about the past. Were we Aboriginal? I sighed and closed my eyes. A mental picture flashed vividly before me. I was a little girl again, and Nan and I were squatting in the sand near the back steps.

'This is a track, Sally. See how they go.' I watched, entranced as she made the pattern of a kangaroo. **'Now, this is a goanna and here are emu tracks. You see, they all different. You got to know all of them if you want to catch tucker.'**

I opened my eyes, and, just as suddenly, the picture vanished. Had I remembered something important? I didn't know. That was the trouble, I knew nothing about Aboriginal people. I was clutching at straws. (99-100)

This recollection is framed in terms of recursive traces. As a piece of writing, it is a trace, in the Derridean sense, that brings to mind the part played by the other in the structure of difference that is the sign. As the textualization of a memory, it can be thought of as of what Freud might have called a 'memory trace', a metaphor that suggests that the structure of the psyche, like the psyche of the sign, carries within itself the trace of alterity.²¹ Yet, this trace of a trace signifies another trace; Sally's double trace is of traces of kangaroos inscribed by her grandmother in the sand. This flash of memory, this trace of a trace of a trace that is inscribed within the narrative of *My Place*, disrupts the wholeness and self-presence attributed to the text by its supporters and detractors alike.

The mechanisms by which the young Sally repressed her family's Aboriginal heritage can, in another recursion, be seen as re-enactments of her mother's life where repression is also internalized. In this sense, Muecke's assertion that Morgan's Aboriginality 'is more a genetic inheritance than a set of social practices to be engaged with' (a phrase cited approvingly by both Attwood and Elder) neglects the fact that one of the social practices that Aborigines were actively encouraged to cultivate, under colonial structures, was denial of their own status as Aborigines, a denial that enables statements like Muecke's. It is social practices such as these, moreover, that constitute specific kinds of subjects. As Gladys Milroy claims in her narrative, during her time at Parkerville, the children's home in which she was raised, she was taught 'never to talk openly about being Aboriginal. It was something we were made to feel ashamed of' (264). It is this social practice, and the concomitant repression and denial that it produces, that can be thought of as Sally's inheritance, and it would be profoundly ahistorical to neglect the impact of this practice on contemporary conceptions of Aboriginality.

This sense of the inheritance of repression is also articulated in Gladys's narrative when she recalls meeting a woman on the bus who asked her where she was

²¹ See Derrida, 'Freud and the Scene of Writing' in *Writing and Difference*, pp. 196-231.

from. When Gladys replied that she was Aboriginal, the woman replied: ““Oh you poor thing... what on earth are you going to do?””:

I didn't know what to say. She looked at me with such pity, I felt really embarrassed. I wondered what was wrong with being Aboriginal. I wondered what she expected me to do about it. I talked to Mum [Nan] about it and she told me I must never tell anyone what I was. She made me really frightened... (278)

The words that Gladys then uses to describe a realization about her own mother are very similar to the terms in which Sally's own repression and its abreaction had been articulated: 'It was harder for Mum than for me because she was so broad featured that she couldn't pass for anything else. I started noticing that, when she went out, people stared at her, I hadn't *realised* that before' (279; Emphasis added).

The response of the woman on the bus echoes responses to Sally's gradual process of identification, responses which had come earlier in the narrative, but which are temporally displaced (and I will return to the question of temporal displacement) in so far as, chronologically, they come after the event that Gladys was recalling:

Sometimes people would say, 'But you're lucky, you'd never know you were that, you could pass for anything'. Many students reacted with an embarrassed silence. Perhaps that was the worst reaction of all. It was like we'd said a forbidden word. (139)

The Place of Patriarchy in *My Place*

This so-called forbidden word, *Aborigine*, is, as I have argued, not as forbidden as the narrative seems to imply. The process through which Morgan comes to acknowledge her Aboriginal heritage is represented and read as a slow dawning realization of the already obvious. Morgan's eventual recognition occurs when she realizes that Nan had been 'buttering up the rentman' in order to avoid eviction. When Morgan tells her grandmother that there is no way they can be legally evicted, her grandmother replies:

'You don't know nothin', girl. You don't know what it's like for people like us. We're like those Jews, we got to look out for ourselves.'

'What do you mean people like us? We're just like anybody else aren't we. I didn't even know you knew Jews existed, how on earth could we be the same as them?'

...Nan's remark about the Jews had confused me I knew a lot about the Jews because of the war and Dad. In my mind, there was no possible comparison between them and us. (105)

It is significant that Nan's remarks analogizing her own experience as an Aboriginal person with that of Jews should bring to Morgan's mind her father. This seems to illustrate the ambivalent and marginal place occupied by him within the narrative. For the story of Morgan's Aboriginal ancestors, her maternal line, is haunted by the secrets surrounding Morgan's paternal ancestry, which the text itself, and interpretations of it, have displaced on to the supposed secret of Morgan's Aboriginality. Given that the text was reconstituted in the light of a search for Aboriginality, the extended description of Sally's relationship to her father at the beginning of the text signifies the strange place in which the paternal is inscribed in the book. It is through exploring this strange and marginal place occupied by figure of the father that ways of reading *My Place* can be rethought.

In general, this early section of the narrative is read as prosaic. Carolyn See's review in the *New York Times Book Review* exemplifies this position:

My Place is an immensely moving book but part of its triumph lies in its diction. Ms. Morgan's early memories of a *disconnected* childhood are rendered in artless primer prose. Then, as the burdens of adulthood, education and the past come upon her, the writing straightens out, shapes itself into beginnings, middles, ends.²²

Judith Brett holds a similar position in her review in *Australian Book Review*:

My Place starts off as a fairly conventional account of growing up, with *fragments of memories* of early childhood...About a third of the way through,... the book is transformed from an entertaining, anecdotal autobiography into a book of great courage and power.²³

Carolyn Bliss's assertions in the *New Literatures Review* recapitulates the point: 'Nearly half of the book is devoted to often dull and sometimes precious anecdotes of Morgan's life before the momentous discovery of Aboriginality.'²⁴

²² Carolyn See, 'Why Australian Writers Keep Their Heads Down', *New York Times Book Review*, 14 May, 1989, p. 37; Emphasis added.

²³ Judith Brett, 'Breaking the Silence: A Gift to the Reader', *Australian Book Review*, 93, (1987), p. 9; Emphasis added.

²⁴ Carolyn Bliss, 'The Mythology of Family: Three Texts of Popular Australian Culture', *New Literatures Review*, 18 (1989), p. 62.

The use of words like 'disconnected', 'fragments of memories', 'often dull' indicate that this early part of the narrative is somewhat out of place, and not part of the narrative of finding a place, in so far as the story of the emergence of Sally's selfhood is told in terms of her identification with her matrilineal Aboriginal inheritance. The absence or peripherality of Sally's father in terms of Morgan's identification is repeatedly questioned and criticized. As David McCooey has noted:

Whilst the matrilineal nature of the work has been often noted, discussion of the war experiences of Morgan's father is mostly avoided, even though much of the first part of the work is concerned with his difficulty in coping with the past. The father's hidden past is virtually ignored, and finds its way into the narrative only through an interpolation by the mother, Gladys Milroy, into her own story. (102)

McCooey's loaded language of intentionality—'avoided', 'ignored'—characterizes readings of the absence of the father as a deliberate narrative strategy, and a form of disingenuousness that Morgan utilizes to emphasize her Aboriginality. McCooey goes on to argue:

Given the importance of the 'voice' and its connections to the past, the absence of the father's voice is striking. Bill Morgan's history, embedded in Gladys Morgan's, is no less shocking than the others (in some ways it is more so); but it is incidental to the confession, not central to it. Rather than being read in terms of the national past (as the other narrators are), Bill Morgan's war experiences are seen to account for his personal behaviour, his drinking and early death. (104)

Muecke's response also reads the absence of the father as 'avoidance':

[*My Place*] describe[s] the emergence of Aboriginality in the effective absence of patriarchal or European agency. The filiation is... through the mother's line, thus avoiding what might be more contradictory (and perhaps interesting) accounts of how patriarchal social formations might have had to be worked through and against. (126)

Eric Michaels' reproduction of what is by now an insistent theme in Morgan criticism claims that Morgan is interesting and poignant:

when describing her father and his weaknesses, but he remains an outsider... One only wishes that the duality of cultural heritage and its consequences had been more frankly described. What a great contribution such a treatment would be, and how much more successfully the contradictions of her own history might have been resolved. (46)

Bain Attwood quotes both Michaels and Muecke in a footnote to support his own argument about the text, and claims that Morgan's 'racial determinism' leads her to 'deny her white side'(318).

These criticisms that desire to hear the name of the father are themselves ambivalent. For McCooey and Michaels, Bill Milroy is 'incidental'; an 'outsider'. For Muecke, an exploration of 'patriarchal or European agency' would have made the text more contradictory, for Michaels less so, although why the successful resolution of contradictions in Morgan's history would be a 'great contribution', and for whom, is never elaborated upon. What I want to suggest is that Bill Milroy's story can be read as standing in a synecdochic relationship to the place of the paternal in the text and, by extension, to the place from which colonial settler anxieties are both articulated and repressed. The criticism of Morgan by Muecke, McCooey, Michaels and Attwood, moreover, can perhaps be read, meta-textually, as extensions of this anxiety. I will further argue that the hidden history of Bill Milroy, so commented upon by so many critics, is a metaphor for the hidden history, not of Aboriginal Australia, but of colonial anxieties and desires. This is perhaps why the role played by Sally's father is that of a peripheral haunting which is never really incorporated into the patterns of meaning that emerge in the rest of the narrative. This undermines the centralizing authority of patriarchy, an undermining that clearly produces anxieties in, particularly male, responses to the text.

My Place opens with the words, 'The hospital again', where Sally, as 'a grubby five-year-old in an alien environment'(11), has come to visit her sick father. From the very first words of the text, Sally's father, and the patriarchal world which he occupies, are situated as 'alien' and are associated with, and even constituted by, hauntings, ghosts, silences and fragmentation. Sally recalls, for example, her mother trying to prompt her to talk to her father in the hospital: 'My silences were embarrassing to Mum. She usually covered up for me by telling everyone I was shy. Actually, I was more scared than shy. I felt if I said anything at all, I'd just fall apart. There'd be me, in pieces on the floor. I was full of secret fears'(12). Sally's fear of fragmentation in the presence of her father has a ghostly resonance which is reiterated when Sally is paralyzed by the

offer of a sweet by another war veteran in the hospital: 'I couldn't move even if I'd wanted to. This man reminded me of a ghost'(12). Just as Sally fears her own dispersal in this environment, the men in the veteran's hospital are threatened with fragmentation. Looking at the old soldiers in the ward, the young Sally 'found it hard to comprehend that you could have so many parts missing and still live'(12). Significantly, in the light of the story that unfolds, the world that the paternal occupies is, from the outset, a space marked by denial: 'Sometimes, I pretended Dad wasn't really sick'(11). *My Place*, then, begins with a patriarchy in pieces, in the aftermath of a war against itself, but it is a beginning that is itself denied, for it is not until some years later, half-way into the text when Sally first comes to acknowledge and recognize her Aboriginal heritage, that the narrative includes a chapter called 'A Beginning'(145). This chapter is the point in the narrative where Sally's family openly admit their Aboriginal ancestry.

This early fragmentation, denial, and repression contrast with and complicate the later models of selfhood that are characterized by expression, wholeness and redemption, models, moreover, which are the basis for criticisms of Morgan by Attwood, Muecke and Michaels. In contrast to the world of the father, the world of the maternal line, and particularly Sally's grandmother, her mother's mother, is the realm of nature. Yet Nan, as a character, is introduced in this opening section, and it is significant that she first 'appears' in the form of a memory, as Sally is in the hospitals amidst the ghosts. For Sally, Nan's world is a world of dreaming, a haven away from the fragmentation of the patriarchal world.:

It was such an optimistically beautiful day I felt like crying. Spring was always an emotional experience for me. It was for Nan, too. Only yesterday, she'd awakened me to view her latest discovery. I had been in a deep sleep, but somehow her voice had penetrated my dreams.
(13)

It is during this recounted memory, of a penetrated dream, (a day-dream that will itself be penetrated by the nervous reality of the hospital) that the bird-call, which will come to have so much significance at the book's conclusion, is introduced as a signifier for the grandmother's world:

I felt excited, but it wasn't the thought of the bullfrog that excited me. This morning, I was waiting for the birdcall. Nan called it her special

bird, nobody had heard it but her. This morning I was going to hear it, too.

Still no bird. I squirmed impatiently. Nan poked her stick in the dirt and said, 'It'll be here soon'. She spoke with certainty.

Suddenly, the yard filled with a high trilling sound. My eyes searched the trees. I couldn't see the bird, but his call was there. The music stopped as abruptly as it had begun.

Nan smiled at me, 'Did you hear him? Did you hear the bird call?' 'I heard him, Nan', I whispered in awe.

What a magical moment it had been. I sighed. I was with Dad now, and there was no room for magic in hospitals. I pressed my teeth together and, resting my chin on my chest, I peered back at Mum and Dad. They both seemed nervous. I wondered how long I'd been day-dreaming. (14)

So, from the very beginning of the narrative, this myth of wholeness is, like all myths of wholeness, necessarily haunted by absence, fragmentation and dispersal. This is exacerbated by the kinds of dislocations produced by colonialism where there is an ever-increasing anxiety about racial amalgamation. And it is through the character of Bill Milroy that anxieties about miscegenation, and the question of an illegitimate desire, are introduced, and simultaneously denied. As the young Sally comments of her father's parents: 'It wasn't that our grandparents disliked us. In fact, they always treated us kindly, in their own way. After all, half of us belonged to Dad. It was the other half they were worried about' (53). It is this anxiety about miscegenation, coupled with the concomitant denial of white male desire for black women, that institute the story of *My Place*, and its continuing significance is highlighted by the anxieties and denials surrounding the Stolen Generation debate presently taking place in Australia.

It is from the perspective of this anxiety that we can consider the legislation introduced in Western Australia that constituted the kinds of fragmented subjects that Sally Morgan, her mother and her grandmother were subjected to. This legislation is referred to marginally in *My Place* in the footnoted reference to Neville: 'A.O. Neville, Chief Protector of Natives, Western Australia, 1915-1940. Widely credited as a principal advocate and force behind an active policy of miscegenation in Western Australia through the 1930s. The legal removal of 'half-caste' Aboriginal children from their mothers was part of this policy' (211).²⁵

²⁵ For an excellent, detailed study of the history of the Western Australia Government policy in relation to Aborigines, see Anna Haebich, *For their Own Good: Aborigines and Government in the South West of Western Australia, 1900-1940* (Nedlands, WA: University of Western Australia Press, 1988).

Although the removal of 'part-Aboriginal' children was practised prior to 1905, the 1905 Aborigines Act made it law and gave the Aborigines' 'protectors' greater incentive and justification in the enforcement of the Act. The law was amended in 1936, under A.O. Neville, enabling even tighter controls and broadening the definition of Aboriginal so that many so-called 'half-castes' and 'quadroons', who were previously exempt from the act, were now controlled by it. The law and its amendments meant that Aborigines previously controlled by criminal codes were now incorporated into a welfare enclave, into an enclave, in other words, dominated by the ideology of paternalism. Anxieties about miscegenation were effectively utilized in Australia's emerging capitalist economy in so far as so-called 'half-caste' children were 'defined by their paternity as sufficiently white to be taken from their Aboriginal mothers, but by their maternity as sufficiently black never to have a place in white society beyond servant or farm-hand status, and usually they were sent away altogether'.²⁶

Beyond this pragmatism, the Aborigines Act of 1905 was deeply contradictory. Primarily concerned to limit miscegenation, it was simultaneously assimilationist and segregationist and this very contradiction is an indication of the way mixed-race children, and Morgan's grandmother was one of them, represented something, some desire, in white colonial consciousness that it would not, and still will not, acknowledge. Morgan's description of herself as 'non-descript', explored earlier, has interesting resonances considered from this perspective. Non-descript is a word that emerged out of the discourse of natural history and was used to define things that were not easily described, 'neither one thing nor the other'.²⁷ Although the ideology of the Act was instituted by the desire to maintain neat racial boundaries, the act of colonization generated obstacles to the neat racial boundaries desired in the form of the production of an expanding 'mixed-race' population.²⁸ The very existence of the so-called half-caste bears witness to the mixing of communities that imperialism seeks to evade and deny.

²⁶ Chris Prentice, 'The Interplay of Place and Placelessness in the Subject of the Postcolonial Fiction', *SPAN*, 31 (1991), p. 79.

²⁷ *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, Vol. 2, p. 1410.

²⁸ For a discussion of the issues surrounding miscegenation, see Gillian Cowlishaw, *Black, White or Brindle: Race in Rural Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); Nicholas Thomas, *Colonialism's Culture: Anthropology, Travel and Government* (Cambridge: Polity, 1994); and Fernando Henriques, *Children of Caliban* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1974).

Production of half-caste children, therefore, in their very existence, challenges the premises of racist ideology, an ideology that led to the attempted denial of the existence of these children.

The growing population of 'mixed-blood' children in the 1920s and 30s alarmed Aboriginal administrators and the public alike. 'That these children were the result of sexual liaisons between, most commonly, white men and black women was often ignored.'²⁹ As Robert Young argues, 'anxiety about hybridity reflected the desire to keep races separate, which meant that attention was immediately focused on the mixed race offspring that resulted from inter-racial sexual intercourse, the proliferating, embodied, living legacies that abrupt, casual, often coerced, unions had left behind'.³⁰ In an Oedipalized imperial culture that is not only concerned with a fixed notion of race, but also with a fixed relation to the father, and fixing inheritances (material, biological and psychic) from him, mixed-race children occupied an extremely marginalized position, bearing witness to the instability of both race and paternity. Certainly, in *My Place*, the troubling intersection of race and paternity around sexual desire remains the unsaid of the text. What legislation like Neville's seeks to evade, and the evasion is seen throughout *My Place*, is sexual desire, and the male settler/colonizer's predatory aggression.

From within this growing welfare enclave, patriarchal law ensured that biological paternity could be displaced on to institutionalized paternalism:

Legally it was also very difficult to prove paternity, as an Aboriginal woman's sworn statement was not enough to incriminate a white man as the father of the child. The Native Welfare Department was therefore increasingly burdened by the cost of providing for the swelling half-caste population.³¹

This very legislation, it would seem, is designed to both legitimate sexual relations between settler men, as dominant holders of the law, and Aboriginal women, and simultaneously enable their denial.

²⁹ Haebich, pp. 48-50.

³⁰ Young, *Colonial Desire*, p. 25.

³¹ Haebich, p. 111.

Joan Newman, in her reading of *My Place*, notes, in line with many other responses that, in ‘identifying with her matrilineal heritage, Morgan avoids the focus upon “the name of the Father” which is commonly emphasized in European autobiography’(72). Yet the name of the father, as both a material and psychic inheritance, is extremely complex for half-caste children in Australia. As Arthur relates in his narrative, when he and Daisy were taken away from their mother to the Swan Native and Half-Caste Mission, ‘[t]he first thing they did was Christen us... We were Christened Corunna, they didn’t give us our father’s name’(183). The irony of being named after a piece of land taken from one’s indigenous community by the very man who disowns his position as father is striking here. So too is the fact that they were named after a piece of land, which had already been renamed after an English poem by C. Wolfe, ‘The Burial of Sir John Moore at Corunna’.³² Corunna, so *The Golden Treasury of English Verse* tells us, was the burial place of Sir J. Moore who ‘was killed whilst covering the embarkation of his troops’(487) when retreating from Napoleon’s army after his capture of Madrid. In his critique, Attwood claims that the chapter of *My Place* called ‘Return to Corunna’, is ‘significantly entitled’(305), presumably because such a ‘return’ fulfills the ‘tradition of another literary genre, that of quest literature [where] the search for a real self culminates in a journey or pilgrimage’(305). Yet, for me, the significance of this chapter title, which Attwood does not elaborate on, is that Morgan’s return is to a place which commemorates the burial place of an English soldier who died, on foreign territory, in a battle against a foreign invader. This naming, in effect, writes over the land of Australia (the North-West of Australia in this case) as a burial place for the many Aboriginal people killed during the invasion of Australia by Britain. In other words, the chapter title recognizes that the ‘return to Corunna’ can never culminate, in spite of Attwood’s insistence, in the unproblematic return to a place of spiritual belonging prior to invasion.

³² C. Wolfe, ‘The Burial of Sir John Moore at Corunna’, Book IV, *The Golden Treasury of English Verse* (1861), ed. Francis Turner Palgrave (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1994), p. 243. I am grateful to Angela Smith for bringing this poem to my attention.

Arthur's narrative about his removal from Corunna also reveals the increasing anxiety and absurdity of legislation surrounding definitions of Aboriginality in Australia when he recalls the effects of a visit by Governor Bedford:

After his visit, the darker kids were separated from the lighter kids. He didn't like us being together....Funny thing was, they put Freddy Lockyer in with the white kids. He had fair hair and fair skin, but really, he was a white blackfella. He didn't want to go, he wanted to stay with us blackies, he belonged to us but they made him go. I said to him, 'You're not black enough to stay with us, you have to go'. I felt sorry for him. He really was one of us. (184)

The impact of this legislation on Daisy Corunna's life is also forcefully articulated in the story, and reveals the extent to which this supposedly racialized legislation was always sexualized and gendered:

In those days, it was considered a privilege for a white man to want you, but if you had children, you weren't allowed to keep them. You were only allowed to keep the black ones. They took the white ones off you 'cause you weren't considered fit to raise a child with white blood. (336)

That the effects of this legislation also haunted the lives of Daisy's daughters is exemplified in the threat that Gladys' husband Bill, Sally's father, used to ensure her obedience:

'Nobody will let someone like you bring up kids and you know it.' I knew what he meant. I always had a sinking feeling in my stomach when he said that. Aboriginal women weren't allowed to keep children fathered by a white man....I couldn't take the chance of losing them. (310)

The placement of the modifier, 'always', suggests that this threat was a recurring one. Yet, even as anxieties surrounding miscegenation are prefigured by Bill Milroy, it is through the Drake-Brockman family, the influential settler family, headed by the arch-patriarch Alfred Howden Drake-Brockman, that these anxieties are both articulated and repressed. It is in the locus of the Drake-Brockman family that anxieties surrounding paternity and miscegenation intersect.

The Drake-Brockman family are first mentioned fairly early in the book. We only learn about them peripherally, as secret knowledge, from an exchange Sally overhears as a child:

I remember, at one stage, we were really desperate. Mum and Nan kept talking *in whispers*. They decided to write a letter to Alice Drake-Brockman in Sydney to see if her family could lend us some money. They were really disappointed when the reply came; it said that they were broke, too, and couldn't lend us anything. Nan was very bitter. *She said she didn't care they were bankrupt, they owed her.* I didn't know what she was talking about. (54; Emphasis added)

At this stage of the narrative, neither does the reader, but the talking in whispers suggests something of a secret nature, and the reference to bankruptcy not only signifies the failure of capitalism as an economic system, but also the ethical bankruptcy of the paternalist settler culture that it supports. Initially, then, the Drake-Brockman family are a haunting presence, introduced in whispered tones, in much the same way that Bill Milroy was, and it is only as the story unfolds that allusions to the significance of the Drake-Brockmans begin to emerge.

After the Quest for Aboriginality has been completed, the major preoccupation of the latter part of the novel is with Daisy Corunna's and Gladys Milroy's paternity. It is this preoccupation to which the narrative surrounding Bill Milroy can be read as standing in a synecdochic relationship. Around the question of Morgan's white ancestry, Hodge and Mishra assert:

It is paradoxical that Sally Morgan's search for her Aboriginal identity is accomplished primarily by disclosing her white ancestors, paradoxical since it is this search that allows her to come to terms with her Aboriginality in a way that Nan herself found too hard. In the process she discloses to nonAborigines a pattern of White complicity in the destruction of Aboriginal society that is its own buried secret: sexual exploitation of Aboriginal women. (100)

This paradox, however, is, as I have tried to suggest, less a paradox than a displacement. Morgan's search for her Aboriginal identity in the text displaces the white complicity in the sexual exploitation of Aboriginal women. If Bill Milroy stands in a metaphoric or synecdochic relationship to paternity in general, we can think differently about why Bill Milroy cannot fully disclose the content of the nightmares he suffers: 'there were some things that were too degrading for him to share' (282).

Given this preoccupation with paternity, Morgan's search for a maternal Aboriginal identity can be read as the unspoken search for a settler paternity that has been repressed, and that the secrets surrounding this paternity have been displaced on to

claims about the supposedly secret nature of Aboriginality. Arthur, Nan's brother, claims unequivocally that both his and Daisy's father is Howden Drake-Brockman, the owner of Corunna Downs, the station where both Arthur and Daisy were born, and the home in which Daisy later became an unpaid domestic servant. Arthur's reminder to Sally and her mother, Gladys, brings to mind anxieties about miscegenation, and denial about sexual relations between white men and Aboriginal women:

'[D]on't forget Alice was Howden's second wife and they had the Victorian way of thinking in those days. Before there were white women, our father owned us, we went by his name, but later, after he married his first wife, Nell, he changed our names... He didn't want to own us no more. They were real fuddy-duddies in those days. No white man wants to have black kids runnin' round the place with his name. And Howden's mother and father, they were real religious types, I bet they didn't know about no black kids that belonged to them.' (157)

This disowning of his own children is in stark contrast to the welcome reception that Morgan and her family receive within their Aboriginal community when they return to Corunna Downs. Much is made of where each of them, including Morgan's non-Aboriginal husband, belong in the community, and there is a marked contrast between the hierarchical and patriarchal denial on the part of the Drake-Brockmans, and the horizontal, and less rigid, structures that the aboriginal community welcome them into, where a person's place within the structure is not determined by the relation to the father. The important thing, it seems, is the multiplicitous relation they have to each other and to place. For example, when Sally and her family meet a man called Jack, and ask him if they are related to him, he replies: "Well, now, which way do you go by, the blackfella's way or the white man's way?" (219).

Yet, even on this journey, where Sally and her family are so readily accepted into the Aboriginal community, the question of both Nan's and Gladys' paternity is never far away. One of the men they meet, Roy, suggests that Drake-Brockman could be Nan's father, and, in so doing, alludes to the excessive half-caste population that station owners both produced and denied. In response to the question of who Nan's father might be, Roy replies, "Could have been the station owner. Plenty of black kids belong to them, but they don't own them" (223).

The Place of Incest in *My Place*

Just as Morgan's father functions synecdochically for anxieties about miscegenation, it is also through Bill Milroy that anxieties about incestuous child abuse are introduced as a narrative fragment which, like the figure of Bill Milroy, is never incorporated into the narrative's pattern of meaning. '[S]ome elderly friends' of Sally's father, who her and her siblings called 'Uncle and Aunty'(81), open up a central concern of the narrative that will later be repressed. It was their father's friend, their metaphorical 'uncle', who tries to bribe Sally and her sister Jill with gifts in exchange for sexual favours:

'You can have the necklace. I might even give you the bracelet as well.' I backed up against the wall. Uncle moved closer and tried to put his hand down my pants. I shoved him away, he fell over and landed on his tool-box... I warned Jill never to go up to his shed again.

I was frightened for her, yet I couldn't explain what I was frightened of. She disregarded my warning. On two occasions, I caught her plodding along silently after Uncle. I caught up with her and distracted her with something else. (82)

This episode is neither introduced nor mentioned again, and the fear that Sally experiences, which she is unable to explain, is reproduced hauntingly within the narrative. Like so much of the incestuous abuse within the narrative, we never find out what happened on the occasions that Sally was not there to distract Jill with something else. Sally's and Jill's contrasting awareness of the dangers of sexual abuse act as mirror reflections of their contrasting awareness of their Aboriginality. On the one hand, Sally is extremely vigilant about the sexual abuse and Jill is extremely naive. On the other hand, Sally's non-recognition of Aboriginality is described as the effect of being in a 'daze', while Jill is totally aware of it. It is almost as if the burdensome weight of this dual awareness cannot be held within the same frame, a weight, moreover, that prevents them from coming together within the narrative.

Although this episode is not mentioned again, it does prefigure another secret incestuous relationship surrounding the question of Gladys' paternity. Nan refuses to reveal this secret closing her narrative with: 'Well, Sal, that's all I'm gunna tell ya ... I got my secrets, I'll take them to the grave. Some things, I can't talk 'bout'(349). The

text, however, reveals the secret in spite of itself, and throughout the course of the latter sections of the story it becomes increasingly clear that not only is Drake-Brockman Daisy's father, he is Gladys' father as well, and that he also fathered another child to Daisy that was taken away from her, a second child that is only vaguely alluded to: 'Before I had Gladdie, I was carryin' another child, but I wasn't allowed to keep it. That was the way of it, then. They took our children one way or another. I never told anyone I was carryin' Gladdie'(340).

Like the episode with the 'uncle', this second child is not mentioned again, although Jack, the man they had met in Corunna did 'recall meeting a Daisy in '23... Never seen her before. It was like she appeared outa nowhere. Took her from Hillside to stay at Corunna. She had family there she wanted to visit... She was pregnant, baby must have been near due'(221). Sally replies that she does not think it could be the same Daisy, but perhaps this figure, appearing out of nowhere, can be read as a metaphor for the unrepresentability of the disseminatory excess of colonial desire. Daisy, in her narrative, also alludes to this disseminatory excess: 'Aah, that colour business is a funny thing. Our colour goes away. You mix us with white man, and pretty soon, you got no blackfellas left. Some of these whitefellas you see walkin' around, they really black underneath. You see, you never can tell'(326).

The unfolding of the textual evidence for a reading of Drake-Brockman as both the father and grandfather of Gladys plays a significant role in the narrative, particularly because it is never explicitly referred to. Its unfolding is full of gaps, denials and repressions. Even in Nan's narrative, she alludes to the possibility that there might be reasons that she was taken from Corunna that she is not aware of: 'Funny how I was the only half-caste they took from Corunna. Drake-Brockman's left the others and took me. Maybe Howden took me 'cause I was his daughter, I don't know'(333). Nan's 'I don't know' is a repeated response in reference to the question of her own and Gladys' paternity.

From about half-way through the narrative, from the moment that the family's Aboriginality had been acknowledged, in the chapter following the chapter titled 'A

Beginning', Sally begins to question her reluctant mother and grandmother about who her mother's father is. Gladys replies:

'When I was little, I used to ask about my father, but she wouldn't tell me anything. In the end, I gave up.'

'Who was your father?'

'Oh, I don't know', she replied sadly, 'Nan just said he was a white man who died when I was very small.'

I felt sad then. I promised myself that, one day, I would find out who her father was. She had a right to know. (145)

This promise, which is also a promise to the reader, is an ambiguous one in terms of the narrative. Daisy dies at the end of the narrative, taking her secrets to the grave. Yet, in another sense, it can be argued that Sally does fulfil this promise she makes to herself, even as the narrative denies it. Sally begins by checking her mother's birth certificate, only to find that there is a blank where Gladys' father's name should be, a blank that can be thought of metaphorically as the position paternity occupies within the text. As Gladys remarks: 'Just a blank. That's awful, like nobody owns me'(152).

It is from this blank that the narrative slowly suggests who Gladys' father might be. The first suggestion of the implication of the Drake-Brockman family in Gladys' paternity comes from Gladys when she claims that she 'had asked Judy Drake-Brockman [Howden and Alice Drake-Brockman's daughter] once and she kept saying, "It's in the blood", whatever that means'(153). Like Nan's 'I don't know', this 'whatever that means' acts as a kind of repressive closure, indicating an unwillingness, for obvious reasons, to pursue what Judy Drake-Brockman might have meant. Sally suggests this herself, as well as suggesting the differential structure of the psyche, two pages earlier in response to Gladys' claim that she doesn't know anything: 'You only THINK you don't know anything. I'm sure if you searched those hidden recesses of your mind you'd come up with something'(151).

Soon after this, Sally and Gladys ask Arthur if he can tell them who Gladys' father is:

He was silent for a moment, thoughtful. Then he said, 'I'd like to. I really would, but it'd be breakin' a trust. Some things 'bout her I can't tell. It wouldn't be right. She could tell you everything you want to know. You see, Howden was a lonely man. I know, one night at Ivanhoe, we both got drunk together and he told me all his troubles.

He used to go down to Daisy's room at night and talk to her. I can't say no more. You'll have to ask her.' (158)

That same evening, after Arthur had gone home, Sally and Gladys continued talking about who Gladys' father might. Strangely, their dialogue does not mention any of the possible implications, for instance what Howden Drake-Brockman's loneliness and trips to Daisy's room at night might have involved, of what Arthur had told them:

'Howden may have been her father, but there could be something else, some secret he wants to keep, that is somehow tied in with all of this. Perhaps that's why he didn't look us in the eye.'

'Yes, that's possible, too. And I can't see why he wouldn't tell us the truth, because he knows how much it means to us. I don't think we'll ever know that full story. I think we're going to have to be satisfied with guesses.'

'It makes me sad to think that no one wants to own our family.'

'I know, Mum...that's all we can go on then, possibilities. Now Judy said Jack Grime was your father, but maybe he wasn't. He was living at Ivanhoe at the time you were born, but that doesn't necessarily mean he fathered you, does it?'

'Oh God, Sally', Mum laughed, 'let's not get in any deeper. I've had enough for one night.' (158-59)

This passage is striking for the extent to which it enacts its repression. Their unwillingness to pursue Arthur's hints, and Gladys' desire to 'not get any deeper' is indicative of the fear of what such depth might reveal. Even Sally's assertion that they will never 'know the full story' is a disavowal of both the story that she is simultaneously revealing and the promise she had made to herself and her mother earlier.

The implication that Howden Drake-Brockman is Gladys' father is again made during Arthur's narrative:

In 1927, I got a letter from Howden... The letter asked if I'd like to have Daisy with me. It said they didn't want her no more and they wondered if I could come and get her. ...

I... was all set to go get Daisy when another letter arrived. It said they'd changed their minds and I couldn't have her after all...

In December 1927, I heard Daisy had had a baby girl. It was news to me. I wondered, then, if that was why they'd changed their minds.

They must have found out she was pregnant...

Early in 1928, Howden died. He'd been a sick man for some time...

Howden saw Daisy's baby before he died. They called her Gladys. He held her in his arms and said, 'She's very beautiful'. She was one of the most beautiful babies I'd ever seen. (203)

The most revealing passage, however, on the question of Gladys' paternity, comes after Arthur's narrative, and just before Gladys begins her own, in a dialogue between Sally and Gladys that is remarkable for the extent to which it reveals the simultaneous blindness and insight that the story as a whole is characterized by. It is worth quoting at length. They begin with a discussion of who Nan's father might be that quickly returns to the question of who Gladys' father is:

'Probably, we'll never really know who fathered her.'

'Do you reckon Jack Grime really is your father?'

'Oh, I don't know, Sally', Mum sighed. 'When I was little, I always thought Howden was my father, isn't that silly?'

'Howden? Why did you think that?'

'I suppose because he was Judy and June and Dick's father. I guess, because I was little and didn't understand, I assumed he was my father, too. You know how it is when you're a kid.'

'Yeah, I could see how you might think that. You were all living there at Ivanhoe.'

'Yes.'

'Aunty Judy said you're the image of Jack Grime, though, that'd be some sort of proof, wouldn't it?'

'Oh, I don't know, people can look like one another, but it doesn't mean they're related.'

'Yeah. Hey, I know. I've got a photo of Jack, a big one, why don't we look at it, see if you do look alike?'

'I don't want to do that.'

'Go on! We'll hold it up to the big mirror in my room, you can put your head next to it and we'll see if you look like him.'

'Oh, all right', Mum giggled, 'why not?'

'Within minutes, Mum and I and the photo were all facing the large mirrors in the doors of my wardrobe.'

'Well, that was a dead loss. You don't look anything like him...'

'There's no resemblance there at all.'

'He doesn't look like any of you kids, either, does he?'

'Naah', I agreed. 'Hang on a tick and I'll get another picture.'

I returned quickly. 'Okay', I said, 'face the mirror.'

Mum fronted up to the mirror and tried not to laugh. She felt silly.

Suddenly, I held up a photograph of Howden as a young man next to her face. We both fell into silence.

'My God', I whispered. 'Give him black, curly hair and a big bust and he's the spitting image of you!'

Mum was shocked. 'I can't believe it', she said. 'Why haven't I ever noticed this before, I've seen that picture hundreds of times.'

'I suppose it never occurred to you', I replied.

'You don't think it's possible he was my father?'

'Anything's possible. But he couldn't be yours as well as Nan's. You know, features can skip a generation. Say he was Nan's father, well you could have inherited those looks from that.'

'Oh, I don't know, Sally', Mum sighed. 'It's such a puzzle. You know, for nearly all my life, I've desperately wanted to know who my father was, now I couldn't care less. Why should I bother with whoever it was, they never bothered with me.'

'But that's been the recent history of Aboriginal people all along, Mum. Kids running around, not knowing who fathered them. Those early pioneers, they've got a lot to answer for.'

'Yes, I know, I know, but I think now I'm better off without all that business. All those wonderful people up North, they all claimed me. Well, that's all I want. That's enough, you see. I don't want to belong to anyone else.'

'Me either.' (236-7)

This is one of the most significant passages in the entire text. It begins with hesitation on Gladys' part ('I don't want to do that'). When Gladys finally sees the similarity between herself and Drake-Brockman, she wonders why she had not realized this earlier, a situation which repeats a pattern of denial that has unfolded during the narrative ('Why haven't I ever noticed this before'; 'I suppose it never occurred to you'). There is also the simultaneous investigation of the possibility of incest, and a disavowal of that same possibility, although no grounds are given for this disavowal ('You don't think it's possible he was my father?'/ 'Anything's possible. But he couldn't be yours as well as Nan's'). In spite of the fact that the mystery of Gladys' paternity has occupied, and will continue to occupy, a major part of the text, and in spite of Sally's promise, it is at the point of discovery that both Gladys and Sally decide that they do not really care who Gladys' father is ('for nearly all my life, I've desperately wanted to know who my father was, now I couldn't care less'; 'I think now I'm better off without all that business'). Visually also, this passage is significant, permeated as it is by mirror reflections and photographic images, that allow for recognitions and misrecognitions. Such images are explicitly linked here to the question of inheritance: 'You know, features can skip a generation. Say he was Nan's father, well you could have inherited those looks from that.' This section of the text alternates between the explicit and the unvocalized, an alternation which underpins its willed and anxious ignorance.

Daisy refers, also to Howden Drake-Brockman in her short narrative, without ever explicitly calling him Gladys' father. What is revealed, however, is that the secret of Gladys' father was simultaneously both widely known and widely repressed: 'Now how this all came about, that's my business, I'll only tell a little. Everyone knew who the father was, but they all pretended they didn't know. Aah, they knew, they knew. You didn't talk 'bout things, then. You hid the truth'(340). What Daisy does make explicit, however, is the extent to which Aboriginal women in unpaid domestic service,

women like herself, were particularly vulnerable to the 'forced' sexual advances of their masters: 'We had no protection when we was in service. I know a lot of native servants had kids to white men because they were forced. Makes you want to cry to think how black women have been treated in this country'(337). Daisy's ambivalent and unstable identification with 'native servants' that she has known also acts as both an identification and disidentification. Judith Butler eloquently describes the complexity of this process, and it is worth quoting at length:

it may be that certain identifications and affiliations are made, certain sympathetic connections amplified, precisely in order to institute a *disidentification* with a position that seems too saturated with injury or aggression, one that might, as a consequence, be occupiable only through imagining the loss of viable identity altogether. Hence, the peculiar logic in the sympathetic gesture by which one objects to an injury done to another to deflect attention from an injury done to oneself, a gesture that then becomes the vehicle of displacement by which one feels for oneself *through and as the other*. Inhibited from petitioning the injury in one's own name (for fear of being steeped in that very abjection and/or launched infelicitously into rage), one makes the petition in the name of another...³³

Daisy enacts such a gesture in her narrative, the shortness of which, in relation to the text as a whole (25 pages of a 358 page book) may well indicate the unoccupiability of her own life-story, and its saturation with suffering.

In reference to the birth of her daughter, Gladys, although without ever explaining the relevance of the connection, she states: 'Howden died not long after she was born. When I came home from hospital, he said, "Bring her here, let me hold her". He wanted to nurse Gladdie before he died'(340). This is significant in so far as all Daisy ever told Gladys about her father was that 'he was a white man who died when [she] was very small'(145).

The Seduction Theory and the Oedipus Complex

This displacement of the perpetrator of incestuous sexual abuse on to an 'uncle' or 'family friend', in the case of *My Place* it is both, is a distinctly Freudian manoeuvre. At the turn of the century, Freud hoped to discover the cause of hysteria, the archetypal

³³ Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (New York and London: Routledge, 1993), p. 100.

female neurosis of the time. Again and again, Freud's early female patients described sexual encounters with men they had trusted. Freud initially believed his patients. In 1896, in 'The Aetiology of Hysteria and Studies on Hysteria', Freud announced that at the origin of hysteria was a childhood sexual trauma.³⁴

The prevalence of these reports of incestuous sexual abuse must have been extremely disturbing to Freud. Perhaps recognizing the challenge not only to patriarchal authority but also to social stability within the patriarchal society that he was analyzing, Freud refused to identify fathers publicly as sexual aggressors. Though in private correspondence he cited 'seduction by the father' as the 'essential point' in hysteria, he did not make this statement in public. So Freud falsified his cases by identifying others as the offenders. In 'Studies on Hysteria', Freud named the uncle as the seducer in two cases: 'Many years later, Freud acknowledged that the "uncles" who had molested Rosalie and Katharina were in fact their fathers. Though he had shown little reluctance to shock prudish sensibilities in other matters, Freud claimed that "discretion" had led him to suppress this essential information.'³⁵

Within a year, Freud repudiated his theory of childhood seduction in favour of the Oedipus complex, which is now a central tenet of psychoanalytic thought. He concluded that his patients' numerous reports were untrue:

In the period in which the main interest was directed to discovering infantile sexual traumas, almost all my women patients told me that they had been seduced by their father. I was driven to recognise in the end that these reports were untrue and so came to understand that the hysterical symptoms are derived from fantasies and not from real occurrences. It was only later that I was able to recognize in this phantasy of being seduced by the father the expression of the typical Oedipus complex in women.³⁶

Freud's abandonment of the seduction theory is certainly problematic, and perhaps motivated by anxieties about the nature of the patriarchal family that Freud and, as we have seen, many others, had already decided was representative of the most advanced stage of civilization. Perhaps Freud's later attempt in *Totem and Taboo* to

³⁴ See Sigmund Freud and Josef Breuer, *Studies on Hysteria* (1895), SE 2, for detailed case studies of hysteria and childhood sexual trauma.

³⁵ Ann Scott, *Real Events Revisited: Fantasy, Memory and Psychoanalysis* (London: Virago, 1996), p. 9.

³⁶ Freud, 'Femininity', p. 154.

universalize the Oedipus complex and ground it in pre-history was a way of displacing the effects of a distinctly modern familial structure. The individual, in a segregated institution of reproduction under capitalism, is provided with only one of two subject positions with which to identify, and these positions are grounded not only in gender but also in a prohibitor/prohibited dichotomy. In this sense, Freud's abandonment of the Seduction Theory can be thought of as a denial of the effects of capitalist modernity.

There is, however, another way of thinking about this transition that founds psychoanalysis. Freud's investigations into childhood sexual trauma have produced some important insights, the most significant of which, in the context of my argument, is the concept of deferred action (*Nachträglichkeit*). According to Freud, deferred action ensures that the experience of childhood sexual trauma overwhelms the individual in such a way that the event is no longer available for remembrance and integration into a sense of self, and that the cause of the trauma resides in the gap between the events and its deferred remembrance, which can only, because of its traumatic nature, be partial, uncertain and fragmented. This tension between the memory and the original experience is analogous to, or rather an extreme form of, the tension between the mediatory and constitutive nature of language and the real to which it attempts to refer, a tension that is at work in both the writing and the readings of *My Place*. If nothing else, what psychoanalysis teaches us is that the relationship between memory and the events it refers to is extremely complex, and it is the disturbances, distortions, omissions and displacements that offer interpretive clues.

Although the notion of deferred action is deeply troubling for a conception of historical truth, Cathy Caruth has argued that it is in the 'widespread and bewildering encounter with trauma—both in its occurrence, and in the attempt to understand it—that we can begin to recognize the possibility of a history which is no longer straightforwardly referential'.³⁷ Caruth's re-reading of *Moses and Monotheism*, and Freud's discussion of trauma in it, suggests that trauma is experienced after an interval of time has elapsed, requiring 'a rethinking of reference... not aimed at eliminating

³⁷ Cathy Caruth, 'Unclaimed Experience: Trauma and the Possibility of History', *Yale French Studies*, 79 (1991), p. 182.

history, but at resituating it in our understanding, that is, of precisely permitting history to emerge where immediate understanding may not'.³⁸ Historical and personal truth, in this conception of trauma, is bound up with a crisis of truth, and an inability to locate, because of the insight of deferred action, where and when such truth might be located. Trauma disrupts the possibility of articulating events in a narrative formulation.

In the light of Freud's shift from the Seduction Theory to the Oedipus, which was also the shift towards the idea of deferred action, perhaps it is possible to resituate *My Place* in the gap between Freud's theory of childhood seduction and his later theorization of the Oedipus complex, bringing them together in a way that Freud's analysis split them apart. In one sense, *My Place* even replays the debates, surrounding the founding moments of psychoanalysis, between childhood seduction and the Oedipus complex. In *My Place*, however, both the reality of the violence of child sexual abuse, and the impossibility of ever giving testimony to that reality in anything but a fragmented and disjointed form, is made manifest. The narrative of *My Place* is also the narrative of that which overwhelms modes of narrativity.

My Place as Detective Story.

Although many critics have claimed that *My Place* is an expression of the historically recent genre of detective fiction, generally considered to have begun in 1841 with Edgar Allen Poe's *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*, there is another even older literary analogue that resembles *My Place*, Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, one of the earliest known detective stories, where the enigma is the enigma of the self.³⁹ As Laura Mulvey has argued, the 'unravelling of the enigma is essential to the Oedipus story in its own right'.⁴⁰ Morgan, like Oedipus, takes on the role of both investigator and story-teller, promising to find the cause of her family's, and, by extension, her country's distress. Although women are extremely marginal to the Oedipus story, Morgan's own story is centred around the maternal line and seems to enact more closely, in spite of similarities

³⁸ Caruth, 'Unclaimed Experience', p. 182.

³⁹ See Ong, pp. 143-148.

⁴⁰ Laura Mulvey, 'The Oedipus Myth: Beyond the Riddles of the Sphinx', in *Psychoanalysis and Cultural Theory: Thresholds*, ed. James Donald (London: Macmillan, 1991), p. 33.

to the Oedipus story, the theory of childhood seduction, even if it can be seen simultaneously as an instance of deferred action. In this way, Morgan's narrative can be thought of as challenging the movement in Freudian theory from childhood seduction to the Oedipus complex, and even the movement that accompanies it from a maternal to a paternal social order and identification.⁴¹ The social and historical problem of inheritance that has pervaded the modern subject under a patriarchal order is subverted here.

In this sense, in spite of the fact that *My Place* remains a self-reflexive autobiographical narrative, a narratorial and subjective position that, I have argued, is deeply implicated in the Oedipalizing of western culture, this intersection of the autobiographical subject with the colonized subject profoundly disrupts not only its own narrative structure, but also the universal and ahistorical narrative of the subject provided by psychoanalysis.

It is with these thoughts in mind that we can perhaps think of *My Place* in terms of both the seduction theory and deferred action, where memory, in the form of either history or autobiography, is already troubled by the secret nature of trauma. The traumatic events of Nan's life are that which is not experienced or assimilated by the subject at the time or in the place of their occurrence. In this sense, the title *My Place* is a jolting reminder that trauma has no place, floating somewhere between the events and (in this case) their transgenerational, yet still repressed, interpretation. It is not so much, as Chris Prentice has argued, that Morgan 'strategically re-identifies with her Aboriginal heritage to recuperate a sense of place', but that it is impossible to identify, strategically or otherwise, with that part of her heritage that is non-Aboriginal.⁴² In this way, *My Place* is less a cure for Australia's violent past, as psychoanalytic readings have tended to read it, and more a symptom of repression and denial.

Certainly, the narrative is full of fragmented and unacknowledged disjunctive moments which challenge references to wholeness in the overarching narrative. At one stage, Morgan decides 'to give it all up...I didn't think my family would care what I

⁴¹ Mulvey, 'The Oedipus Myth', p. 27.

⁴² Prentice, p. 79.

did... They could all go on being what they'd been for years, they wouldn't have to cope with a crazy member of the family who didn't know who she was...' (141). At another stage, during the trip to Corunna when they meet some of their relatives, Morgan states:

Gladys [a relative] and I had tears in our eyes, but we managed not to break down... we were all just managing to hold ourselves together. I tried not to look at Gladys as she explained things, because I was trying to keep a tight lid on my emotions. It wasn't that I would have minded crying, it was just that I knew if I began, I wouldn't be able to stop. It was the only way to cope. (228)

Such emotional scenes, where the fear of fragmentation is always close at hand, one minute laughing and one minute crying, permeate the text.

Responses to Incest

Most commentators on *My Place* have noted this incestuous relationship, and it is one of the most significant aspects of responses to *My Place* that the symptomatic repression of incestuous sexual abuse is reproduced meta-textually, where readings rely on a straight-forward relationship between events, the memory of these events, and their interpretation and narration, which ignore the place of dislocation and distortion that is characteristic of traumatic histories. The result of this reduction involves a relation to the text which is either one of believing or disbelieving. Just as *My Place* glides over the shadow of incest in the text, only alluding to it obliquely, so too have critical responses to the text. Both Robyn Dizard and Kathryn Trees admit that the narrative indicates the family secret is incest, but do not elaborate on what that might mean or even who it is between. Jodi Broun writes that *My Place* alludes to the issue of incest by the 'implication of Drake-Brockman as Nan's father, and perhaps Glad's father as well!' (27-28). Apart from this exclamatory statement, no more about this is mentioned. Jan Larbalestier merely states that there 'are hints in the narrative that Howden himself may have fathered his own daughter's child'.⁴³ Tamsin Donaldson, in an otherwise fascinating reading, reproduces the denial within the text which she masks with the claim of irrelevance when she argues that the 'hardest of the revelations to make, and by

⁴³ Jan Larbalestier, 'Through their own Eyes: An Interpretation of Aboriginal Women's Writing', in *Intersexions: Gender/Class/Culture/Ethnicity*, ed. Gill Bottomley, Marie de Lepervanche and Jeannie Martin (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1991), p. 89.

the same token the one ultimately judged least relevant to the reworking of identities is that Howden Drake-Brockman may be the father of both Nan and Mum...'⁴⁴

I only quote from these responses to illustrate the extent to which the incestuous relationship that is repressed within the narrative, an index, I would have thought, of its significance, is then so casually dismissed in responses to the text. Sometimes the terms within which this dismissal is articulated are particularly revealing of the kinds of anxieties that lie behind this lack of recognition. In a curiously unguarded metaphor of seduction, Hodge and Mishra, in discussing the secret of Gladys' father, claim that although Nan dies without giving his name, 'the clues mount and the book leads us tantalisingly close to an unspoken and unspeakable final secret. Aboriginal rules of secrecy coincide with White laws of libel to ensure that this meaning (if it exists) does not enter into text'(100).

Like Hodge and Mishra, Kateryna Longley refers to the unspeakable within the text, and states:

Much of the unspeakable is related to landowners' violation of white and Aboriginal laws, including those relating to incest, in their sexual abuse of Aboriginal women. These blank moments remind both the reader and the writer of the crudeness and invasiveness of the genre of transcribed autobiography when compared with the oral tradition of shared stories told on tribal lands, a central communal activity that these people can still remember.⁴⁵

Longley's reading seems to me to be a complete displacement of the issues raised by the incestuous abuse that she refers to. For Longley, the 'blank moments' do not remind the reader of the sexual exploitation of Aboriginal women as part of the colonial project, but rather 'of the crudeness and invasiveness of the genre of transcribed autobiography'. Incredibly, in Longley's reading, it is Morgan herself, and the genre she uses in *My Place*, that Arthur finds 'crude and invasive', not the sexual abuse, incestuous or otherwise, of Aboriginal women.

⁴⁴ Tamsin Donaldson, 'Australian Tales of Mystery and Miscegenation' *Meanjin*, 50, (1991), p. 38.

⁴⁵ Kateryna Olijnyk Longley, 'Story-Telling by Australian Aboriginal Women', in *De/Colonizing the Subject: The Politics of Gender in Women's Autobiography*, ed. Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota press, 1992), p. 378.

Given the dislocated place of incestuous sexual abuse within the narrative, it is difficult to understand how Bain Attwood could claim that *My Place* has ‘an ending in which all the loose ends are tied up and all the disturbing questions answered’(305). This is especially surprising given that Attwood begins his own reading, in psychoanalytic terms, by asking: ‘What is the unconscious (or conscious) problem that belief in her Aboriginality solves for Morgan, or what wishes or desires does this belief satisfy?’(303). One might well turn just such a question on to Attwood himself and ask what unconscious (or conscious) problem is solved for Attwood by reading *My Place* in such a way that all the ‘disturbing questions’ are considered answered, by not addressing the question of incestuous sexual abuse that pervades the text, and by claiming dismissively that Morgan’s ‘forebears have not been oppressed as much as most Aborigines were’(313)! How much worse, one might ask, does it need to have been.⁴⁶ Attwood’s blindness around the issue of sexual abuse, which he does not mention, is revealed most tellingly in his observations of Daisy’s relationship with the Drake-Brockman family:

[Daisy] returned to the Drake-Brockmans’ employment more than once, and this – along with other evidence – [which is uncited] suggests that she was both proud to be a loyal servant to an upper-class family, and that she saw herself as one of the family – and, indeed, that she was comparatively well treated by them... In the present, Daisy apparently resents the Drake-Brockmans’ failure to honour the obligations she believes they had incurred, and this leads her necessarily to deny her earlier feelings of warmth and affection for them as well as to vent some of the hostility she might also have felt at the time, but had to suppress. (312)

It is strange, given Attwood’s awareness of the constraints on Aboriginal movement earlier this century (he is, after all, a historian), and his occasional gestures towards Foucault, that Daisy’s choices are read so unproblematically. Even stranger that he would criticize Morgan for ‘her inability to historicise her past more thoroughly’(318). He may well castigate her, in a profoundly ahistorical gesture, for

⁴⁶ I can’t help feeling that Attwood’s reading of Morgan is wilfully ungenerous. For example, he writes that Morgan ‘states her belief in the “complete truth” of [Arthur’s] and other family members’ oral testimony (pp. 154, 158)’. I could not find any reference to the “complete truth” on page 154, and the reference on page 158 reads as follows: ‘We were very confused, we knew that the small pieces of information we now possessed weren’t the complete truth.’

reproducing a Western subjectivity, that is, the autobiographical subject (as if she could have produced any other subjectivity) yet he locates himself within an historical tradition that, as I have tried to suggest, produces the very same subject. Attwood is right that Morgan's conception of Aboriginality is a discursive construct (which means, although he is not explicit about it, that it is thoroughly enmeshed in power-knowledge regimes), yet so too is his own conception of Aboriginality and historical praxis. As Annabel Cooper argues of his critique, Attwood 'assumes the post-structural suspicion of the autobiographer as knowing subject and replaces it with the critic as knowing subject, the one who knows the other'.⁴⁷

The hostility of Attwood's review can perhaps be explained in a number of ways. I can only wonder if it is fortuitous that the three white, male critics most hostile to the text, and most desiring of a more frank portrayal of her 'white side', should, none of them, mention the question of the sexual exploitation of Aboriginal women by settler men. Could there be a displacement at work here on the part of settler men?

Attwood's biggest problem with the text, however, surrounds the issue of passing. Attwood claims that this was a pragmatic decision, but then adds 'although this should not lead us to overlook that they had already chosen to pass (and that other Aborigines in the same circumstances did not choose to do so)'(313). He then goes on to state that Morgan too 'has been an accomplice in "the crime"', although, unlike her mother and grandmother, Morgan seems unable to accept her own responsibility for this denial and so displaces it. This results in her hounding her family to confess *their* Aboriginality'(314). This leaves Morgan in the impossible position that, whether she chooses to pass or not, either way she is committing a 'crime'. So, although in his lengthy article, Attwood nowhere refers to the crime of sexual exploitation, the only crime, it seems, is Morgan's and her family's. It is hard to know exactly what Attwood's scare quotes around the word crime intend to signify, but to me they signify Attwood's own denial of the sexual crimes that instituted the traumatic story of *My Place*.

⁴⁷ Annabel Cooper, 'Talking about *My Place* /My Place: Feminism, Criticism and Other's Autobiography, *Southern Review*, 28, (1995), p. 143.

Incest and the Repression of Aboriginality

Given Attwood's condemnation of the act of passing as it takes place in the text, it is interesting to look at the event that instigated Gladys' decision not to tell her children about their Aboriginal ancestry:

Bill had only been dead a short time when a Welfare lady came out to visit us. I was really frightened because I thought, if she realised we were Aboriginal, she might have the children taken away. We only had two bedrooms and there were five children, as well as Mum and me.

This woman turned out to be a real bitch... She asked where we all slept, and when I told her Helen slept with me, she was absolutely furious. She said, 'You are to get that child out of your bed, we will not stand for that.' (304)

What is it, one might ask, that the Welfare lady would not stand for? What is it that made her 'absolutely furious'? That is a question the text does not address, but we are told that it was 'after the visit from the welfare lady that Mum and I decided we would definitely never tell the children they were Aboriginal'(305). Gladys and Daisy decide to repress their own Aboriginality in response to paternalistic (I am referring to the Welfare lady's institutional affiliation rather than her gender) anxieties about incestuous desire, that culminated in the threat of their children being taken away from them. In this way, the Welfare lady effects an anxious displacement of the incestuous sexual desire of settler men in the text on to Aboriginal women. This is most striking because it was the anxious Oedipal repression of such desires that instituted, both in the text and in the history of Australia that it refers to, the repression of Aboriginality. So, *My Place* can be read as a place that repeats and yet simultaneously reveals the displacement of the secret of the terrifying spectre of patriarchal and colonial desire on to the supposed secret of Aboriginality.

This projection of anxieties about incest, which are so characteristic of the Oedipalized family, has a long history in psychoanalytic and anthropological thought, with the two disciplines coming together, as we saw in Chapter One, around the question of the prohibition of incest. Charles Darwin, whom Freud saw as his predecessor, and who was the major influence on early evolutionary anthropology, addressed the question of the 'curious problem' of how the prohibition of incest 'arose

during early and barbarous times.’⁴⁸ According to Freud, man’s earliest desires were incestuous and have to be repressed to enable the growth of civilization and the species, which reaches its zenith in the patriarchal family. In *Totem and Taboo*, Freud uses the anthropological evidence of Spencer and Gillen to support his argument:

For our purpose it is enough to draw attention to the great care which is devoted by the Australians, as well as by other savage peoples, to the prevention of incest. It must be admitted that these savages are even more sensitive on the subject of incest than we are. They are probably liable to a greater temptation to it and for that reason stand in need of fuller protection. (9)

Here Freud seems to be arguing that it is Aborigines who are in ‘immediate peril’ of committing incest, against which ‘the most severe measures of defence must be enforced’(17). This is odd, given that consanguineous marriages were an issue for both Darwin and Freud. Darwin, like his older sister, had entered into a consanguineous marriage with a Wedgwood first cousin, and although Freud did not enter such a marriage, the Freud family had proposed one for him with his niece Pauline Freud, daughter of his older half-brother Emmanuel: ‘It was to encourage such a marriage and a possible business career with Pauline’s father that Freud visited with his half-brothers in Manchester upon finishing Gymnasium.’⁴⁹

What *My Place* reveals, however, through the anxiety about incest that surrounds it, and is repressed by it, is that, in the context of Australian colonialism, it was settler men who committed incest. In Freud’s text, as in Morgan’s own and responses to it, anxieties about the modern patriarchal nuclear family, and their repressive and limited Oedipalized identifications, are projected on to Aboriginal Australians.

To read *My Place* as redemptive or comforting is not only to devalue the traumatic and unspeakable status of historical experience; it is to displace on to a redemptive Aboriginal self-knowledge the terrifying spectre of colonial oppression within the text which manifests itself as a haunting presence through which, I would like to suggest, patriarchal and colonial authority are undermined.

⁴⁸ Darwin, *The Variation of Animals and Plants under Domestication* 2 Vols. (London: John Murray, 1905) Vol. 2, p. 127.

⁴⁹ Ritvo, pp. 105-06.

Gods and Hauntings

In the light of this, however, perhaps the most unsettling aspect of *My Place* involves the ambiguity that emerges in the tension between the authority of a patriarchal Christian God and a destabilizing dispersive spirituality that the narrative is permeated by, which can be thought of as undermining the Christian onto-theology of the text.

The chapter called 'What People are We?', the same chapter in which Nan analogizes her experience as an Aborigine in Australia with that of Jews, and the chapter in which, you will recall, Morgan's father was reintroduced, begins with a revelation. The young Morgan is at a Youth meeting in a church hall:

Suddenly, there was someone talking to me... I looked around in a furtive kind of way, trying to see who it was. All eyes were fixed on the speaker, there was no one new in the room.

'Who are you?' I asked mentally.

With a sudden *dreadful insight* I knew it was God.

'What are you doing here?' I asked...

It had to be Him because the voice seemed to come from without not within, it *transcended the reality* of the room... I was having an audience with Him whom I dreaded. The *mental images* that I had built up of Him so far in my life began to *dissolve*, and in their place came a new *image*. A person, overwhelming love, acceptance and humour... In an instant I became what others refer to as a believer. (102; Emphasis added)

This is clearly an extraordinary experience that Sally is describing and it has peculiar resonances to other parts of the narrative. Like the vision of her grandmother tracing lines in the sand, it involves the emergence and dissolution of mental images. Yet, this experience of God, with its dissolution of mental images, can also be thought of as providing the narrative with a site of stability that restores wholeness and authority to a fragmented patriarchy, but also establishes an ultimate and stable meaning that the text and characters, otherwise in danger of falling apart altogether, might adhere to. In other words, this vision of God which transcends reality can perhaps be read as the relocation of the anxiety that Sally's reality is characterized by. God, here, is not only the ultimate patriarch but also the transcendental signified.

The later image of her grandmother, however, and its multilayered and disseminatory recursive textuality will radically call this stability into question. In some ways this tension can be thought of as re-enacting, on an onto-theological level, the

unstable authority of patriarchy in the story. The fragmentation and ghostly presence of the father at the beginning of the story are quickly compensated for by the return of the authority of the father as God, where God might be, as Freud has suggested, 'a father-substitute; or, more correctly... an exalted father'.⁵⁰ It is also worth noting that in the autobiographical tradition as instigated by Saint Augustine (as opposed to the more secular autobiography of Abelard), the point was not only to search for the truth of the self, but to search for God as well. This return of patriarchal authority, however, is already undermined on the very same page as Morgan's epiphany, when the deacon at the church, the deacon whose voice was drowned out by the voice of God, asks Sally, after the service, to stop mixing with his daughter. Although the deacon claims that this is because Sally is a 'bad influence', there are clear racist overtones to the request, undermining the image of love and acceptance that Morgan has just experienced.

Arthur's story also reveals the ambiguous place occupied in the narrative by the Christian god. He finishes his story on a religiously Trinitarian note: 'God is the only friend we got. God the father, God the son and God the Holy Spirit. You stick to Him, He's the only one'(213). Yet, his invocation of God the father has unsettling substitutive resonances if we recall his opening refusal to have his own story mixed up with that of his biological father, Howden Drake-Brockman.

Daisy's narrative is decidedly less Christian than those of the other narrators, and an event early in the text reveals the equation of settler patriarchal authority with God. In this event, Sally overhears a conversation between Nan and the rentman, in which Nan eulogizes over the power of God to create nature. Sally is disturbed and bewildered when she hears Nan say, 'here are you and I, both white, and we couldn't do that!'(107). Sally asks herself: 'Why did she want to be white? Did she really equate being white with the power of God, or was it just a slip of the tongue?'(107).

Gladys' narrative also reproduces this same unsettling ambiguity. On the one hand, she is avowedly Christian and claims that her healing power 'comes from God'(301). On the other hand, her own practice of Christianity, what she calls her

⁵⁰ Freud, 'A Seventeenth-Century Demonological Neurosis', *PFL*, 14, p. 399.

'secret weapon' (against what? one might ask) is deeply unstable, crossing denominational boundaries:

[Gladys] supplemented her prayers by taking us to every religious meeting imaginable. That was one thing you could say about Mum, she wasn't biased when it came to religion. We attended the Roman Catholic, Baptist, Anglican, Church of Christ and Seventh Day Adventist churches. (62)

Nan's description of Gladys' interest in religion, moreover, would be anathema to orthodox Christian onto-theology:

Gladdie was silly in those days, always wantin' to know the future. She didn't know what she was meddlin' with. You leave the spirits alone, you mess with them, you get burnt. She had her palm read, her tea leaves read, I don't know what she didn't read. I never went with her to any of these fortune tellers. They give you a funny feeling inside. Blackfellas know all 'bout spirits. We brought up with them. That's where the white man's stupid. He only believes what he can see. He needs to get educated. He's only livin' half a life. (344)

This description points to the spectral as it comes increasingly to inhabit the text where the notion of a Christian god is itself haunted by ghosts, phantoms and visions. These spectres, it could be argued, represent those aspects of the text, and the surface stability of its meanings, which exceed the self-identity of language, memory and the subject of autobiography, and can be thought of as occupying a realm of other modes of knowing.

One possible way of looking at the phantoms that inhabit the text is through Nicholas Abraham and Maria Torok's discussion of transgenerational haunting and phantom effects. Abraham and Torok postulate that some people inherit the secret psychic substance of their ancestors' lives. Abraham's theory of the phantom enlarges upon Freud's metapsychology by suggesting that the unsettling disruptions in the psychic life of one person can adversely and unconsciously affect someone else. Abraham likens the foreign presence to ventriloquism and calls it a 'phantom', a 'haunting' or a 'phantomatic haunting'.⁵¹

⁵¹ Nicholas Abraham, 'Notes on the Phantom: A Complement to Freud's Metapsychology' in *The Shell and the Kernel*, ed. and trans. Nicholas T. Rand (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1994), p. 166. Future references are to this edition, and are included in parentheses in the text.

Abraham in 'Notes on the Phantom: A Complement to Freud's Metapsychology' begins with the idea that 'the theme of the dead—who, having suffered repression by their family or society, cannot enjoy, even in death, a state of authenticity—appears to be omnipresent (whether overtly expressed or disguised) on the fringes of religions and, failing that, in rational systems'(171). Abraham suggests:

That the spirits of the dead can return to haunt the living exists either as an accepted tenet or as a marginal conviction in all civilizations, ancient and modern... To be sure, all the departed may return, but some are destined to haunt: the dead who were shamed during their lifetime or those who took unspeakable secrets to the grave. (171)

For Abraham and Torok, the dead do not return, but their lives' unfinished business is unconsciously handed down to their descendants. So, phantom effects, like those in *My Place*, for instance, arise if 'the dead were shamed during their lifetime or... took unspeakable secrets to the grave'. The phantom is an invention of the living in so far as it embodies the consequences of silence where 'what haunts are not the dead, but the gaps left within us by the secrets of others'(171).

Just as in that other literary instance of transgenerational haunting that Abraham and Torok use to illustrate their theory, Hamlet, the prince of a rotten state, *My Place* opens with the ghost of patriarchy, to remind us that, like Hamlet's state of Denmark, Australia is inhabited by a foreign and devious occupier.

Once again, Bill Milroy, Morgan's father, is the site from which all of these tensions are prefigured. Gladys' narrative includes the story of a visitation:

New year's eve, 1960, was one I've never forgotten. I awoke suddenly, feeling frightened. There was a light in the corner of the bedroom, it was the spirit of Christ. I'd never seen Him in the spirit form before, His arms were outstretched as though He'd come for someone. I screamed and told him to go away, I knew I was looking at death. I knew I wouldn't have Bill much longer. (301)

It was ten months after this that Bill died, from what, it is suggested, might be an intentional overdose. Haunted by her own religious education, Gladys fears that he may have gone to hell as a result: 'I didn't want him to go to hell, I started to cry, I felt so depressed'(302). It is at this moment that Gladys sees a vision of Bill:

standing in a garden near a tree, he looked confused. Then, I saw Jesus, in a long, white robe, beckon to him... He spoke to Bill and

suddenly Bill wasn't lost anymore, he was happy... When the vision finished, I was surrounded by a glow of pure love, I was so happy. I knew Bill was all right. (302)

Yet even though this vision relies, for its effectivity, upon Christian theology, earlier in this same section of the narrative we are told that that the swamp near the Milroy family home had been haunted, up until the death of Bill, by the ghosts of Aborigines performing corroborees (292). Gladys recalls how she often sat with her mother and listened to the music:

I've never been to a corroboree, but that music had always been inside of me. When I was little I was told Aboriginal music was heathen music. I thought it was beautiful music; whenever I heard it, it was like a message, like I was being supported, protected. (292)

As Daisy later asserts, about the sound of Aboriginal music, in her narrative:

See, we was hearin' the people from long ago. Our people who used to live here before the white man came. Funny, they stopped playin' after your father died. I think now they was protectin' us. Fancy, eh? Those dear old people. You see, the blackfella knows all 'bout spirits. (347)

Although Nan possesses a secret that she was too ashamed to reveal while she was alive, the extended focus on the ghost of Bill after he died, and the description of Aboriginal ghosts who protected his family from his violence while he was alive, are ways of both addressing the shameful secret of an abusive patriarchy in Australian history and culture, and at the same time, not addressing the issues of incest and sexual abuse, that Daisy had not been protected from, that the narrative tries so hard to repress. According to Abraham and Torok, this is how the transgenerational phantom manifests itself in its descendants, through the simultaneous unveiling and obscuring of the phantom's secret:

Produced by the secret, the gaps and the impediments in our communication with the love object create a two-fold and contrary effect: the prohibition of knowledge coupled with an unconscious investigation. As a result, 'haunted' individuals are caught between two inclinations. They must at all costs maintain their ignorance of a loved one's secret; hence the semblance of unawareness (nescience) concerning it. At the same time they must eliminate the state of secrecy; hence the reconstruction of the secret in the form of unconscious knowledge. (188)

This formulation of a 'prohibition of knowledge coupled with an unconscious investigation' accurately describes the ambivalence that *My Place* is constituted by. This ambivalence and two-fold effect does not focus around the question of Aboriginality but around the question of Drake-Brockman's incestuous relationship with his daughter. This two-fold effect, moreover, is articulated most memorably in the scene I quoted at length where Sally 'suddenly' holds up the ghostly photograph of Drake-Brockman to the mirror image of her mother, and they are both silenced by the uncanny resemblance. The words between Sally and Gladys that follow, like the words used by the phantom, 'point to a gap, they refer to the unspeakable'.⁵² In this sense, it is the tensions surrounding colonial desire that are inscribed and enacted, phantom-like, within the text. Although Nan might be too ashamed to tell Gladys who her father is, the shameful secret that Gladys and Sally inherit is just as surely Howden Drake-Brockman's.

According to Abraham and Torok, analyses involving phantom effects are particularly difficult:

The special difficulty of these analyses lies in the patient's horror at violating a parent's or a family's guarded secret, even though the secret text and context are inscribed within the patient's own unconscious. The horror of transgression, in the strict sense of the term, is compounded by the risk of undermining the fictitious yet necessary integrity of the parental figure in question. (174)

This horror of transgression is exemplified in the occasional references in critical responses to the text of the fear of saying anything libellous about the Drake-Brockman family. You will recall Hodge and Mishra's claim that 'Aboriginal rules of secrecy coincide with White laws of libel to ensure that this meaning (if it exists) does not enter into text'(100). It seems that the refusal to speak about the incestuous relationship within the text does not only avoid facing Daisy's shame, but also avoids confronting the transgression of the settler patriarch, Howden Drake-Brockman.

Abraham and Torok argue that transgenerational haunting is inscribed by 'the fact that parents are not at all the gods of coherence and consistency, courage and power

⁵² Abraham, p. 174

that their young offspring would wish'(180). It is perhaps the disavowal of paternity on the part of Drake-Brockman that leads to the somewhat ambivalent reliance on the Christian god of coherence and consistency.

Perhaps what is most unsatisfying in Abraham and Torok's formulation is, as Jacques Derrida alludes to in *Spectres of Marx*, the role of exorcism within their theory: 'Yes, the shameful and therefore concealed secret always does return to haunt. To exorcise it one must *express it in words*.'⁵³ This, it would seem, is in keeping with Abraham and Torok's psychoanalytic framework. Yet, as Derrida asserts, the question of spectres and their exorcism is necessarily the question of justice and responsibility. Derrida's reformulation of the spectre as an imperative of justice, is particularly resonant in the context of contemporary Australian politics where the ghost of the past has continued to haunt, a ghost which the present Howard Government seems intent on trying to conjure away by its refusal to acknowledge or apologize for the effects of the past—the scattered and fragmented individuals who were taken from their mothers at birth and thrust into an alien community. As Amnesty International has stated in their recent report on the horrific treatment of Aboriginal children, this legacy will continue to haunt Australia 'until the government stops evading its responsibility to adequately respond to the "Stolen Children" inquiry'.⁵⁴ It is equally important then, for the sake of justice, that, in reading *My Place*, we do not exorcise the ghosts that haunt it and turn it into a narrative of Australia's redemption.

In this light, it is interesting to re-read the first spectral vision in the narrative of *My Place*. It occurs soon after Sally has begun, tentatively, to identify with Aboriginality. In order to do this, Sally applies for an Aboriginal scholarship: 'It wasn't the money I was after...I desperately wanted to do something to identify with my new-found heritage and that was the only thing I could think of'(137). It is soon after that the University challenges her Aboriginal status, and therefore her eligibility to retain an

⁵³ Jacques Derrida, *Spectres of Marx: the State of Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York and London: Routledge, 1994), p. 188. . Future references are to this edition, and are included in parentheses in the text.

⁵⁴ Amnesty International, 'Australia: Government Silence on Stolen Children', News Release Issued by the International Secretariat of Amnesty International, *AI INDEX: ASA* 12 May 1998.

Aboriginal scholarship. It is at the early stages of this process of identification that she discovers that 'Aborigine' is like 'a forbidden word'(139):

It hadn't been so easy trying to identify with being Aboriginal. No one was sympathetic... no one understood why it was so important.... I wanted to cry. I hated myself when I got like that. I never cried, and yet, since all this has been going on, I'd wanted to cry often. It wasn't something I could control. Sometimes when I looked at Nan, I just wanted to cry. It was absurd. There was so much about myself that I didn't understand...

Had I been dishonest with myself? What did it really mean to be Aboriginal? I'd never lived off the land and been a hunter and gatherer. I'd never participated in corroborees or heard stories of the Dreamtime. I'd lived all my life in suburbia and told everyone I was Indian. I hardly knew any Aboriginal people. What did it mean for someone like me?...

I decided to give it all up...I didn't think my family would care what I did, they'd probably be relieved that I wasn't going to rock the boat any more. They could all go on being what they'd been for years, they wouldn't have to cope with a crazy member of the family who didn't know who she was....

Just then, for some reason, I could see Nan. She was standing in front of me, looking at me. Her eyes were sad, 'Oh Nan', I sighed, 'why did you have to turn up now, of all times'. She vanished as quickly as she'd come. I knew then, that for some reason, it was very important I stay on the scholarship. If I denied my tentative identification with the past now, I'd be denying her as well. (141)

In this spectral vision, Sally is confronted by the responsibility she has towards her grandmother, even as her grandmother refuses to tell her the secret that she insists on taking to her grave. This vision of Nan reminds us of the necessity of remembering Nan's life and death, of the necessity of learning to live with spectres, and, as Derrida has phrased it, 'this being-with spectres would also be, not only but also, a *politics* of memory, of inheritance, and of generations':

It is necessary to speak *of the* ghost, indeed, *to the* ghost and *with* it, from the moment that no ethics, no politics, whether revolutionary or not, seems possible and thinkable and *just* that does not recognise in its principle the respect for others who are no longer or for those others who are not yet *there*, presently living, whether they are already dead or not yet born. No justice—let us not say no law and once again we are not speaking of laws—seems possible or thinkable without the principle of some *responsibility*, beyond all living present, within that which disjoins the living present, before the ghosts of those who are not yet born or who are already dead... (xix)

The novel ends at the secret moment *par excellence*. The death of Nan is prefigured by the bird-call, the call that, you will remember, was introduced at the very beginning of the narrative in a daydream that Sally had while visiting her sick father.

'I heard the bird call.' It was Jill's voice.

'What bird call?'

'This morning, about five o'clock. I heard it, Sally. It was a weird sound like a bird call, only it wasn't. It was something spiritual, something out of this world. I think she'll be going soon.'

After breakfast, I hurried over...

'Nan...about that call, you weren't frightened when you heard it, were you?'

'Ooh, no', she scoffed, 'it was the Aboriginal bird, Sally. God sent him to tell me I'm going home soon. Home to my own land and my own people.' (356-7)

What remains of Nan at the end of the narrative is the promise of this bird-call, what Derrida might call 'a certain experience of the emancipatory promise'(59). In the opening chapter of the narrative, you will recall, the young Sally recalled the memory of hearing the bird-call with her grandmother which drew her away, dream-like, from the fragmented and haunted world of patriarchy that she was forced to inhabit. The bird-call as emancipatory promise also recalls the promise that Sally had made to herself that she would find out who her mother's father was.

The following morning, Nan dies, and it is with the sound of the bird-call that the narrative closes:

For some reason, Jill's words from the previous day began echoing inside of me. I heard the bird call, I heard the bird call. Around and around.

'Oh, Nan', I cried with sudden certainty, 'I heard it, too. In my heart I heard it.' (358)

The bird call, the echo which Sally hears belatedly, [*nachträglich*] at the close of the narrative:

carries life beyond present life or its actual being-there, its empirical and ontological actuality: not toward death but toward a living-on [*sur-vie*], namely a trace of which life and death would themselves be but traces and traces of traces, a survival whose possibility in advance comes to disjoin or dis-adjust the identity to itself of the living present as well as of any effectivity. There is then *some spirit*. Spirits. And *one must reckon with them.*⁵⁵

So Morgan's narrative ends in the shadow of death, with the reminder of the necessity of remembering the life. For if Nan and her story are forgotten, and if Morgan is, through a variety of critical tools, denied her Aboriginality, then the policies of A.O.

⁵⁵ Derrida, *Spectres of Marx*, p. xx.

Neville have been successful, and the stories retold in that act of just remembering that is the report into the Stolen Generation, will be forgotten. The uncanny bird call that haunts the final lines of *My Place* are a reminder that, in the words of Derrida: 'Inheritance is never *given*, it is always a task' (54). This is the task presently confronting Australia.

Chapter 4: Re-reading Mudrooroo

Identity Crisis

One of the most vociferous of Morgan's critics has been Mudrooroo, perhaps Australia's most well-known and prolific Aboriginal writer. His position on *My Place* has long been that it is 'not really an Aboriginal book—it's coming from outside and exploring our Aboriginality, and that's where the problems lie'.¹ In July 1996, many believed he had received his just deserts when the *Australian Magazine* published an article by Victoria Laurie, titled 'Identity Crisis', which called into question Mudrooroo's status as an Aboriginal Australian, and claimed that he was, in fact, the descendent of an African American. The opening sentence reveals the oppositions between appearance and reality around which Laurie's narrative is structured: 'The author of *Wild Cat Falling*, Australia's first published Aboriginal novel, would seem to have little left to prove to anyone these days' (28). It is the implications of this *seems* that the article proceeds to elaborate on.

Laurie asks rhetorically: 'What more could he want?' before replying: 'Probably that the past would stop trying to reclaim him. Specifically that his older sister [Betty Polglaze], whom he hardly knows, would abandon her obsessive search for identity that, with every birth certificate, every faded photograph she accumulates, threatens to damage the fabric of his public identity' (28). There is a curious contradiction within this statement: while Laurie clearly privileges Polglaze's speech as that of the truth-seeker who is present to herself, her 'obsessive search for identity' is both facilitated and haunted by a series of substitutions—faded photographs, birth certificates—texts within which the impossibility of the self-presence they desire is inscribed. Polglaze's self-knowledge, then, that which allows her to know who she is, springs out of the very structure of *différance* where the desire to uncover an origin is inevitably tangled up in textual complications.

¹ Cited in Laurie, 'Identity Crisis', *Australian Magazine*, July 20-21, 1996: 32.

The publication of this article, and the ambiguous logic within which it is inserted, have generated much debate and disturbing silences in Australia. As Graeme Dixon has asserted in one of the few public responses to the situation: 'The authenticity of the Aboriginality of contemporary Australian writer Mudrooroo is causing quite a dilemma in the Aboriginal community, academic and literary circles.'² Mudrooroo's response to this dilemma, so far, has been to ask other questions:

When, in 1996, it was declared that Mudrooroo was of negro ancestry, thus negating thirty years of being an Aborigine, it necessitated some identity searching: what did this mean to me? I had discovered that identity is a fragile thing and can be taken away, just as it can be given. As I had not confronted such a crisis before, did it mean that through a genetic oversight I had lost my culture and become inauthentic?³

These questions, in turn, invite a response which would not function as a narrative of origin; Mudrooroo's alienating reference to himself in the third person already signals the impossibility of such a return.

Identity and Identification

Perhaps one response is to think through the relation between identity and identification. This term, identification, although often unspoken, has been crucial to the discussion generated by the debate. Graeme Dixon, for example, states: 'It may be true that Mudrooroo's institutionalized childhood caused him to relate to [identify with] Aboriginal people, but if so for the good of all he should come clean and tell the true story of Colin Johnson'(6). Tom and Lorna Little make the further claim that an argument for Mudrooroo's Aboriginality:

could be made if, by virtue of the fact that his experience of institutionalisation is so similar to that of so many members of the 'Lost Generation', he has come to identify strongly with the Nyoongar community and has no concept of his true identity, although the question of Nyoongar blood still remains.⁴

² Graeme Dixon, 'The Mudrooroo Dilemma', *Westerly*, 3, (1996), p. 5. . Future references are to this edition, and are included in parentheses in the text.

³ Mudrooroo, 'Afterword: "Tell them You're Indian"', in *Race Matters*, ed. G. Cowlshaw and B. Morris (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 1997), p. 263.

⁴ Tom Little and Lorna Little, 'The Mudrooroo Dilemma', *Westerly*, 3, Spring, (1996), p. 7.

Laurie's article, while on the one hand pursuing the question of Mudrooroo's 'true identity', also reiterates this distinction by attempting to map Mudrooroo's identification with Aboriginality:

If it is possible to pinpoint Johnson's transformation into Mudrooroo, it may have happened within the cramped confines of Fremantle prison, a 19th-century building of grim inhumanity. The 'coloured boy' of indeterminate origins had become an angry young black man, hardened by poverty, family separation and jail, an experience shared by so many of his Aboriginal inmates [sic]. (31)

These arguments point to, and simultaneously elide, the complexity of processes of identification; they imply that identification is of a different order, in that it is historically determined, to the ontological 'truth' of identity, a truth that is associated with blood. Yet, by rethinking identity in the way that Diana Fuss does in *Identification Papers*, it is possible to think of our identities as never 'true' as such; rather, it is identifications which make identity possible. These identifications, moreover, while not predetermined, do not operate outside history and culture. According to Fuss, identification 'names the entry of history and culture into the subject, a subject that must bear the traces of each and every encounter with the external world'.⁵ Mudrooroo's response to the issues raised by Laurie seems to pre-empt this position: 'Identity, for me, [was] like a shroud and part of the weave of that shroud was an early history similar to those Aborigines I knew.'⁶

Even as identifications make identity possible, they also unsettle the 'I' of identity because our sense of who we are is constituted by identifying with others, that is, by identifying with what we are not; this is the complexity of identity. So, although identification is the psychical mechanism that produces self-recognition, it also 'operates as a mark of self-difference, opening up a space for the self to relate to itself as a self, a self that is perpetually other'.⁷ Identification, then, although making possible the illusion of identity as secure and immediate simultaneously prevents our identities from ever being identical with what we can only problematically call, ourselves.

⁵ Diana Fuss, *Identification Papers* (New York and London: Routledge, 1995), p. 3. Future references are to this edition, and are included in parentheses in the text.

⁶ Mudrooroo, "Tell them You're Indian", p. 264.

⁷ Fuss, p. 2.

Identification, as it is understood psychoanalytically, is structured around a conception of substitution and loss.⁸ Freud's theorization of identification, moreover, as you will recall, emerges out of a colonialist epistemology, that is *Totem and Taboo*, and Freud's hypothesis of the primal parricide. After the murder, the sons cannibalized the powerful father as a means of identification. Because of the ambivalent structure of the instincts, however, the brothers felt both love and hate for their father which encouraged guilt and remorse in the post-parricide world. They therefore set him up as a totem, and incorporated his terror within them. Thus, as with the development of the individual's superego, what had been an external authority became incorporated internally as a sense of legislative guilt. This instituted the Oedipal moment through a paternal identification which engendered the unconscious through repression.

What is interesting, from my perspective, is that Freud's theory of identification 'is entirely predicated on a logic of metaphoric exchange and displacement'.⁹ As a result, it cannot help but exceed itself in the way that Borch-Jacobsen has described. Borch-Jacobsen's reading of the Freudian subject demonstrates the way in which this subject is inevitably haunted by otherness, and the identity it claims for itself is always already an 'improbable' one, an 'eccentric... distorted (displaced, dissimulated) subject in all sorts of identificatory roles and figures'.¹⁰ The potentially infinitely proliferating order of metaphor, the substitution of the one for the other, is internal both to the work of identification and language, and it is no coincidence that, as you will recall from Chapter One, in Freud's account in *Totem and Taboo*, these two substitutive processes should emerge simultaneously. As Fuss has argued, 'Psychoanalysis, at least where the theory of identification is concerned, can actually be understood as a scientific discourse on the very problem of metaphorization'(6). This places the psychical mechanism of identification within a space of inscription.¹¹ As Fuss argues, Freud's concept of

⁸ 'If one has lost a love-object, the most obvious reaction is to identify oneself with it, to replace it, as it were, from within by identification.' Freud, *Outline of Psychoanalysis*, p. 62.

⁹ Fuss, p. 6.

¹⁰ Borch-Jacobsen, *The Freudian Subject*, p. 54.

¹¹ See Derrida, 'Freud and the Scene of Writing' in *Writing and Difference*, pp. 196-231. Derrida claims that 'it is no accident that Freud, at the decisive moments of his itinerary, has recourse to metaphorical models which are borrowed not from spoken language or from verbal forms, nor even from phonetic writing, but from a script which is never subject to, never exterior and posterior to, the spoken word'(199). On the basis of this, Derrida asks, 'what is a text, and what must the psyche be if it can be

identification 'fundamentally presupposes the possibility of metaphoricity—of iterability, redoubling, translation and transposition' (6). Mudrooroo has made explicit this connection in his response to Laurie's article when he refers to his identity or identification as emerging out of a process of textualization, undertaken by his benefactor, Mary Durack, who wrote the foreword to Mudrooroo's first novel, *Wild Cat Falling*:

In a sense, I had been textualised by Mary Durack and given a race which did not affect my being in the slightest, but did affect my work when I went on to write my novel which was about a part-Aboriginal youth and which was edited into publishability by Mary Durack.¹²

This is an ambiguous assertion. It suggests that prior to the publication of this novel, Mudrooroo had not perceived himself as an Aborigine, and it was only through the writing by Durack of the foreword to his novel, that a racial identity actually emerged, a suggestion that is contradicted by other assertions about an earlier identification with Aboriginality. It is interesting, in the light of this, that Durack, in the foreword, described the then Colin Johnson, as a 'nineteen year old, and part Aboriginal, though his features would not have betrayed him'.¹³ The question of Mudrooroo's identification with Aboriginality exemplifies the complexity of identification.

This complexity may explain why uncertainty surrounding Mudrooroo's identity should impact upon the reception of his work. It is certainly the case that the status of Mudrooroo's writings is one of the central issues at stake in Laurie's article. As Tom and Lorna Little assert: 'If Mudrooroo is proven to be non-Aboriginal, non-Aboriginal academics will then have to decide whether his writing is of sufficient merit to stand alone in a separate genre to Aboriginal writings.'¹⁴

Leaving aside, for a moment, this authoritarian recourse to generic distinctions determined by racial identity, it is worth reconsidering what such a reassessment would involve, and perhaps one way of approaching this is through a re-reading of Mudrooroo

represented by a text? For if there is neither machine nor text without psychical origin, there is no domain of the psychic without text. Finally, what must be the relationship between psyche, writing and spacing for such a metaphoric transition to be possible, not only, nor primarily, within theoretical discourse, but within the history of psyche, text and technology?' (199).

¹² Mudrooroo, 'Afterword', p. 262-63.

¹³ Mary Durack, 'Foreword', in *Wild Cat Falling* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1965), p. v.

¹⁴ Little, p. 8.

rewritings, particularly his 1991 novel *Master of the Ghost Dreaming*, itself an unstable reiteration of the earlier *Doctor Wooreddy's Prescription for Enduring the Ending of the World*. This process of reiteration is further complicated when we think through the implications of the former novel being an historical novel, with all the central characters being historical figures, and with much of the text making use of historical and archival research. *Dr. Wooreddy's Prescription* narrates events that took place in Tasmania in the middle of the nineteenth-century and, more specifically, the deluded attempt by the missionary, George Augustus Robinson, to civilize and Christianize the Aboriginal communities of the island. Both texts refer explicitly to that shadowy part of Tasmania's history when the entire Aboriginal population was rounded up and placed on a reserve on Flinder's Island, a small island north of Tasmania.¹⁵ Much of *Dr. Wooreddy's Prescription* is set on Flinder's Island. *Master of the Ghost Dreaming*, in line with its even less realistic framework, is merely set on what is called Island. The two central Aboriginal characters, Wooreddy and Trugernanna, reappear in *Master of the Ghost Dreaming* as Jangamuttuk and Ludgee and much of this novel's action takes place on another plane of consciousness where the Aboriginal characters can move around freely with the help of their Dreaming companions.

Fada's Identifications

I want to begin by re-reading the character of Fada in *Master of the Ghost Dreaming*, a reworking of the historical figure of the British missionary and colonial administrator, George Augustus Robinson, already fictionalized by Mudrooroo in *Dr. Wooreddy's Prescription for Enduring the Ending of the World*. Fada provides us with the perfect model of the Oedipalized subject. The structure of colonial authority resides in what Deleuze and Guattari call the 'tripartite formula—the Oedipal, neurotic one: daddy-mommy-me'.¹⁶ Colonial society, in this novel, and the authority upon which it is structured, operate at the level of the family and are only made up of three characters called Fada, Mada and Sonny. Fada and Sonny's relation could be characterized, in

¹⁵ For a brief account of this period, see Stocking, esp. pp. 275-283.

¹⁶ Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, p. 23.

Freudian terms, as an unresolved Oedipal one: 'Sonny writhed nervously under his father's gaze. Somehow his father always made him feel like a small boy. And always, he had to answer, had to find words and more words' (73).

This Oedipal world that the novel opens in to, like the Freudian subject Borch-Jacobsen describes, is haunted and fragmented. The patriarchal world of colonialism that the reader is introduced to from page one of the novel is described as 'the realm of the ghosts', a description with resonances of the opening hospital scene in *My Place*. As we learn about the characters of Fada and Mada, and their complex histories, we see the extent to which their own identities are constructed differentially by that which they deny in themselves:

Being the superintendent (he had changed it to commandant because it had a much more authoritative ring) was a position from which to look back at the ragged child in the East End of London having to scabble in the dirt and garbage heaps for a morsel of food. No one understood that ugly existence. The so-called gentlemen of this world turned their noses up at you, not knowing what it was like to struggle, to fight to escape that shithole into which he had been dropped at birth. Fada had never considered the proposition that the people he had come to help, hinder and change, might try and accommodate his hidden rancour by creating a myth in which his white race were seen as ghosts, and London as a cold forbidding realm filled with so much suffering that a human could not survive it. (32)

What the novel points towards, and here I think it is an illustration of the logic of the anthropology that haunts *Totem and Taboo*, is the way in which the colonial characters repress what they are most afraid of in themselves by displacing it on to the Aboriginal community whom they construct as savages and then attempt to 'civilize'. Certainly the descriptions of savages that Fada utilizes are ones that, at the time, would also have been applied to him as a member of the working classes of London.¹⁷ Mada also enacts this displacement when she describes the indigenous community as 'savages'. On the very same page, the reader witnesses her digging her husband in the ribs 'savagely' (9). This displacement is then made even more explicit when Mada hits Fada 'savagely across the nose. Startled, he sat up wildly. Aghast at her action, she sought a victim and

¹⁷ See Elaine Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the "Fin de Siècle"* (London: Bloomsbury, 1991), p. 6. Showalter's study examines the way in which metaphors of race and colonialism were often used at the turn of the century to analyze class encounters in Britain where the African jungle and the Urban jungle became interchangeable.

settled on the convenient victims caterwauling the night away with their pagan cries'(10).

This repressed structure of difference that the colonizer is haunted by is dealt with through reinvoking a nostalgic past. Mada reiterates the paternal identification through an unresolved Oedipalized nostalgia. She attributes her own gift for accountancy to her father: 'Thank God, her daddy had been a shopkeeper and had made sure that everyone in the family could figure. If it wasn't for her father, God rest his soul, and herself, that worthless man would have stayed the bricklayer he was meant to be'(8-9).

Reading the novel, however, we later learn that Mada:

had the gift of falsity and over the years her origins had risen to be far above her husband's, but if the truth were known, her father was the proprietor of a pub in a very, very rough neighbourhood, who demonstrated by his foul language and physical aggression that he was the master of his territory which included his slovenly wife and his sluttish daughter. (34)

The brutality of this Oedipal triangle is distorted through memory as '[o]ver the years her memories of London had dimmed. Now it was a fairyland free from suffering'(6). Like the process of remembering trauma analyzed in the previous chapter, Mada's memory is as much about concealment as recollection, and the 'fairyland' she yearns for can be thought of as a form of mourning for that which never existed. Even as she longs for this non-existent time and place, the brutality she was exposed to is reproduced within her relationship to Fada.

The narrative of the identificatory processes through which Fada attains his position of authority is equally striking, and likewise marked by repression:

Fada covered his tracks so successfully that even in his thoughts he could no longer be honest. What had happened was that the young chap had caught the fancy of a toff who liked what would later be referred to as rough trade. Well, this toff had picked up the young Cockney, and had given him a long and loving bath, in the course of which certain intimacies were shared. This notwithstanding, the gentleman was an extremely devout Christian and saved the youth from the life of a bricklayer. (33)

In one sense, Fada's personal development echoes Freud's articulations of the ontological status of phylogenesis. In *Totem and Taboo*, the mythological basis of

culture, in the conjectured period after the murder of the father but before the establishment of the internalized law, emerges through homosociality replacing homosexuality. The organization that made the primal sons strong in this period, Freud hypothesizes, 'may have been based on homosexual feelings and acts' (144). According to Freud, once the father had been incorporated as the law, the exchange of women was able to take place. Fada's Oedipalized development, likewise, takes place through the repression of the homosexual relation of young Fada to his benefactor. In so doing, not only is Fada's relationship to Mada instituted, his imperializing and civilizing mission can be undertaken.

Fada's justification for his mission, moreover, follows closely the argument set out by Freud of the necessity of the repression of the instincts, and the re-channelling of sublimated sexual energy, for the work of civilization. Fada's justification, moreover, comes at a point in the narrative when he is trying to control his own desire for Aboriginal women:

It was difficult to understand the workings of the native mind, especially that of a woman. Indeed, if he knew anything of their sexuality, the men simply took it when the urge rose. So unlike civilised behaviour, but somehow so romantic for all that. Civilisation imposed restraints which were often impossible to keep. But then what was he thinking? Such restraints were what made the British empire great. Such restraints were derived from the teaching of his religion.
(49)

Like Freud's description of the 'savage' in *Totem and Taboo*, Fada conceives of the Aborigine, or at least Aboriginal men, as uninhibited; actions are unmediated by thoughts. Fada's desire for Ludgee is characterized by a nostalgia for the psychic wholeness he presumes exists before the splitting of the subject imposed by the civilization. This Oedipalized ordering of his own desire pushes the question of the legitimacy of invasion out of sight, and it does so through recourse to the prior authority of God, as the ultimate, and absent, father figure.

Identification and Textuality

But perhaps what is most significant about Fada's attempt to acquire an identity is that it is enabled and, in a sense, constituted through textualization, a suggestion with

troubling echoes of Mudrooroo's own textualization by his benefactor. It was Fada's benefactor, 'the good Christian who created Fada even to the extent of teaching him how to read (the bible) and then to write'(33). This parenthetical reference to the Bible exposes the kinds of anxieties about authority that mark the ability to read and write. The benefactor has to teach Fada how to read and write so that the authentic truth of the Word of God can be transmitted, and the authority of Christianity maintained and disseminated through his missionary role in the colonies. In so doing, however, the benefactor's authority is placed at risk, for Fada, in learning to read and write, can re-read and re-write anything, which, as we shall see, he does. After Fada leaves Britain, he continues to correspond with his benefactor who becomes a figure of authority and law and a repository for guilt, very much the same role played by the absent dead father of the primal parricide: 'Over the years in letter after letter, he would confess his peccadilloes to this person who would come to see him as a son'(37). In psychoanalytic terms, this is the place of the father internalized as the superego: 'Fada, as much as he was able (which was a great deal), took the gentleman for his model, even to the extent of adopting his Christianity and his writing style'(33). Fada's identification with his benefactor is double-pronged and deeply ambivalent. Although harking back to an originary father figure, that is represented through Christianity, this identification is simultaneously undermined through the dispersal of authority that writing is characterized by.

Identification and Anthropology

Fada's ability to read and write enables an anthropological voyeurism manifested as constant reiterative inscriptions and descriptions of Aboriginality. These inscriptions are almost always sexualized. This anthropologizing, moreover, can itself be seen as a form of identificatory practice for Fada's inscriptions of Aboriginality, like William Ramsay Smith's, are partly motivated by his desire for that very psychic wholeness that he attributes to the Aboriginal community, his ancestral forefathers. *Master of the Ghost Dreaming* in particular interrogates the complicity of anthropology, and the discourses of race attached to it, in the production of narratives of fantasy and

sexual desire. At every opportunity, Fada sketches Ludgee naked for his 'definitive work' on Aborigines:

Fada was not to be denied his little pleasures and Ludgee was to perform for him yet again. The excuse, for father was one for excuses, was to sketch a primitive scene for the chapter on food gathering in his definitive work. (51)

It is significant that Fada's voyeurism is described using a metaphor of cannibalization, the very first act of identification: 'Fada feasted on her body, his eyes misting with memories... A forbidden memory of his youth on the East End of London came to him'(53). Gazing at Ludgee's body, however, brings to mind forbidden memories that he quickly represses, but that unconsciously make their way back into his anthropologized portrait of Ludgee.

Ludgee, in order to escape from this static construction of herself as an object of knowledge, dives into the water. This scene serves as a reminder that, in the words of James Clifford:

'Cultures' do not hold still for their portraits. Attempts to make them do so always involve simplification and exclusion, selection of a temporal focus, the construction of a particular self-other relationship, and the imposition or negotiation of a power relationship.¹⁸

Fada continues his sketching, and through this continued activity, the novel questions the status of the knowledge produced by the discipline of anthropology as already being constituted through a displaced Oedipalized desire. In a hermeneutically closed circle of logic, these anthropological knowledges, as we have seen, constituted the premises for Freud's elaboration of the concept of identification.

Fada, immersed in his own collecting of knowledge, saw nothing. He had frowned when the woman had deserted her pose to dive into the ocean. Now he was intent on sketching the memory of her form. Swiftly, he sketched in the heavy breasts, hesitated over the groin and left it bare and sexless. More often than not, no, always, the dictates of polite behaviour and decorum had to be observed in illustration as well as words. He was illustrating an anthropological text and not the sort of pornography which was sold on the streets of London. He moved away from that train of thought and continued on with the sketch, little realising that unconscious memories had taken over his illustration. (60)

¹⁸ James Clifford, 'Introduction: Partial Truths', in Clifford and Markus, p. 10.

It is hardly surprising that Fada later ‘glanced down at his disguised sketch of a naked English prostitute’(62). When Ludgee finally emerges from the ocean, Fada is ‘entranced’. It is while being in this trance-like state that Fada thinks to himself: ‘Such a primal scene. If only there was some way of capturing it for research’(63).

Primal Scenes

Not only is the use of the word ‘primal’ part of the process of capturing Ludgee as an object trapped in the evolutionary past,¹⁹ Fada’s reference to a ‘primal scene’ has distinct psychoanalytic resonances as well. In ‘The Sexual Theories of Children’ Freud describes the primal scene claiming that children’s ‘perceptions of what is happening are bound, however, to be only very incomplete’.²⁰ Given the incompleteness of Fada’s sketch through the removal of Ludgee’s genitalia, ‘primal scene’ is an apt description. Like the discussion of trauma in the previous chapter, the primal scene reminds us of the highly problematical nature of constructed scenes from our pasts, and the knowledge we produce out of them. This sketching scene, moreover, addresses the complexity of the status of memory in its relation to the real, linked inextricably as it is to the problematic of desire. In Freud’s conception of the primal scene, memory, as reconstruction, is not about revealing, it is about concealment. In this sense, we can look at both Mada’s and Fada’s reconstructions of their personal histories as primal scenes.

Ned Lukacher, in his book *Primal Scenes*, offers an interesting reading of the function of primal scenes in the history of Western metaphysics, a reading that is extremely relevant to the kinds of concerns that I am attempting to raise. Lukacher does not only use the concept of the primal scene to refer to the conventional psychoanalytic understanding of the term, where the child’s witnessing of the sexual act subsequently plays a traumatic role in his or her psychosexual life:

¹⁹The anthropologist W. E. H. Stanner, puts it in these terms. When writers use words like ‘primal’ they ‘take over from W. K. Hancock his thesis that “in truth, a hunting and pastoral economy cannot co-exist within the same bounds”, but they do not like his plain language, and they prefer to say that “the twentieth century and the Stone Age cannot live together.”’ W.E.H. Stanner, *After The Dreaming: Black and White Australians: an Anthropologist’s View* (Sydney: Australian Broadcasting Commission, 1969), p. 22. Johannes Fabian makes the further claim that discourses of the ‘primal’ are not about ‘real’ people, but ‘about the primitive as internal referent of a discourse or as a scientifically constituted object of a discourse or as a scientifically constituted object of a discipline’(77).

²⁰ Freud, ‘The Sexual Theories of Children’ (1908), in *The Essentials of Psychoanalysis*, ed. Anna Freud, trans. James Strachey (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986), p. 385.

Rather, the 'primal scene' becomes an intertextual event that displaces the notion of the event from the ground of ontology. It calls the event's relation to the Real into question in an entirely new way. Rather than signifying the child's observation of sexual intercourse, the primal scene comes to signify an ontologically undecidable intertextual event that is situated in the differential space between historical memory and imaginative reconstruction, between archival verification and interpretive free play.²¹

Such a conception of the primal scene is particularly pertinent to *Master of the Ghost Dreaming*, where, as we have seen, there is such a 'differential space between historical memory and imaginative reconstruction'. Laurie's article, moreover, can be considered in terms of Lukacher's formulation. Laurie's assertion that Mudrooroo's last wish would be that the past would stop trying to reclaim him assumes that the past is a stable and accessible place, an assumption that is, however, already undermined by the problematical nature of the 're-' in reclaim. Similarly, this is a gesture that responds to *My Place*, explored in the previous chapter, which assume an unproblematic relation between memory and its reconstruction, tend to reproduce.

The primal scene is relevant to our reading of both Mudrooroo's texts and the textual event that is Mudrooroo's life because the primal scene is a textual scene; it is, according to Lukacher, a figure for 'the "already written," for what has already been inscribed within and between texts'(43). Fada's 'anthropological sketch', as the 'disguised sketch of a naked English prostitute' is precisely that which is 'already written'. Even as Fada perceives what he thinks of as a primal scene, such a perception is already thrown into doubt, and his vague acknowledgement of the inability of ever capturing such a scene, of ever really knowing such a scene, is testimony to that ontological undecidability that primal scenes are marked by, an undecidability that moves through all the textual events that this thesis has explored.

What is interesting, however, about this primal scene, and Fada's attempts to record it as inscription, is that it is out of such primal scenes that Fada's anthropological text is to be produced. The reader learns early on that Fada is 'in the midst of writing the definitive text about [the Tasmanian Aborigines]'(10). Yet, at the same time, the novel

²¹ Ned Lukacher, *Primal Scenes: Literature, Philosophy and Psychoanalysis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 24.

undermines the possibility that such anthropological knowledge can ever be definitive, that such knowledge is, like the construction of the primal scene, a form of concealment. Lukacher points out that Freud, in 'From the History of an Infantile Neurosis', resorts to an anthropological explanation for that which he sometimes is able to admit is inexplicable. As we saw in Chapter One, Freud argues that the Wolf-Man's repression of the primal scene reveals a phylogenetic mechanism, and claims that this mechanism is so primitive that it may well mark the point at which the human is linked to the 'instinctual world of animal behaviour'.²²

Fada reproduces this manoeuvre in order to provide some kind of ontological stability in his desire for an explanatory point of origin, yet this is what the Aboriginal community attempt to resist. For them, Fada's inscriptions are threatening, and point to the ambivalent status of inscription within the novel. For Ludgee and Jangamuttuk, Fada's inscriptions are a form of capture, because of his belief in their definitiveness and power: 'I want you to pose for me,' Fada says when he wants to draw Ludgee naked, 'I'll put you down on paper.' Ludgee, in response to this, whispers to herself, 'Capture my soul' (53). Jangamuttuk later worries that 'when we die, he binds us to him. He writes us down in that big book of his and we are trapped forever' (29-30).

Colonization and the Power of Writing

Such fears emerge out of the exploitation, by both Robinson in *Dr Wooreddy's Prescription* and Fada in the *Master of the Ghost Dreaming*, of the power their own form of graphic representation (what we traditionally think of as writing) gives them in the colonial context. As the narrative makes clear, it is Fada's ability to write that enables him to become a colonizer, and the ability of writing to control and oppress is repeatedly referred to in both texts as a source of almost magical power. In *Dr. Wooreddy*, Robinson tells Wooreddy that the letter he was writing, which would enable the Aboriginal community to leave Flinder's Island and return to Tasmania, was magic and so was the bark called 'paper'. Wooreddy, in response to this:

²² Freud, 'From the History of an Infantile Neurosis', p. 120.

acknowledged the magic of the symbols scratched onto a thin sheet of bark with a stick dipped in charcoal. They might well be magic, he thought, declaring: 'Neire this paper, neire this letter; good this letter, good this paper.'²³

Yet the 'magical properties' that Robinson attributes to his own inscriptions are incapable of fulfilling his needs of the Aboriginal community. Later, when Trugernanna was to be interviewed by the Governor, 'she passed into a room in which a ghost was bent over a table making those strange marks on that strange bark or skin, which Meeter Rob-in-un was always doing and which he said was magic'(50).

Master focuses less on the 'magical properties' of writing and more on the power of writing as a means of colonial domination, particularly over Wadawaka, the African slave who first makes an appearance as a character in *Master of the Ghost Dreaming*. Fada tells his son, 'Make [Wadawaka] aware of his position and how I hold his freedom in the ink of this pen'(72). Later, Fada tells Wadawaka himself:

'I won't have insolence, sir. That I won't. Take Care, I have your future in the ink of my pen.'
It was true, and a suddenly apprehensive Wadawaka bowed his head as if awaiting punishment. (75)

Barbara Johnson's interrogation of the effects of claims of indigenous orality is pertinent in this context. She argues that Derrida's critique of the metaphysics which privileges the presence of speech over the materiality of writing, has never been a privilege devoid of ambiguity:

An equal but more covert privilege of writing has also been operative. One of the ways in which colonial powers succeeded in imposing their domination over other peoples was precisely through writing... And indeed, when comparing itself to other cultures, European culture has always seen its own form of literacy as a sign of superiority. The hidden but ineradicable importance of writing that Derrida uncovers in

²³ Mudrooroo, *Dr Wooreddy's Prescription*, p. 37. This corresponds closely to a scene described by Robinson in the diaries: 'Upon the return of TRUGERNANNA and PAGERLY, WOORRADY who had during their absence been very desponding, seemed immediately to revive and become animated and cheerful—he had frequently importuned me to dispatch a messenger with my paper, meaning a letter, with a view to facilitate the return of the aboriginal natives. Upon acquainting WOORRADY, who was in the natives' hut, with their arrival, a circumstance which to a barbarous mind might be easily imputed to the specific virtue of the paper, his joy was truly rapturous. He put his arms around my waist and hugged me and danced around me calling "NEIRE (good) paper, NEIRE Mr. Robinson"... I had previously told him that I would bring them back by force of that piece of paper which I transmitted to the managing whalers, the magic properties of which he fully credited when the author of his anxiety was so shortly afterwards presented to his sight.' N.B.J. Plomley (ed.), *Friendly Mission: The Tasmanian Journals and Papers of George Augustus Robinson, 1829-1834* (Hobart: Tasmanian Historical Research Association, 1966), p. 80.

his readings of logocentric texts in fact reflects an unacknowledged, or 'repressed' graphocentrism.²⁴

It is perhaps for this reason that both Robinson and Fada refuse to acknowledge Aboriginal forms of textual representation and signifying practices, even as the texts repeatedly establish these. For, to acknowledge these inscriptions and this textuality would be to undermine Fada's own authority within the community. In *Dr. Wooreddy's Prescription*, for example, Maree, an Aboriginal woman, begins to explain to Robinson 'how the men carved images on trees, but seeing that he did not understand her she stopped'(173). At another stage of the novel, Wooreddy is accompanying Robinson on a mission. Unbeknownst to Robinson, Wooreddy had already been in communication with the local Aboriginal community. Wooreddy 'pointed out some line drawings of kangaroo and some symbols to Ballawine [Robinson] without telling him that a sign had been left behind telling him to continue along the track, but slowly'(119). This is a form of inscription that Robinson not only does not comprehend, but does not even acknowledge as existing.

Other forms of Aboriginal inscription pervade the text. Early in *Dr. Wooreddy's Prescription*, Mangana, Trugemanna's father, 'took up the subject of his daughter. With a finger he painted in the soft ashes at the edge of the fire her symbol and her actions'(23). The importance of writing as a means of communication is also emphasized in the meeting of Wooreddy and Ummarrah:

Wooreddy and the stranger, who had been eyeing and weighing each other... now took the opportunity to introduce themselves formally. Wooreddy... removed his shirt to show the marks of his initiation and the stranger did likewise. (60)

These forms of bodily inscription, and their signifying power, are an aspect of Aboriginal inscription that both texts repeatedly emphasize. As early as page four of *Dr. Wooreddy's Prescription*, even before Wooreddy engages in any dialogue, he is 'written on' in an initiation ceremony and has to 'endure a series of parallel slashes across his chest'(4). After the rape and murder of his wife, Mangana realized that he was 'at the

²⁴ Barbara Johnson, 'Writing', in *Critical Terms for Literary Study*, ed. Frank Lentricchia and Thomas McLaughlin (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1990), p. 47.

mercy of forces which he could only try and propitiate through magic. He snatched up a sharp pebble and slashed at his chest'(10). For Wooreddy also, 'what could he do but chant the old protection spells, gash into his body extra-potent strength marks, carry about relics of the long dead, and hope'(28). Robinson's diaries, although denying the Aborigines any form of graphic representation, also describe this process: 'if they feel any inward affliction or pain they cut themselves with sharp stones or shells, supposing the affliction is caused by RAGEAWRAPPER or evil spirit and by making an incision imagine a speedy cure'.²⁵

Master of the Ghost Dreaming emphasizes even more than the previous text, the importance of Aboriginal inscriptions in the form of scarification and body drawings, and how powerful these inscriptions actually are. Jangamuttuk's first trip into the alternative plane that much of the novel's action takes place in takes him to a place of magical inscription: 'The smooth surfaces were covered in designs and figures of such mystical intent, that he wished he had the time to draw some, but he had to hurry onwards'(14). His dreaming companion, moreover, his mode of transport in this other realm, is also marked by inscriptions: 'The back of Goanna was ancient and even his sacred skin patterns were faded. Jangamuttuk could remember his first journeys with him, then the patterns were clear and well marked. They had gone to form his most sacred body paintings'(13).

These instances of Aboriginal inscription are examples of the way so-called oral cultures use language. Deleuze and Guattari argue in *Anti-Oedipus* that oral cultures are only called oral 'because they possess a graphic system that is independent of the voice, a system that is not aligned on the voice and not subordinate to it, co-ordinated "in an organization that is radiating, as it were" and multi-dimensional'(118). The kind of writing inscribed in Wooreddy's body, for example, and its relation to the voice, constitute a completely different form of representation from phonetic languages like English. In English, a form of representation that Deleuze and Guattari call 'despotic', the graphic sign is deprived of its multiple connotations and made a one-dimensional

²⁵ Plomley, *Friendly Mission*, p. 57.

transcription of the voice.²⁶ In other words, sounds are given meaning, not by multiple networks of connotation, but by the reduction of meaning to linguistic regularity, dominated by the ideal of a fixed one-to-one relationship between each sound and its corresponding concept.

But Robinson's non-recognition of Aboriginal inscriptions is not just about not understanding a different mode of inscription. It is also, quite clearly, the result of an anxiety about the transmission of knowledge and dispersal of authority, those anxieties that I have already discussed in the context of Fada's relation to his benefactor. Although in *Dr Wooreddy's Prescription*, the Aboriginal community are taught to read and write, in the rewriting that is *Master*, this opportunity is never made available. *Dr. Wooreddy's Prescription* refers to *The Flinders Island Weekly Chronicle*, a journal that was produced on Flinder's Island under Robinson, a copy of which can be found in the Mitchell Library in Sydney. Sitting in those archives it is possible to read the stated aim of the journal: to 'promote Christianity, civilisation and learning among the Aboriginal inhabitants'. Profits arising from the journal were 'to be equally divided amongst the writers which, it is hoped, may produce Emmulation (sic) in writing'. The journal was 'under the sanction of the Commandant', and proof sheets were 'to be submitted to the Commandant for correction before publishing'.²⁷ Just as in Mudrooroo's fictional account of Fada's relation to his benefactor, this historical document suggests the way in which teaching alphabetic writing also functioned as an identificatory practice that was to be emulated.

In a similar way, teaching the Aborigines to read and write enable the initiation and production of a mode of history-making that also function as a monument to none other than Robinson, the beloved father, himself:

In commencing our journal agreeable to the prospectus we cannot look back on the events connected with our history. This we leave with the divine blessing to the heart and head that has been instrumental in uniting us together...

We date our history of events from the month of October 1835 when our beloved father made his appearance among us dispelling the darkness.

²⁶ Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, p. 206.

²⁷ *The William Thomas Papers*, The Mitchell Library of New South Wales.

We had been in a deplorable state, we looked for a better day and it has arrived. What a contrast between the present and the past.²⁸

In Mudrooroo's fictionalized account of the production of this journal, the anxieties around teaching Aborigines to write are explored as Wooreddy 'watched Macy, a young Aborigine, copy it out from a draft supplied by Robinson and had heard him repeat each word and sentence as he wrote them' (145). Just as Derrida asserts, the 'father is always suspicious and watchful toward writing'.²⁹

It is perhaps for this reason that, in the latter text, Fada teaches the Aborigines as little about alphabetic writing as possible. When, for example, Fada claims, in a re-enactment of a scene from *Dr. Wooreddy's Prescription*, he has written a document that would ensure the Aboriginal community on the Island would be saved from destruction, the fact that none of the Aboriginal community can read and write English, ensures their obedience: 'You know that paper tell 'em story. I send to Governor. He reads it and sends things... Now I write important story on paper. Strong story to get you all away from this island... Need you all to sign, to make mark on paper' (67).

The other significant feature of Fada's ability to write in *Master of the Ghost Dreaming* is the way such a tool enables him to fictionalize his own account of his life. Even as Fada believes in the ontological truth status of, for example, the anthropological texts he is producing, and even as he is deeply attached to the idea of some kind of transcendental ground, the place of God, or even of civilization, which gives meaning to his experiences, the novel also makes explicit how difficult it is for Fada to ever return to a truth that is commensurate with historical fact. Fada's textual mediations constantly fictionalize his own experiences. Examples abound in *Master of the Ghost Dreaming*. Immediately after an argument with his wife about why she is not teaching the natives household duties, Fada sits down to write in his journal:

The commandant... bent over his journal, his pen busily scrawling across the page as he wrote: My wife has been of constant help to me. She is teaching a number of the native women household duties. Ludgee, a faithful companion and the wife of Jangamuttuk who accompanied me on my dangerous missions of reconciliation which

²⁸*The William Thomas Papers*,

²⁹ Derrida, 'Plato's Pharmacy' in *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnson (London: The Athlone Press, 1993), p. 76.

enabled the remnants of a once proud people to be saved, is an apt pupil. (44)

While never explicitly stating that Fada is a liar, the novel belies Fada's observation. Fada's obsession with writing in his journal, moreover, reveals both a desire for, and a simultaneous moving away from unmediated truth that characterize Lukacher's analysis of the primal scene. Fada's rationalization for why he writes journals, 'Gentlemen wrote journals and so he wrote not one journal but journal after journal' (42), reveals that concealment of his own history that he cannot help but repress. When his wife becomes exasperated about his constant journal writing, he replies:

"One moment while I finish off this entry. It is most important as a record."

The commandant ignored his still furious wife while he wrote: taking with me the petition duly signed (thumb printed) by all of the natives. They will be of great help as agents of civilisation among the savage tribes which still inhabit the mainland. (43)

Mudrooroo and the Making of History

What, for me, is most interesting about this comment is that the copious journals of the historical figure of George Augustus Robinson, and they number well over one thousand pages, have been, and continue to be used as important historical records, records that Mudrooroo clearly drew upon in his writing of his Tasmanian novels. The editor of Robinson's journals was faced with much the same problem confronting Freud in his analysis of the primal scene. Brian Plomley, as a traditional historian, does not know how to deal with the fact that his own historical research points towards the fact that George Augustus Robinson was constantly engaged in the process of fictionalizing himself through his journals. In his article 'Who was the Real Robinson?', Plomley acknowledges that there are 'inconsistencies' between official and private correspondence, and that the official reports were 'often deliberately misleading'.³⁰ He then tries to explain the situation that 'led to the absurdity of [Robinson's] statements and to the falsity of the public record': 'Although no excuse for Robinson's excesses, it must be pointed out that the whole Flinder's Island record is bedevilled by untruths and

³⁰ Plomley, 'Who was the Real Robinson?', *Overland*, 111 (1988), p. 54

exaggerations.’³¹ In spite of this acknowledgement, Plomley’s historical reconstruction engages in the production of the truth effects of historical discourse using exact chronology (he finds this difficult), cross-referencing to ‘official’ sources, and ethnocentric selection of detail, as ‘the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned, [and] the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth’.³² Mudrooroo’s fiction exploits the problematics of history through the portrayal of a deluded medium. This is history that does not claim to understand the truth, but instead politicizes the practice of history-making, enabling the tactical use of historical knowledge. Although he does not use a different class of documents, Mudrooroo reads the documents in a different way, in much the same way that Freud attempts to read the events of the primal scene. Unlike Plomley’s editorial work, and even Robinson’s journals, these novels investigate the production of meaning which much of particularly *Master of the Ghost Dreaming* is concerned with.

Master of the Ghost Dreaming also enacts this genealogical challenge to history-making through a disguised reference to the first historical painting in Australia, Benjamin Duterrau’s *The Conciliation* (see Appendix 7). As a publicly sponsored national historical painting, *The Conciliation* commemorates the work of Robinson’s mission where not only is there a strong dichotomy between the civilized and the savage, but where Robinson is positioned centrally as the pacifier, domesticator and protector of an acquiescent group of Aborigines. According to Tim Bonyhady, this ‘meeting was to be treated as an heroic moment in modern British history rather than as an event of national significance for Australia’.³³ Bonyhady also claims that ‘Duterrau was endeavouring to elevate ethnographic description to the status of high art’ (78). This intersection of art and ethnography is particularly significant in the light of the previous discussion of the primal scene because, when looking at the painting, like the

³¹ Plomley, ‘Who was the Real Robinson?’, p. 56.

³² Foucault, ‘Nietzsche, Genealogy, History’, p. 131.

³³ Tim Bonyhady, *Australian Colonial Paintings in the Australian National Gallery* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 84.

descriptions Fada gives of his own paintings, the genitals of the Aborigines have been effaced.

The Conciliation is presently displayed in the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, and Geoff Parr, in his commentary on the painting, describes how he felt when he first saw it: 'There, *without a context*, it appeared as an exotic and enigmatic painting.'³⁴ If, as Michel de Certeau argues, '[r]epresentations are authorised to speak in the name of the "real" only if they are successful in obliterating any memory of the conditions under which they were produced'³⁵, then the act of recuperating this context is a strategy that, to some extent, deauthorizes Eurocentric representations of Aboriginality. *Master* recontextualizes the painting, bringing to the surface the erasure of the production of knowledge that history involves, as the reader witnesses Fada's constructed fame:

It was as he had always imagined it—the shepherd at the head of his newly saved flock. Feverishly, he began storing the aspects of the image in his head. It should, and must be, the subject of a painting.
(130)

Again, 'subject' is used here to connote both the subject-matter of the painting, and the colonial subjection of Aborigines to such representations. In this way, Mudrooroo's fiction is able to exploit uncertainties around conceptions of textuality, truth, history, power and knowledge. Moreover, his novels, unlike Robinson's journal, Plomley's editorial work and Duterrau's painting, explore the relation between the production of meaning and the production of subjectivity or identity on which it depends.

Identificatory Practices

This concern with the production of meaning is evident from the beginning of the novel when the Aboriginal community are about to undergo an alternative identificatory practice, a practice made necessary by the historical conditions of

³⁴ Geoff Parr, 'Benjamin Duterrau: The Conciliation', in *Considering Art in Tasmania* (Sydney: The Fine Arts Press, 1985), p. 500; Emphasis added.

³⁵ Michel de Certeau, *Heterologies: Discourse on the Other*, trans. Brian Massumi (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), p. 208.

invasion. It is ironic that at this moment, when the Aboriginal community of the Island are in the process of radically altering their modes of identification, Fada is engaging in his anthropological colonizing in order to capture, as a form of knowledge in his 'definitive text', some kind of timeless primordial Aboriginal identity. *Master of the Ghost Dreaming* opens with a dangerous ritualized attempt by the Aboriginal community to understand and resist the power the 'ghosts' (the colonizers) had over them. It is little wonder then that the ritual which opens *Master of the Ghost Dreaming* should be accompanied by an image of cannibalization, an image reminiscent of William Ramsay Smith's dismemberment of bodies: 'Our spirits become their play things; our bodies their food, to be ripped apart, and our gnawed bones are scattered'(1). In Freud's story, it is cannibalism that characterizes identification which 'operates on one level as an endless process of violent negation, a process of killing off the other to usurp the other's place, the place where the subject desires to be'.³⁶

It is this violent negation that the identificatory battles enacted in this opening ritual are designed to counter. Unlike Freud's originary story of identification, the Island community's identificatory ritual takes place in another realm. In this realm, otherness is not repressed but harnessed through altered states of consciousness. The Aboriginal community are dressed up as Europeans in an attempt to release them from the world of the ghosts in which they are trapped. The ritual is designed to take them into another plane of existence where they meet their dreaming companions, companions that enable them to journey through this other plane. It is in this plane, a plane that exists only for Mada and Fada in dreams, that the battle to save the community will take place.

Fada disbands the ritual after being woken up 'savagely' by Mada who in turn was woken by the ritual singing of English ballads. Fada's response reveals his deluded anthropological construction of Aboriginality. What the narrator had described as the 'ultimate in a sign system'(3), Fada reads as a 'travesty of the central ritual of a popish mass'(16). It is his reading that goes towards the production of the Aborigine as object

³⁶ Fuss, p. 9.

of anthropological knowledge: 'On the way back to the house... he began to plan out an interesting paper for the Journal of the Royal Anthropological Society'(18). This is genealogy in Foucault's strictest sense, not just a rewriting but 'a form of history which can account for the constitution of knowledges, discourses, domains of objects etc'.³⁷

This opening ritual, 'the ultimate in a sign system', involves the singing of ballads of loneliness and alienation in a faraway place, but the narrative also makes clear that Jangamuttuk was 'not after a realist copy, after all he had no intention of aping the Europeans, but sought for an adaptation of these alien cultural forms appropriate to his own cultural matrix. It was an exciting concept; but it was more than this. There was a ritual need for it to be done'(3). What becomes increasingly clear is that this ritual is not simply about mimicry or imitation. It seems to me to follow a much more complicated theorization of identification which involves taking the place of the other, and usurping their power. It is through this ritual that Jangamuttuk is able to enter the altered plane of Mada's existence through her repressed dreams and desires. This is possibly what could be thought of as Mada's unconscious world, a world that she has no access to.

This battle is re-enacted within Mada's own body, which is constructed as a war-zone. Her body was 'constantly wracked by pain. In fact it felt as though it was the battle field between constantly warring groups of organs... What could she do but seek to bring a truce in the warfare, and to pacify all the combatants by using the haphazard supply of medicines which arrived on the supply vessel? One medicine above all she valued as a pacifier, laudanum'(7).

For Jangamuttuk, laudanum comes to be seen as the source of health and the elixir of life. In the opening identificatory ritual, in their desire to be in the place of the other, the place of seeming good health in contrast to the disease the Aboriginal community are suffering from, Jangamuttuk and Wadawaka enter this altered plane in order to reach the laudanum: 'Her longing extruded from her to fix his attention on a

³⁷ Foucault, 'Neitzsche, Genealogy, History', p. 117.

small table within reach of her groping hand. On it stood a golden flask. The source of her good health. Before the hand could clasp it, Jangamuttuk snatched it up' (15).

In order to perform this ritual, Jangamuttuk had to master the Dreaming of the Ghosts. As the narrator states, Jangamuttuk:

the shaman, and *purported* master of the Ghost Dreaming, was about to undertake entry into the realm of the ghosts. Not only was he to attempt the act of *possession*, but he hoped to bring all of his people into contact with the ghost realm so they could all capture the essence of health and well-being, and then break back safely into their own culture and society. This was the purpose of the ceremony. (4)

Jangamuttuk, then, is the *purported* master, and the ambivalence of the word 'purported' signals the very contradictions that such identificatory practices are constituted by. In the *Oxford English Dictionary*, 'purported' has a range of meanings all of which we can bring to bear on our understanding of Jangamuttuk's mastery. For not only does 'purported' signify that which is conveyed or expressed and that which is intended to be done or effected by something, it also refers to that which is merely alleged or ostensible. The *Oxford English Dictionary* definition of 'purportless', moreover, signifies that which is without sense or meaning.³⁸ Jangamuttuk's mastery can therefore be seen as a performative position that attempts to produce meaning or sense out of the chaos of invasion. As a performative position it produces mastery by professing it. The ritual involves the repetitive singing of English ballads in a new context, and Jangamuttuk's mastery, it seems, is a result of destabilizing the master's identificatory mastery using the same processes through which it is stabilized and consolidated, that is, citing it repeatedly. Through reiteration, Jangamuttuk is able to open the constitutive instabilities within the colonizer's citations thereby enabling entry into the realm of the ghosts.

This ritualized identification, then, is subject to the logic of iterability and falls within Judith Butler's definition of identification as a ritualized production, a ritual reiterated under and through constraint.³⁹ It is clear that this ritual is not only produced under considerable constraint, but is potentially life-threatening to Jangamuttuk, which

³⁸ See *The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, Vol. 2, p. 2421.

³⁹ Butler, *Bodies that Matter*, p. 95.

invokes both the necessity and danger of identification, and is a reminder that every identification involves a measure of temporary mastery and possession which enable the subject. The ritual, moreover, points to the contradiction at the heart of identification: by identifying with the other, we lose ourselves through the very gesture by which we attempt to constitute ourselves as free autonomous subjects. This dangerous contradiction, and the tenuousness of processes of identification, are made explicit towards the end of the book when the reader is told that the bottle of laudanum 'which Jangamuttuk on his last visit had mistaken as the elixir of all health' was, 'he realised, a deadly drug responsible for the prison in which the poor female lay'(112).

With this in mind, I want to be clear that I am not advocating a celebratory identification politics to replace what I see as the problems of a celebratory identity politics.⁴⁰ This opening identificatory ritual, its dangers and its errors, are sufficient reminder that such a celebration is not possible. What I am trying to say is that this ritual, and the issues that motivated Laurie's article, provide opportunities to rethink identity and identification, and to explore possible ways of reworking them.

Like the identifications of the colonizer, Jangamuttuk's opening ritual is self-authorizing. The difference, however, is that his self-authorizing ritual, unlike Fada's which can be traced back through his benefactor to the ultimate and originary father, is not constituted through recourse to an imagined origin. Jangamuttuk is the 'creator and choreographer' of his ritual, authoring and authorizing it, in a self-conscious manner in response to the historical fact of invasion.

These differences in the authorizing logics of colonial society and the Aboriginal community can be seen in the naming rituals that are enacted in both texts. In *Dr Wooreddy's Prescription*, Robinson baptizes the Aborigines saying, 'to signify your rebirth you will be Christened anew'(139). In this ritualized reiteration of identity, 'it is precisely through the infinite deferral of authority to an irrecoverable past that authority

⁴⁰ As Diana Fuss argues, 'the unconscious plays a formative role in the production of identifications, and it is a formidable (not to say impossible) task for the political subject to exert any steady or lasting control over them. Given the capacity of identifications to evolve and change, to slip and shift under the weight of fantasy and ideology, the task of harnessing a complex and protean set of emotional ties for specific social ends cannot help but to pose intractable problems for politics'(9).

itself is constituted'.⁴¹ The authority resides only in the very practice of citation, which would explain why Robinson attempts to cement his authority, while revealing the anxieties attached to such a groundless practice, by forcing the Aborigines 'to repeat their names until he was satisfied that they had the proper pronunciation'(139). The authority of these baptisms 'works only by reworking a set of already operative conventions. And these conventions are grounded in no other legitimating authority than the echo-chain of their own reinvocation'.⁴²

Naming rituals are also enacted by the Aboriginal community in *Master of the Ghost Dreaming*. Apart from the renaming of Wooreddy, Trugernanna and George Augustus Robinson from the previous text to Jangamuttuk, Ludgee and Fada, Jangamuttuk and Wadawaka, the African convict, undertake the initiation of two young Aboriginal boys. This initiation does not involve, in spite of what Fada thinks, training in the 'arts of civilisation', nor does it coincide with traditional Aboriginal law, but is, as Ludgee asserts, 'what [Jangamuttuk] calls the new Law'(50). Just before Fada leaves the Island, Jangamuttuk renames the initiates, George and Augustus, harking back not just to the figure of Robinson in the prior text, but also to the historical figure of George Augustus Robinson, causing the text to exceed its own limits, a reminder of the way in which texts refuse to be self-enclosed systems of meaning.

During the initiation, Wadawaka claims, "Can't be calling 'em boys after this. They gotta have new names". Jangamuttuk replies, "New names, ghost names, signify something you know"(125). What this something might be remains unarticulated, but we do know that it is through Jangamuttuk's rituals that Fada is eventually forced to leave the Island, ultimately liberating the Aboriginal community from Fada's control:

Only the natives had cause for celebration, especially the shaman Jangamuttuk who it may now be revealed had orchestrated things so that Fada would need to retreat to the capital. How he had done this remains somewhat of a mystery, but Jangamuttuk needed the absence of Fada and the ascendancy of his son to fulfil a certain operation he had in mind. (129)

⁴¹ Butler, *Bodies that Matter*, p. 108.

⁴² Butler, *Bodies that Matter*, p. 107.

After Fada and Mada leave Sonny and the Island behind, Sonny begins drinking and sobbing: 'There was no mother or father to listen or to come to his aid. There was no one' (142). What Deleuze and Guattari call the 'analytic imperialism of the Oedipus complex' is dismantled.⁴³ In the final scene of *Master of the Ghost Dreaming* as Fada sailed away leaving Sonny to inherit his authority, the wind 'whipped' up an 'inventory' that Sonny was 'trying to divine' and 'took [it] out to sea' (137). While the two initiates fill the corporeal space left by Fada, Mudrooroo himself might perhaps be seen as a third initiate whose inventive novel fills the space left by the inability of Sonny, as the aftermath of a ruptured Oedipal triangle, to control the wind-blown dissemination of the authorizing 'inventory' that could not be contained by the divine *logos* of the Father. The text of *Master of the Ghost Dreaming* might then be seen as the new 'inventory', with its ambiguous resonances of both a totalizing list of goods, and the unpredictability of self-conscious fictional inventions, through which Mudrooroo, as writer, performatively identifies. It is significant that it is only after Fada disappears that this disseminatory space for writing is opened. As Derrida has asserted: 'The specificity of writing [is] intimately bound to the absence of the father'.⁴⁴

Mudrooroo's Past

How might we think about Colin Johnson re-naming himself Mudrooroo, the Nyoogah equivalent of the English word for 'paperbark', in 1988, partly in response to Australia's bicentennial? The extent to which paperbark is invested with power within texts written by Mudrooroo is striking. In *Dr. Wooreddy*, as we have seen, 'this letter' was magic and so was the bark called 'paper' (37). In *Master of the Ghost Dreaming*, when Jangamuttuk is undertaking his entry into Mada's room in the opening identificatory ritual, the power he derives from the ritual ensures that 'the walls were thin as paperbark to him' (13). Mudrooroo is thereby constructing his own identification with Aboriginality through a totem of inscription that he has invested with penetrative

⁴³ Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, p. 23.

⁴⁴ Derrida, 'Plato's Pharmacy', p. 77.

power. According to Mudrooroo, 'this has become our Dreaming, or our secondary totem or our functional dreaming'.⁴⁵

Such an identification with writing can be seen as a simultaneous disidentification with another story of a violent colonizing paternity that Victoria Laurie's article narrates. Laurie alleges that Mudrooroo's father 'was Thomas Johnson, an American Negro, though thought to be of mixed origins or Creole' (29). She also asserts that Edward Barron senior, Colin/Mudrooroo's great-great grandfather on his mother's side, was a colonialist in Western Australia who had instigated an Aboriginal massacre:

That attack by white troops at Pinjarra in 1834 had killed a dozen Aborigines, in part a reprisal for the murder of a settler, Hugh Nesbitt, by Aborigines South of Perth. His companion had been speared three times but escaped to raise the alarm. The companion was retired army sergeant Edward Barron senior, the father of the first white colonial child and Colin/Mudrooroo's great-great grandfather. (30)

Laurie makes the point that the Johnson children 'were directly descended from the first white child born on the shores of the Swan River colony in 1829. In a classic display of Western Australia's proximity to its past, the generational link from first white colonists to celebrated Aboriginal writer spanned just five families' (30).

There are a number of reasons, however, why Mudrooroo's mother could not share in the inheritance of this wealthy settler family: 'His mother, Elizabeth Barron, who was ostracized after having an affair with a male relative, a child born out of wedlock, and then marriage to a dark-skinned man, had been born on a wealthy pastoral property just outside Narrogin, but the family fortune had passed into the hands of a male heir' (29-30). Elizabeth Barron's status as a daughter ensured her exclusion from the inherited wealth and power that is transmitted from father to son in Oedipalized, patriarchal cultures.

Elizabeth Barron's relationship with Thomas Johnson, and the anxieties caused by this union, also contributed to her disinheritance. It is in this relationship that race

⁴⁵ Mudrooroo, 'Paperbark', in *Crisis and Creativity in the New Literatures in English*, ed. Geoffrey V. Davis and Hena Maes-Jelinek (Amsterdam-Atlanta: Rodopi, 1990), p. 389. Here Mudrooroo is also referring to Oodgeroo Noonuccal who also changed her name from Kath Walker to the Noonuccal word for 'paperbark' in 1988.

and sexuality intersect, and where anxieties about miscegenation, and the accompanying threat to inheritance, bloodlines and racial purity are played out. It was in this intersection that the greatest fears of empire would be located. In the face of a global racial inter-mixing lay the fear that the empire was being undermined by racial degeneration and the rebellion of the lower races. As Robert Young describes in detail in *Colonial Desire*, the early science of anthropology spent much of its energy attempting to establish the legitimacy of racial differentiation and hierarchy. Elaine Showalter argues:

Racial boundaries were among the most important lines of demarcation for English society; fears not only of colonial rebellion but also of racial mingling, crossbreeding and intermarriage, fuelled scientific and political interest in establishing clear lines of demarcation between black and white, East and West. (5)

It was such boundaries that led to the contradictory policies of assimilation and segregation described in the previous chapter. And it was these policies that caused what has now become known as the Stolen Generation, resulting in a dispersed and often untraceable mixed-race population, an ungovernable excess that subverts official and institutional recuperative gestures of mastery, an historical practice of which Mudrooroo is a specific effect.

These gestures are evident in Laurie's archival research into the records of Clontarf Boy's Home where Mudrooroo had been sent as a child. This research reveals the extent to which, as early as 1955, uncertainties about Mudrooroo's origins and identity were in circulation: 'The confusion about the boy's origins prompted a diligent clerk in 1955 to contact the Department of Native Affairs [D.N.A] which, he noted in a handwritten memo, "advised me, this a.m., lad not known at all to D.N.A."' (31). Since the publication of Laurie's article, Mudrooroo has argued for the importance of theorizing the ways in which mixed race people destabilize simplistic notions of identity. Quoting Gerard Vizenor, he claims that 'mixed bloods loosen the seams in the shrouds of identity' and that 'the crossblood exists at the edges of identity and his identity is always open to doubt'.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Cited in Mudrooroo, "Tell them You're Indian", p. 262-63.

Identification with Writing

Mudrooroo has never identified with the narrative of paternity represented by his maternal grandparents as told by Laurie. Rather, after his father's death, Mudrooroo was put into welfare, and took on the status of an orphan, the same status that Jacques Derrida attributes to writing [*graphein*] which, 'being nobody's son at the instant it reaches inscription, scarcely remains a son at all and no longer recognizes its origins, whether legally or morally'.⁴⁷ For Derrida, the position of writing with regard to the legitimate family line, takes on the status, like Mudrooroo, of an orphan, one whose 'welfare cannot be assured by any attendance or assistance' (77). According to Derrida, it is for this reason, its illegitimacy, that writing has been repressed in Western culture. Its effect is to break those ties of paternal sanction and filial obligation that serve to ensure the authorized transmission of authentic truth from each generation to the next. Because it challenges this self-perpetuation of the truth, it becomes an orphan deprived of all natural, hereditary rights.

Perhaps it is the anxiety produced through the unauthorized and dispersive transmission that inscriptions are characterized by that has led to this position being reproduced in critical responses to Mudrooroo's work from within the authorizing regime of the academy. Even prior to Laurie's revelations, Mudrooroo's work was called into question on the basis of a putative inauthenticity often on the basis merely that he writes. In one sense, it all seems hopelessly overdetermined. From the publication of Mudrooroo's first novel, *Wild Cat Falling*, Mudrooroo has been haunted by the spectre of inauthenticity. Xavier Pons, for example, in his response to *Master of the Ghost Dreaming*, claims, 'Writing itself is the first problem since Aboriginal culture was essentially oral'.⁴⁸ Kateryna Arthur sees writing as 'alien to Aboriginal culture', and claims that Mudrooroo's use of writing which, she informs us, is a non-Aboriginal enterprise, involves 'multiple violations of the very thing that is being defended', and that this 'popularisation is inevitably a form of betrayal, whether it is carried out by

⁴⁷ Jacques Derrida, 'Plato's Pharmacy', p. 77.

⁴⁸ Pons, 'Writing Koori', p. 101.

Europeans or Aborigines'.⁴⁹ John Fielder claims that 'Aboriginal writing addressed to white audiences will always be something of a compromised, hybridised process', implying that it is only in writing by Aboriginal people that such a process takes place.⁵⁰ Gay Raines argues that writing itself is 'a colonisation of Aboriginal culture,' and cites Barry Blake's *Australian Aboriginal Languages* to support her case: 'Any written representation is the work of Europeans or of Aborigines trained by Europeans.'⁵¹

Wadawaka

Given the clear anxieties that the status of Mudrooroo's writings have occupied, coupled with the revelation of his African-American ancestry, how then can we think about the role of the orphan in *Master of the Ghost Dreaming* being filled by Wadawaka, the African slave who is '[n]ot only... an exile, but he had no country, no land of his own'? (85). It is certainly the case that Wadawaka has become an initiated Aborigine, and that this has involved ritual scarification. When Jangamuttuk suggests escaping from the Island, after the mistake over the laudanum, Wadawaka is not convinced of the possibility of such a plan. Jangamuttuk replies, and calls him uncle, stressing the kin relationship accepted by Wadawaka when he had been initiated into the community, "I got this way of talkin' from you in the first place. Anyway, you uncle to these boys under our Law. You me same like that in our Law, since I cut you"(83).

Apart from his status as an initiated Aborigine, there is no doubt that Wadawaka's presence constitutes a profound disturbance to colonial and patriarchal authority:

This, this rebel, [Fada] spluttered in his mind, might, for all he knew, be the cunning leader of the uprising which had threatened civilised culture and order in the Caribbean. For all his obsequiousness he was a dangerous threat to the stability of his noble experiment of bringing civilisation and Christianity to his sable friends on the island where they were safe from all disruptive forces. (76)

⁴⁹ Kateryna Arthur, 'Fiction and the Rewriting of History: A Reading of Colin Johnson', *Westerly*, 1 (1985), p. 57.

⁵⁰ John Fielder, 'Postcoloniality and Mudrooroo Narogin's Ideology of Aboriginality', *SPAN*, 32 (1991), p. 50.

⁵¹ Gay Raines, 'Aboriginal Writing as a Reassertion of Cultural Identity', *Antipodes*, 5.2 (1991), p. 102.

Not only is this remarkable for the extent to which it reveals Wadawaka as a disruptive force, but also for the image of Fada's inarticulate intrapsychic spluttering. Even these inarticulate moments reveal the impossibility of self-presence in the face of internal differentiation.

It is also significant that Fada's anxiety over Wadawaka emerges at the point in the novel where Wadawaka seems to be usurping the authority of Sonny, undermining the Oedipalized transmission of authority:

Fada noticed with pride that his son was the last one to leave his vessel...A large black man held the stern steering oar and led the singing. This was the duty of his son, but there he was, handling one of the oars just like a crew member. He would have a word about this at once. The structure of society must be maintained at all costs. It was like a ladder with each class having its own rung. Divinely ordered, it had stood the test of time. (70-71)

Fada frames his anxiety about the Oedipalized transmission of authority through recourse to the arguments of evolutionary anthropology, itself an effect, as we have seen, of anxieties about the Oedipalized transmission of authority. It is at this stage that Fada sees for the first time the inscriptions on Wadawaka's chest, inscriptions by which he had not previously been identified:

‘Sir,’ he began carefully so as not to alarm Wadawaka, ‘those markings on your chest. There appears to be no mention or description of them in your personal identification record. Sir, if I may say so, they bear an uncanny resemblance to the markings our own natives have on their chests and shoulders. Never in my wildest imagination did I believe that there existed a connection between this remote colony and Africa. Impossible, but it must be so, for I find it improbable that a man such as yourself who has had the benefits of the civilising process should revert to the darkest savagery of which these poor souls are still in thrall. Sir, I am well aware that Africa has been the cradle of ancient cultures.’ (76-7)

Even as Fada desires a kind of undifferentiated primordality in Wadawaka's inscriptions, a desire that is simultaneously disrupted through its uncanny repetition of Aboriginal inscriptions, this very desire is itself constituted and represented through an inscribed differentiation in his own mind:

[H]e stared with amazement at the tribal markings, the cicatrices of adulthood on the African's chest, which were exactly the same as his own native community. Instantly, the outlines of a paper presented itself in headings, subheadings, paragraphs and even a few sentences in his mind. Eagerly, he inscribed the treasured paper on his memory

as he began to initiate an investigation which might prove a discovery of world importance. (76)

Although Fada begins his own internalized differential psychic inscription of this discovery, he is still unable to conceive of Wadawaka's Aboriginal inscriptions as anything but originary. Wadawaka's bodily inscriptions thereby become inscribed in Fada's mind for 'despotic' reproduction. What the text seems to suggest, however, is that Wadawaka's Aboriginal initiation, and the ritual scarification that it involved, works more 'like the voice of an alliance', with the marks inscribed on the body being a graphics of 'extended filiation'.⁵² These are forms of alliance that Deleuze and Guattari argue that Oedipalized capital, with its anxious modes of inheritance, seeks to dissolve. Fada needs the inscriptions to originate from Africa both to enable his upward movement on an intellectual hierarchy and so as not to disturb his own construction of a hierarchically organized aboriginality of racial purity: 'He needed this person to have been born in Africa for the marks to be the initiating cicatrices of the tribal savage' (79). However, this is the kind of stable origin that both Wadawaka and the writing that is inscribed on his body, as Orphans, resist. Wadawaka, like Mudrooroo, poses such a threat because he does not take part in the established order of a colonial authority structured around paternal identifications, identifying instead with the status of orphan and writer, the identifications of which are structured more around a mutable and historically-determined conception of alliance.

It is surely not a coincidence that the authority and law of paternal speech that exists in Fada would be undermined as a result of Wadawaka and Jangamuttuk's alliance, nor that it would be at the moment that he sees Wadawaka's ritual scars that he first begins to be unable to articulate himself: 'Fada began to falter. Somehow the subject had escaped his control just when he was on the verge of a great discovery' (79). Here it is not just the subject under discussion that escapes him, but, in a sense also, his subjection of Wadawaka. As the novel moves to its provisional conclusion, Fada increasingly experiences a 'fragmented period filled with alarming gaps and pieces of his own sentences commencing and drifting off into chaos' (92). When he is finally

⁵² Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, p. 188 and 223.

leaving the Island, his 'concentration had gone and with it the rest of his farewell address. Worst of all a memory lapse had occurred and he hadn't the foggiest idea what he had been going on about' (134).

Mudrooroo: the Father of Aboriginal Literature

Meta-textually, this usurpation of Fada's authority has had some unsettling consequences, and I am aware that my argument is complicated by Mudrooroo's often patriarchal and authoritative position with regard to other Aboriginal writers, and particularly women writers. It is interesting to speculate upon the extent to which Mudrooroo's vocal authorizing and deauthorizing of other writers were a catalyst for Laurie's article. Just as the publication of Sally Morgan's *My Place* can be read, meta-textually, as a narrative of origins of the birth of contemporary Aboriginal women's writing, Mudrooroo's writings had been inserted in a narrative of origins whereby Mudrooroo came to be seen (and perhaps saw himself), as the Father of Aboriginal literature, a manoeuvre that reincorporates everything into the patriarchal familial structure. Certainly, Mudrooroo's recent position at the head of the judging panel of the David Unaipon award for Aboriginal writing, inaugurated in 1988, seems to indicate this. There is, moreover, rarely any critical work done on Aboriginal writing in Australia, and even on Mudrooroo, that does not make the obligatory reference to *Wild Cat Falling* and the publication of the first Aboriginal novel. The opening sentence of Laurie's article participates in this kind of originary attribution: 'The author of *Wild Cat Falling*, Australia's first published Aboriginal novel, would seem to have little left to prove to anyone these days' (28).

It seems to me that while Mudrooroo's novels can be read, as I have attempted to do, as challenging patriarchal authority, his own critical writings can be read as reinstating this authority through his authorizing and deauthorizing of other Aboriginal identifications. Mudrooroo's critical texts are subject to the same processes of rewriting that his fictional texts are. *Writing from the Fringe*, published in 1991, was reworked and republished under the title, *Milli Milli Wangka: The Indigenous Literature of Australia*, in 1997. Both these projects are marked by an attempt to define, in an often

contradictory and uncompromising way, Aboriginal or Indigenous writing. Mudrooroo claims, for example, in *Writing From the Fringe*, that 'just because something is written by a person who identifies as an Aborigine doesn't make it an Aboriginal work'(148). In the earlier text in particular, Mudrooroo's definitions of Aboriginality were so stringent that, as many critics have noted, few Aboriginal writers qualify as writers of Aboriginality.⁵³ In these texts, Mudrooroo swings between an evolutionary essentialism ('In fact, even today, scratch many an Indigenous person and beneath his or her contemporary skin, or the persona he or she shows to the white world, you will still find the old hunter or gatherer')⁵⁴ and a postmodern non-essentialist Aboriginal subjectivity.

In spite of the complex meanings that inscription is marked by in his novels, Mudrooroo's critical texts tend to privilege the oral and reinstate the logos that his fiction so profoundly calls into question. These critical texts also imply that some kind of essence of Aboriginality is identifiable in certain kinds of textualities. The rewriting that is *Milli Milli Wangka* argues for a category of Australian literature called Indigenous writing, which would be classified as Indigenous in so far as it adheres to what Mudrooroo calls Maban reality. This reality is presumably measured by the markers of oral discourse, which Mudrooroo contrasts with what he calls the 'settler cultural patrix', implying that the use of writing is an identification with the father in contrast to the Aboriginal 'matrix' of orality. Mudrooroo then designates certain texts as 'Aboriginal' or 'non-Aboriginal' on the basis of this. It is when Mudrooroo makes these kinds of pronouncements about what constitutes Aboriginal writing and orality that he is at his most authoritarian and patriarchal, most like Fada of *Master of the Ghost Dreaming*.

⁵³ See, in particular, Adam Shoemaker, *Mudrooroo: A Critical Study* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1993), esp. Chapter 5; See also Eva Rask Knudsen, 'Fringe Finds Focus: Developments and Strategies in Aboriginal Writing in English', in *European Perspectives: Contemporary Essays on Australian Literature*, ed. Giovanna Capone (St. Lucia, Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 1991), pp. 32-44; and Simon During, 'How Aboriginal Is It?', *Australian Book Review*, 118, (1990), pp. 21-23.

⁵⁴ Mudrooroo, *Writing from the Fringe, A Study of Modern Aboriginal Literature* (Melbourne: Hyland House, 1990), p. 39.

Mudrooroo's Place

Possibly the most troubling aspect of Mudrooroo's critical writings has been his consistent attack on Sally Morgan and the popular success of *My Place*. This was mentioned in Laurie's article which quotes Mudrooroo in *Writing from the Fringe* as claiming that *My Place* is 'not really an Aboriginal book—it's coming from outside and exploring our Aboriginality, and that's where the problems lie'.⁵⁵ Although Mudrooroo is claiming here that there is an inside and an outside to Aboriginality, and his use of the plural possessive pronoun 'our' suggests that he considers himself to be on the inside, this chapter has tried to suggest that the ability to differentiate between inside and outside is extremely tenuous, not to mention ahistorical. Mudrooroo reduces the complexity of *My Place* to a caricature of what he calls 'the battler' genre: 'The plotline goes like this. Poor underprivileged person through the force of his or her own character makes it to the top through own efforts.'⁵⁶ In *Writing from the Fringe*, Mudrooroo also argued that 'Sally Morgan's book is a milepost in Aboriginal literature in that it marks a stage when it is considered O.K. to be Aboriginal as long as you are young, gifted and not very black'(149). Most responses to Laurie's article have raised this point. Graeme Dixon, for example, states: 'Ironically, over the years Mudrooroo has become the arbitrator of what is and what is not the authentic style that an Aboriginal person uses when telling a story in the written form'(5). What is perhaps most striking about this attack is the way in which the story of Sally Morgan's life resonates in Mudrooroo's response to Laurie's article. The title of Mudrooroo's only published response is, in what seems to me to be an explicit, yet unacknowledged reference to Morgan's life narrative, "'Tell them you're Indian'". The quotation marks around this title enable Gladys Milroy's voice to intrude into Mudrooroo's response. In this article, Mudrooroo reiterates this connection, even if he does not mention *My Place* explicitly: "'Tell them you're Indian" was a response denied people of colour in the rural areas'(259).

Moreover, in an article in the Brisbane newspaper, the *Courier-Mail*, it is stated that: 'Prominent Aboriginal writer Mudrooroo has answered claims he is not really

⁵⁵ Cited in Laurie, p. 32.

⁵⁶ Mudrooroo, *Writing from the Fringe*, p. 149.

Aboriginal by saying his birth certificate was falsified to hide the identity of his real mother—who was actually his half-sister.⁵⁷ This reference to an incestuous relationship, and a mother that is also the half-sister of her daughter, echoes the story of abuse in *My Place*. Although Mudrooroo's half-sister, Joyreen Stamsfield, has vigorously denied Mudrooroo's allegations, it is remarkable that such a parallel narrative would emerge out of Laurie's article. Similarly, as in *My Place*, miscegenation and illegitimacy are central to the story of Mudrooroo's mother as told in Laurie's article. In many ways, the story of Sally Morgan and *My Place* haunts Mudrooroo's life narrative. Mudrooroo's claim, therefore, in *Milli Milli Wangka* that 'what indigenality is in [*My Place*] has come from a white readership who found *My Place* mirrored their concerns about place in Australia' (195) is perhaps a displacement of the possibility that *My Place* articulates his own concerns about the fragility of Aboriginal identifications, as a combined effect of denial and Government policy, in contemporary Australia. After all, his own defence in "“Tell then You're Indian”" states that the 'best white families in West Australia have a black side anyway'.⁵⁸

It is odd that in an interview with Terry O'Connor in his first public response to Laurie's article, Mudrooroo would reiterate his position regarding Morgan: 'Sally Morgan's book became the overall bestseller in Australia. It made it legitimate to have Aboriginal ancestors, especially when it didn't cause any political upsets.'⁵⁹ But, as I have attempted to show, *My Place* is potentially extremely politically upsetting, even if this potential has been neutralized by critiques such as Mudrooroo's. Perhaps in Mudrooroo's paternalism towards Morgan we can see anxieties about his own position as father/originator of Aboriginal writing, a position that the popularity of *My Place* has threatened.

If this questioning of Mudrooroo's identity, however, is an anti-patriarchal gesture, it is necessary to think through the way such a gesture may perhaps reinscribe

⁵⁷ Terry O'Connor, 'Author's Heritage Claims Split Family', *Courier-Mail*, 28 March 1998, p. 1

⁵⁸ Quoted in Terry O'Connor, 'A Question of Race', *Courier-Mail*, 28 March 1998, p. 24.

⁵⁹ O'Connor, 'A Question of Race', p. 24.

an even more insidious and anterior form of patriarchal imperialism that Laurie's article may have been designed to challenge.

Crisis of Identity

It is significant that the title of Victoria Laurie's article is 'Identity Crisis'. Of course, the article attributes such a crisis to Mudrooroo. Yet, it is also possible to read the whole article, and the contradictions within it, as an expression of a crisis in a certain conception of identity. There are a number of ways of approaching such a crisis. One that has been suggested is that Mudrooroo submit to a DNA test to determine his identity.⁶⁰ Finally we have the technology that civilization has always dreamed of, that is, establishing the identity of the father with certainty. The question is, would such a test really establish who Mudrooroo is anyway? What could the results of such a test actually tell us? More importantly, what problems would this 'solution' itself engender? Mudrooroo is right to remind us of 'Victorian classifications of race' which culminated in the 'genocidal practices of Auschwitz'.⁶¹ We should be wary, I think, of emotive claims, like those of Robert Eggington, the co-ordinator of the Dumbartung Aboriginal Corporation in Western Australia, that suggest Mudrooroo's 'deception...[is] a continuation of genocide'.⁶² The Holocaust, after all, was the culmination of a conception of selfhood that seeks to eliminate otherness in the name of truth, purity and civilization. Surely such a test, while perhaps serving temporarily as a container for the anxieties produced in this crisis, would stand as a testament to the cruelties that sustain the fiction of coherent racially determined identities.

At a time when the extreme right are gaining political ground in Australia, with an agenda which includes the policing of the boundaries of 'real' Aborigines, we must ask whether testing Mudrooroo's DNA is the necessary and immediate political task. Surely there must be another way, that may be presented more in terms of a challenge than a solution. Perhaps, instead, we can think about the case of Mudrooroo as providing an opportunity to question the celebratory tone of contemporary identity-

⁶⁰ Terry O'Connor, 'Mudrooroo to Undergo DNA Test', *Courier Mail*, 30 March 1998, p. 1.

⁶¹ Mudrooroo, "Tell them You're Indian", p. 262.

⁶² Cited in Amanda Meade, 'Novelist Defends his Black Identity' *Australian*, 5-6 April 1997, p. 3.

politics that refuses to acknowledge the violence and alienation at the heart of our identities. In this way, we might be able to confront what a DNA test seeks to evade—that regardless of our genetic make-up, we are always exiles from ourselves, and that the repression of this internal division in an attempt to produce a coherent identity excludes the possibility of reworking identifications to produce alliances rather than merely exclusions.

Perhaps it is through an acknowledgement of that unsettling space of otherness that orphans and writing inhabit, that such an identificatory politics might be initiated. Mudrooroo has gestured towards such a position: ‘A fixed identity really did not exist for writers such as myself who, every day, were creating identities in language. Identity itself, seeing as it could be given and taken away, was as much pastiche as any other contemporary structure’(263). The issue then is no longer the patriarchal and imperialistic formulation of whether Mudrooroo is still an Aboriginal writer (or whether, for that matter, *My Place* is really an Aboriginal book), but whether we can risk thinking about identification itself, like writing, as orphaned from a conception of an ‘aboriginality’ of the kind constructed by Fada that is so deeply and neurotically attached to the origin embedded within it.

Conclusion

This study has suggested one way in which we can think about the phenomenon of modern colonialism. It has long been argued that colonialism produces objects of knowledge, even if these are, like the spectre of the savage, phantasmatic. What I have tried to think about in this thesis is the way in which colonization also tries to produce certain kinds of subjects. It is for this reason that I have found psychoanalysis to be such an important and necessary conceptual tool for thinking through the psychic dimension of colonization.

Yet, as I have tried to suggest, to use psychoanalysis to study colonization is rendered problematic by its own complicity in the production of colonial knowledges. I have attempted to negotiate this dilemma by historicizing the emergence not only of psychoanalysis and colonization as cultural institutions, but also the psychoanalytic subject. In this way, I hope to have opened up a way of thinking productively about both colonization and psychoanalysis, while simultaneously calling into question the naturalized status of the Western Oedipalized subject.

This thesis suggests that it is, perhaps, possible that in the ongoing encounter with difference that is colonial and neo-colonial relations, re-reading Aboriginal texts may profoundly unsettle the subject of modern western colonialism, and its colonialist desire to produce subjects like itself. It is through such readings, and the intersubjective relations they require, that, even in spite of the asymmetrical power relations that colonization involves, the possibility of alternative non-Oedipalized subjectivities may be formulated.

This thesis began with unease. It concludes with a similar feeling, although the source of this unease has no doubt shifted. Attempting to produce a conclusion requires the kind of mythologized thinking that this thesis has attempted to question. This is the teleological myth of the end-point, where the culmination of progress is finally realized, that the idea of civilization has depended on for its effectivity. A conclusion generally

requires that the conditions under which a piece of work was written are effaced in favour of a seamless, coherent and unified narrative. It is for this reason (however unreasonable) that I would like to consider the contingent nature of the work just presented.

The chapter on *Totem and Taboo*, the first draft of which was written some two and a half years ago, was formulated in response to an invitation to present a paper at a conference with the spectral title of 'Phantom FX'. I was reading *Totem and Taboo* at the time, and the chapter can be seen as an effect of thinking through the logic of spectrality in what is possibly Freud's strangest and most unsettling text. As I continued to think and write, although I never would have predicted it, the phantoms multiplied, and everywhere I looked, there were ghosts.

The final chapter, researched and written in the last six months, came about in response to a newspaper article that a friend thought I might be interested in. On October 23, 1998, the *Scotsman* reported the recent discovery of the appropriation of the work of David Unaipon by a little-known Scottish anthropologist, William Ramsay Smith. It seemed to me, upon reading this brief article, that this event brought together the concerns of my thesis and that Ramsay Smith could be thought of as exemplary of the colonizing subject. I decided to pursue this interest, and write my final chapter on Unaipon and William Ramsay Smith.

This was the only chapter that involved extended archival research, most of which took place at the Mitchell Library in Sydney. This research exposed me to the unique pleasure of archival discovery. It was during this time, when I was wondering how to knit together the various threads of my argument, that I came to recognize the disturbing similarity of Ramsay Smith's intellectual endeavours and my own. Although I attempt to critique his appropriation, as I sat in the archives in the Mitchell Library, I was struck by the sense that my own project, like Ramsay Smith's, was a project of discovery and recovery, a project that sought to uncover the truth of the matter at its origin. Like Ramsay Smith, my project was motivated by the desire to know the unknown, to incorporate the unknown into the known.

There was also an uncanny sense of déjà vu as I sat in those archives. Another archival search had occurred in the very same place some ten years previously. At that time I had been searching for the truth of my own origins, and the past of my grandmother. That search produced nothing but the blank space on her birth certificate where her mother's name should have been. In some ways, this thesis enacts its own displacement, which is perhaps why it focuses on the disavowed, the familial, the secret and the spectral.

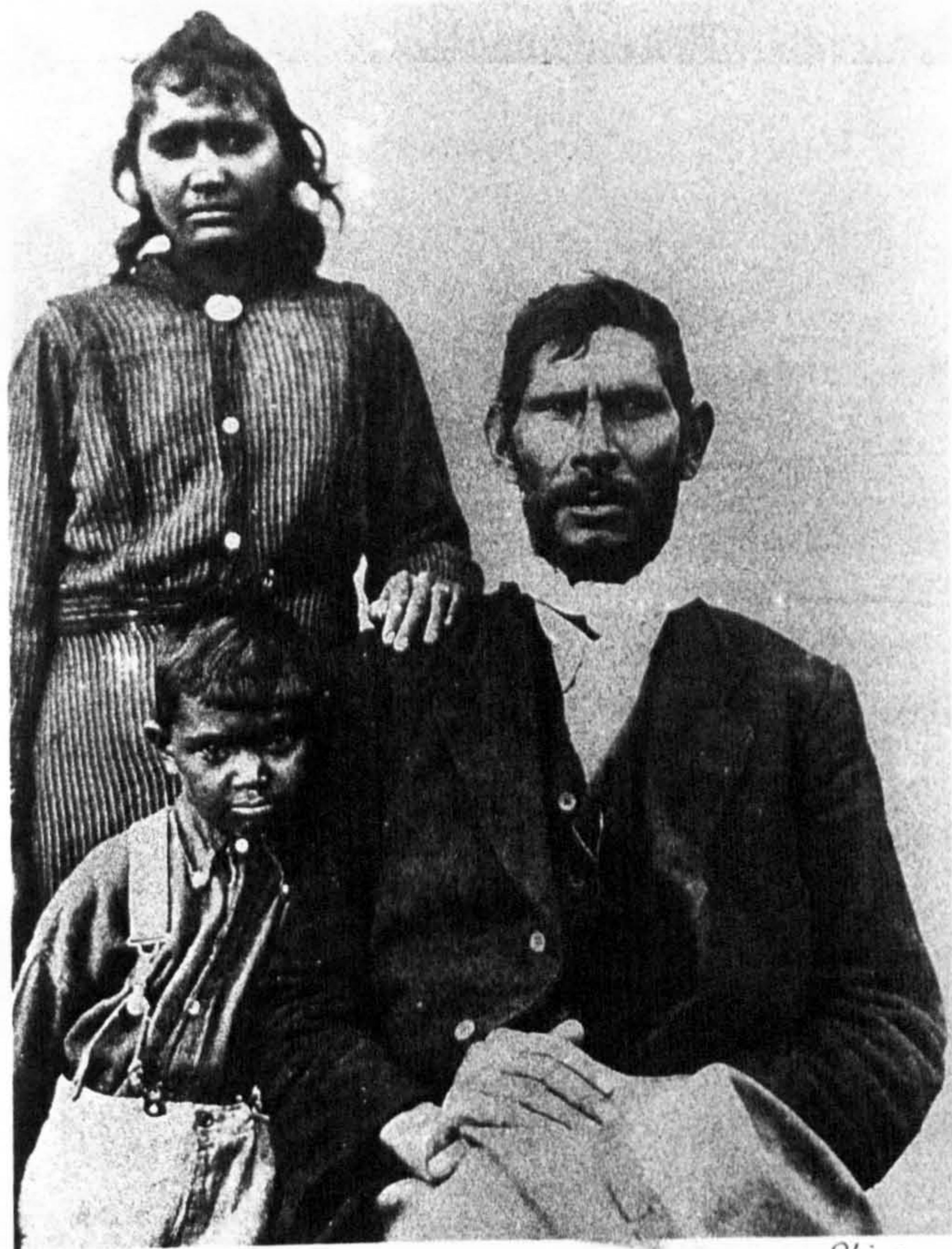
In this way, the reasoned institutional concerns of this thesis intersect in a personal way with the concerns of my own history, a history that is also bound up with the history of Australia's colonization. Yet, given the history of the divide between the private and public domains that has been so central to both capitalism and colonialism that this thesis has tried to trace, such an intersection seems to me to be an important place from which alternative subjectivities may begin to be articulated.

I hope to have avoided both the desire to recover the past and the desire to affirm the present. Rather, I hope to retain the question of how to remember the past, the legacy of colonialism which we all inherit, without assimilating it to ourselves.

Appendices

Appendix 1:

From Walter Baldwin Spencer's 1923 'Report on the Half-Castes and Aboriginals of the Southern Division of the Northern Territory'.



Half caste man and woman with their child. This man speaks English well, is most capable in dealing with stock & quite equal to taking his place amongst white workers. The photograph does not do justice to the half caste woman.

Appendix 2:

From the *Aborigines' Friends' Association Annual Review*, 1938.

Full Blooded Australian Aborigines — A Study in Contrasts

Two uncivilized natives, living under Stone Age conditions.



The scientists advocate segregating the natives and then leaving them alone to work out their own destiny.

"It is a crying shame that after 150 years of colonization, we can suggest nothing better for the natives of Arnhem Land, who have already made contact with Malays, Japanese, and other races, than that they should be kept apart and not be allowed to establish contact with the best we have to offer in the way of British culture and civilization."—Ed. "A.F.A. Review."

Two civilized natives, who have come under Mission influence.



James Noble, Forrest River Mission, W A



David Unaipon, Native Advocate, S.A.

"Speaking as a representative of the aborigines, I feel that the only hope for the improvement of my race lies along the line of properly-conducted missionary enterprise, which goes down to the fundamental needs of the aborigines, and gives them the inner power to reconstruct their lives, which have become shattered by contact with white civilization."—David Unaipon.

Appendix 3:

David Unaipon, 'An Aboriginal Pleads for his Race', in the *AFA Annual Review*, 1936.

An Aboriginal Pleads for His Race

By David Unaipon

Civilization has come to my people so suddenly that they have not been able to adapt themselves to it. Evolution is a process which takes time. Some people say the white man should leave the aborigine alone, should not interfere with his customs and his manner of living.

The white man must not leave the aborigine alone. We cannot stand in the way of progress. The aborigine must not be left alone in the middle of civilization. That would be like an aborigine leaving a white man alone in the middle of the bush.

It is the duty of the white man to stand by the aborigine, to guide him and help him until he can help himself in this new world that has grown up round him. The training of the aborigine in European methods has done a great deal of good, but with the good influence of the missionary there also comes the influence of the lower type of civilization, and the pull downwards is greater than the lift upwards.

That is the real problem. If the aborigine could see only the good points of civilization there would be no problem. But the uneducated, uncivilized aborigine thinks that whatever a white man does is good. He lacks the civilized man's power to distinguish between what is good and what is bad in civilization.

If some sort of reserve were possible, in which only the good influences of civilization could be felt, a new civilized race could be built up. With a gradual process of introducing Christianity and all the best civilization can give, the aborigine would come up fully developed. It might take two generations, perhaps more, but eventually we would be able to take our stand among the civilized peoples.

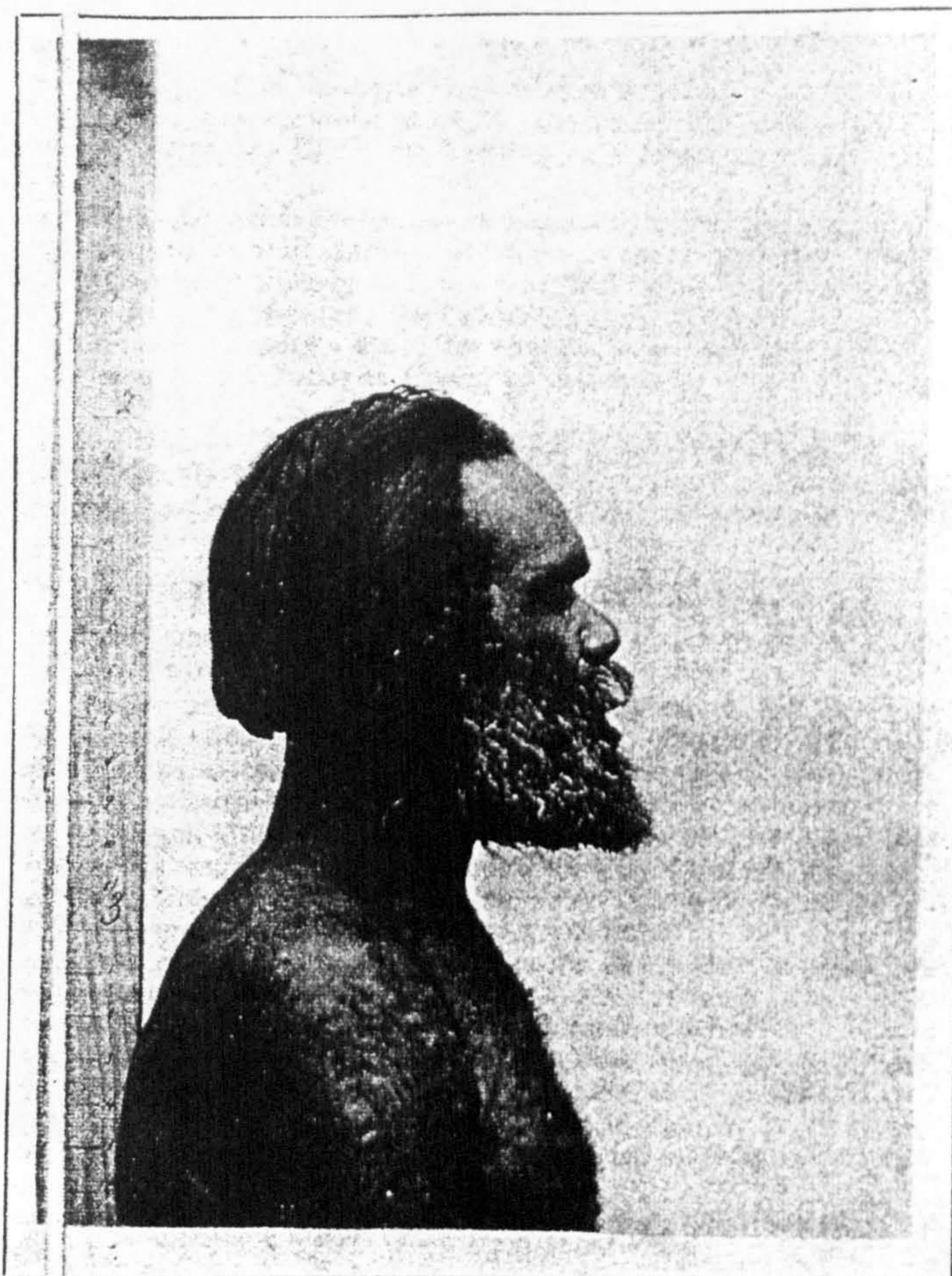
Already the aborigine has shown he can fit in with the white civilization. In the early days he helped the squatter, and he makes a fine stock rider and station hand. Educate him properly, treat him properly, and he will show his value.



David Unaipon, full-blooded native Narrinyeri Tribe, and spokesman for the aborigines

Appendix 4:

From George Taplin, *The Folklore, Manners, Customs and Languages of the South Australian Aborigines*. 1878.



NGUNAITPONI.
A MAN OF THE NARRINYERI.

Appendix 5:
1953 Coronation Medal.



Appendix 6:
Australian \$50 note.



Appendix 7:

Benjamin Duterrau's *The Conciliation*.

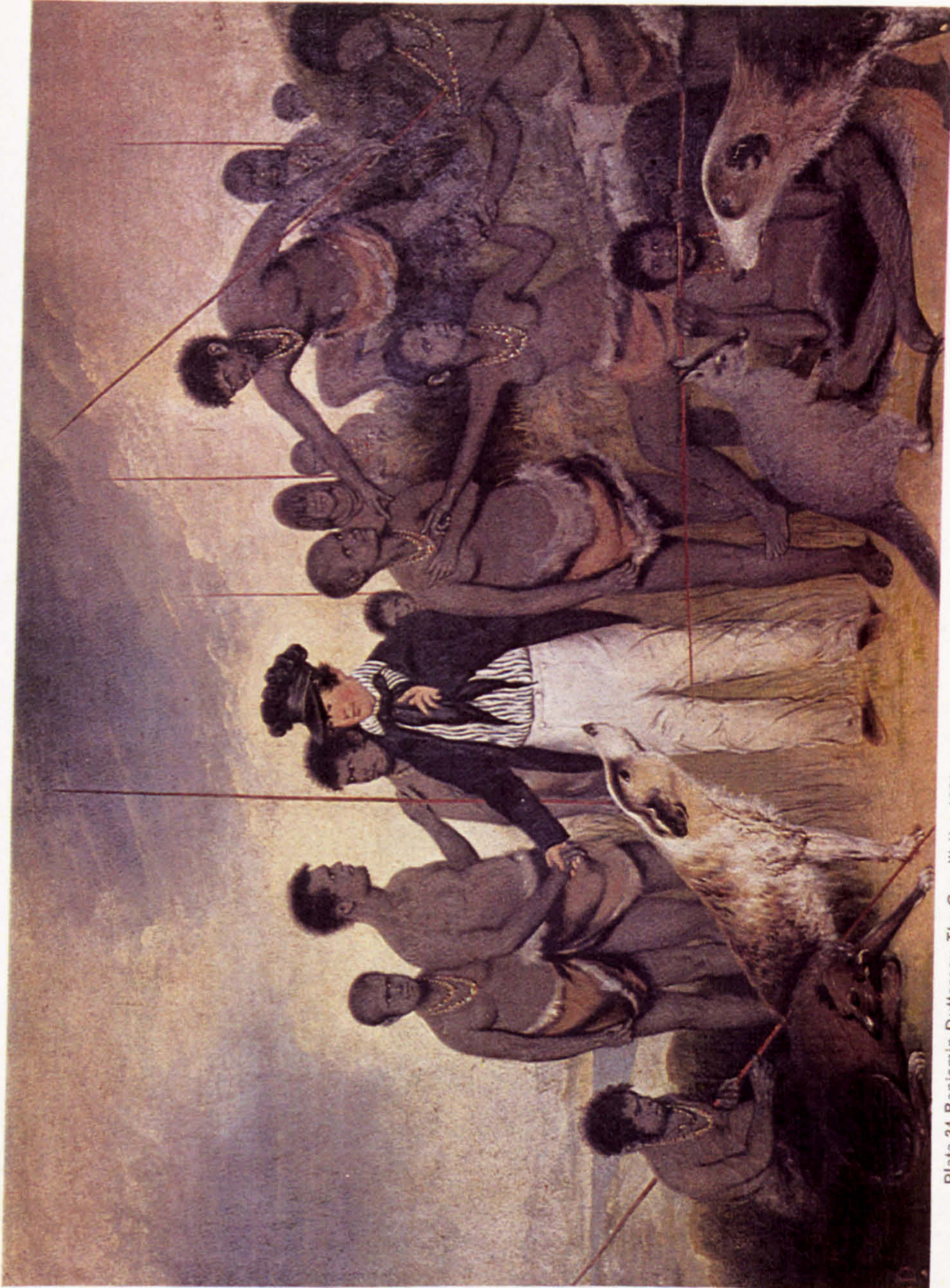


Plate 34 Benjamin Duterrau *The Conciliation* 1836

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