



DOROTHY GREEN MEMORIAL LECTURE

Narrative Lives and Human Rights: Stolen Generation Narratives and the Ethics of Recognition

KAY SCHAFFER, UNIVERSITY OF ADELAIDE

Dorothy Green was a formidable figure in the field of Australian literature. I first met her twenty five years ago at a symposium in Sydney hosted by Geoffrey Sharp, the then editor of *Arena*. The idea for the gathering grew out of the presentation of a number of innovative papers that had been delivered to the first ASAL Conference, held at Monash University in 1978 that offered what then were emergent feminist and cultural studies perspectives. At the ASAL conference, and later at the Sharp symposium, I presented a paper on Katharine Susannah Prichard, entitled “Of an End a New Beginning,” that utilized feminist, neo-marxist and psychobiographic tools to analyse the creative tension between Prichard’s biography, her Marxist politics and the marked Lawrentian tendencies in her fiction. Geoff later published it in *Arena* in 1979 (Iseman). It was my first published piece of critical writing in Australia.

A number of (then) young (and now well-known) scholars whose work pioneered Australian feminist and cultural studies, including film and popular culture, had delivered papers at ASAL and were subsequently invited to the seminar in Sydney. Many of us worked at the intersections of literature, politics, philosophy and popular culture and came from interdisciplinary faculties in the CAEs, the Institutes of Technology and newer universities. The participants included John Docker, Susan Dermody, Drusilla Modjeska, Sylvia Lawson, Tim Rowse, Susan Sheridan and Leslie Stern among others. Geoff invited Dorothy Green to

the symposium, as well. Although she disparaged what she often referred to as the “vulgar” turn to popular culture, opposed the “abstraction” and obfuscation of new critical perspectives, and had serious misgivings about the political objectives of feminism, she accepted the invitation, offering critical appraisals and challenging commentary throughout the three-day event. The papers appeared in the anthology *Nellie Melba, Ginger Meggs and Friends*, with an afterward by Dorothy Green.

My boundary-crossing piece on Katharine Prichard, caused me no end of grief. Ric Throssell, Prichard’s son, wrote an angry letter to me, my editors and his literary agent objecting to my attempt, in his words, “to interpret the personality and creative impulse of a person you have not known or met, on the basis of her fiction and the subjective reports of some of her life experiences” (Throssell 157). He refused permission for me to quote from original archival sources unless his letter was published as an afterward to the article, a condition the editors gently coaxed me to accept. Later, Cathy Greenfield and Tom O’Regan cut their deconstructive incisors on the piece in the *avant guard* Sydney journal *Local Consumption*, describing it as an exemplary type of “a mundane and quite ordinary literary political criticism [. . .] [that had an] utterly bereft familiarity” (Greenfield and O’Regan 93, 94). They then proceeded to offer an excoriating critique of the essay and its author. After *Nellie Melba, Ginger Meggs and Friends* appeared, the collection and a majority of the essays received an almost universally hostile reception. Peter Pierce reviewed it for the *Saturday Age*, finding the text as a whole “confused, aimless and slovenly” and my piece “platitudinous” (Pierce 13). He did, however, cite Ric Throssell’s appended letter with approval. Bruce Clunies-Ross reviewed it for *Australian Literary Studies*. He found the volume “riddled with contradictions” (Clunies-Ross 127). His review shamelessly parodied what he identified as the more “aphasically written” postmodern essays. He remarked, however, that the text “actually contains its own best criticism,” continuing, “one of the outstanding pieces in the book is not even mentioned in the index” (127). The piece to which he refers, of course, is Ric Throssell’s letter which, according to Clunies-Ross, “states incisively exactly what is wrong with [my essay [. . .] of] ponderous imprecision” (127). But Dorothy Green liked it. After hearing the essay at Geoff Sharp’s seminar in Sydney, she offered an enthusiastic commentary, noting that she found my analysis provocative (in this she was perspicacious) and, more importantly, from her knowledge of Prichard and her work, she judged that I had gotten it “just right.”

This was the start of my career. My brilliant career. I met Dorothy on several other occasions in which she continued to be supportive of my work, as was Shirley Walker at other important times during my sometimes precarious rise to academic notoriety. In addition to admiring Dorothy Green’s monumental study on Henry Handel Richardson, *Ulysses Bound* (1973), which was one of the first,

and certainly the finest critical study I encountered after arriving in Australia in 1974, I remained in awe of the breadth of her vision, the force and passion of her opinions and objections, and her ability to offer incisive (some called them ferocious) critiques, often to formidable scholars during question time at ASAL conferences. Although I did not share all of her humanist critical orientations, nor her discomforts with feminism, I admired her political commitments to social justice, human rights, anti-nuclear campaigns and environmental concerns. She was always encouraging of my work and for that I owe her a debt of gratitude.

Dorothy wrote a rejoinder for the collection *Nellie Melba, Ginger Meggs and Friends*, of which the above-mentioned reviewers of the book heartily approved. In it she offered a corrective to what she detected as jargon or pseudo-intellectualism in the theoretical drift of some of the essays. Fortunately, my piece was spared. Later she would remark caustically that “to read much fashionable contemporary criticism is like chewing sawdust.” Here, as in her collection of essays *Writer, Reader, Critic*, Dorothy offered an impassioned plea for critics to register the interconnectedness of literature to the world. “Literature and life are inextricably connected” (“The Writer” 1), she wrote. For Dorothy, the critic had a duty, indeed a moral obligation, to engage with the politics of her time, to promote social justice, and to extend the possibilities for human freedom.

I returned to Dorothy Green’s essays in preparation for this lecture with my own research on the roles of Indigenous storytelling in human rights campaigns in mind, a project, I trust, she would find compatible with her commitments.¹ A firm supporter of human rights, Dorothy believed that a national literature needed to be inclusive of all voices. “[N]o civilization,” she wrote, “neither an oral one, nor a literate one, can survive at all without a transmitted culture, a racial memory” (“Behind the Glittering” 82). Although politically progressive and aligned with the left, her awareness was tempered by a classical, modernist approach to literature in general and Indigenous oral traditions in particular that some readers today would find assimilationist and patronizing.² At the same time, Dorothy fought against the imposition (apart from her own, perhaps—we are seldom conscious of the ground on which we stand) of western political hegemonies and patriarchal prejudices on Indigenous, working class and women’s lives, an imposition of power that resulted in a disregard for Indigenous oral traditions, an eradication of racial, class and gendered memories and experiences, and the deployment of material and symbolic critical practices that actively discriminated against women and minority groups.

In relation to Indigenous political autonomy, Green was acutely aware how difficult it was (and remains) for Aboriginal people to be recognized as subjects and agents of their own destiny. She commented that for some groups who had limited purchase in the national arena the impetus for change could come from outside the community. Citing Adorno and his championing of the principle of

freedom from the constraints of western hegemony, she considered it the role of the critic to call attention to social injustice, to support the extension of rights and to believe that the force of one's critical writing might precede, aid and abet social and political reform. Throughout her career she maintained a commitment to social justice, human dignity and freedom. If Dorothy is still tuned in to ASAL's musings, I hope she registers the ongoing connections between her critical work, her passions and this enterprise. In her life and her work, she was and continues to be an influential mentor.

Few in Australia would doubt the significance of Indigenous storytelling to the evolution of human rights claims. Indeed, no recognition of human rights violations can come without story, testimony and witness. Virtually since the first years of white settlement, Indigenous people have been telling stories of their lives both within and outside of their communities and seeking recognition and redress before official inquiries from what we now would call human rights abuses. Penny Van Toorn reminds us "from as far back as 1796, Aboriginal people were recounting small segments of their lives, in piecemeal, fragmentary, written forms in hundreds of handwritten letters, petitions, and submissions to official inquiries and court testimonies" (Van Toorn 1–2). But inquiries held in colonial contexts, or those held in national settings prior to the international affirmation of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, seldom acknowledged the legitimacy of claims made on behalf of the colonized. Their voices were not recognized outside of their own communities, nor was there a means to bring forward their claims on a national stage that would validate their stories and carry authority within the nation. In our time, a time of a global discourse on and commitment to human rights, testimony before national tribunals carries a moral weight that requires nations to recognize and attempt to redress their human rights abuses.

The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Inquiry into the forced separation of Indigenous children from their families enabled Indigenous speakers who testified to their past experiences to be heard and acknowledged. Prompted by the United Nations Decade of Indigenous Peoples, it came in the wake of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation hearings and mirrored similar inquiries in other white settler nations like Canada and New Zealand. Although not broadly reported around the world, the Inquiry galvanized political controversy within Australia, profoundly unsettling received narratives of nation. The Inquiry opened a dialogue between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. It validated the experiences and legitimated the claims of those who testified. It also reopened the pain and trauma of a recollected past.

In his Report, Sir Ron Wilson framed the narratives of stolen children in human rights terms and made a number of recommendations that addressed these issues.

The recommendations included the pursuit of measures to restore land, language, and culture and to ensure self-determination and non-discrimination in line with international standards. In addition the Report called for measures to educate the Australian public about past policies so that they might never be repeated; it called for a number of reparations, including financial compensation; a national apology and an annual Sorry Day to commemorate the history of forced separations and their effects. In all, the Report made fifty-four recommendations “directed to healing and reconciliation for the benefit of all Australians” (Wilson 4).

Bringing them Home, in its address to readers, did more than expose the abuses of the past. It asked that “the whole community listens with an open heart and mind to the stories of what has happened in the past and, having listened and understood, commit itself to reconciliation” (3). That is, HREOC not only presented the testimony of witnesses within a human rights framework, it also called for an active ethical, engagement on the part of its readers to become involved in a process that might bring about justice by acknowledging the loss and harm that had been done to Indigenous witnesses and their families.³ Many responded to that call in various ways, both personal and professional. Like a number of other academics, I spoke at several conferences here and overseas engaging with this healing process of telling and listening. In hindsight, bearing in mind the backlash that has occurred within the country, the wilful forgetting / denial of injustice, and the ongoing pain suffered by Indigenous families in the absence of a national apology, I have begun to rethink the model for reconciliation that the Report proposed. Are there limits to the model? What are its benefits and its costs? Just because there has been no apology, does this mean that the healing process has come to an impasse? Are there other ways to heal?

There are several issues that come together that I want to keep in mind as I explore the telling, listening and healing processes that have (and have not) occurred in the wake of the report. These include the affective dimensions that attend the witnessing processes, the psychoanalytic model to which the healing is aligned, and the personal, institutional and communal arenas in which the witnessing is received and interpreted. In terms of affect, some of the most painful passages for many readers of *Bringing them Home* were those in which narrators testified to being abused, and then shamed, when they tried to tell their stories to officials who rebuked them. Not being heard is part of the process by which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have been erased and effaced in the nation’s history. Being shamed is part of the process of internalized oppression that denied individuals their subjectivity, limited their freedom and scarred their lives. I have addressed these issues at length elsewhere so will only provide a brief overview here before moving in another direction to consider signs of healing in post-HREOC Indigenous life writing (See Schaffer, “Legitimizing the Personal Voice” and “The Stolen Generation”).

Although the collective weight of the testimony contained in the Report saddened, shocked and shamed the nation, there were many elements of the stories that had been heard before. Prior to HREOC, Indigenous narratives and plays by Glenyse Ward, Sally Morgan, Alice Nannup, Jackie and Rita Huggins, Doris Pilkington Garimara, and Jane Harrison among others, contained painful passages that invited an empathic identification on the part of readers. In particular, passages that detailed the experiences of shaming, told in the language of abjection, carried an unforgettable and intense appeal. “We were treated like dirt, owned like a horse or a cow [. . .] labelled mongrels,” Daisy Corona relates in her oral narrative to Sally Morgan at the end of *My Place*. “Makes you feel rotten inside” (Morgan 143). “There was a lot of cruelty that went on in those days, and mostly they just turned a blind eye to it, relates Alice Nannup in *When the Pelican Laughed*” (Nannup 47). “We were little nobodies.” And then we come to the passages in the *Bringing them Home* Report like that of William: “I did everything. I just couldn’t cope with life. I lived under cardboard boxes. I used to eat out of rubbish bins [. . .]—shamed,” after a counsellor sent him on his way with the offhand rebuke: “He’s an Aboriginal kid. He’ll never amount to anything” (Wilson 373).⁴

The Indigenous life narratives that preceded and testimonies taken for the Inquiry reveal the effects of shaming and internalized oppression that assimilationist policies brought to the speakers. Abjected in their interactions with white society, the tellers became objects before the law, their lives compromised by a lack of recognition and validation. As Kelly Oliver comments, such forms of systemic violence deny the subjectivity of the victim as self-constituting. They render the teller an “other,” a subject without subjectivity (Oliver 7).⁵

Psychoanalyst and Holocaust survivor, Dori Laub, writes, in a language commonly invoked by Indigenous speakers and their supporters in the wake of the Report, that the process of telling and listening is an essential first step towards healing. He maintains that the giving of testimony is a two-fold process, the telling itself, which breaks previous frameworks of knowing, and what is going on beyond the words. This second process, beyond the words, enables emotional healing, the key to a rediscovery of a lost identity (Laub 63). According to this formulation, that healing absolutely requires the active engagement of listeners as enablers of the healing process. If victims fail to receive affirmation or legitimation for their stories they remain entrapped within the trauma.

Shortly after the appearance of *Bringing them Home*, I attended a women’s studies conference at which Katrina Power, an Indigenous activist, journalist, and executive board member of Tandanya, the Aboriginal Cultural Arts Centre in Adelaide, was a keynote speaker. During question time, she was asked why she thought it was important for the government to apologize. In her response, she emphasized that the pain and trauma of recounting memories of experiences in the past had redoubled for those who testified and their families because the

Inquiry opened so many wounds. The government's apology might initiate a process of healing. "If we are given an opportunity to forgive," she commented, "we are given the opportunity to heal."

This dynamic of healing continues to be affirmed. For example, in their introduction to *Many Voices*, oral history project conducted by the National Library of Australia, Doreen Mellor and Anna Haebich write: "most of us [. . .] would wish to find a way to heal the sadness, abuse and deprivation that children undoubtedly suffered as a result of the policies that led to their separation, and have subsequently led to generations of grief, hurt and bewilderment. The project has been established with the intention of making it possible for people to listen with an open mind to the complex array of experiences that make up this history, and in doing so, to participate in a restorative process for our whole community" (Mellor and Haebich 14).

While the telling and listening process may be restorative in the immediate environment and positive context of witnessing, the psychoanalytic model on which it rests may be too confining to deal with the complexities of the process, particularly for previously colonized people in colonizer nations, when stories circulate in public domains beyond the immediate contexts of telling. It requires an empathic relationship that presupposes that the listener will vicariously identify with the teller. But that listening is intensified by affect, and affect, as Silvan Tomkins studies have shown, can be channelled in a range of negative or positive ways. There can be no predicting responses in advance. When a listener / reader is shamed by accusations, or identifies not with the victims but with the officials and institutions coming under scrutiny, that negative affect of shaming can result in emotional outrage, cognitive rebuttal, and wilful forgetting/denial, as occurred in the backlash to the *Bringing them Home* Report. As Anne Brewster reminded us in her paper delivered to the 2003 ASAL conference, however, forgetting is a supplement to memory; not an end of the story but part of the processes on ongoing interaction.

Even when the process does succeed as anticipated and listeners or readers accept an ethical response-ability to acknowledge and validate the story and the veracity of the tellers, narratives of shaming do other things as well. They place tellers in the position of victim, with listeners as advocates and agents, thus reinforcing pre-existing power relations. Validation of the teller's story can lead to new forms of subjectivity, beyond victimhood but, in the context of a human rights regime, it also requires the teller to take up a particular performative stance—as the subject of human rights. Multiple selfhoods and identities are reduced to a particular kind of subjectivity, with a particular kind of history. In addition, as stories of the past are reinterpreted in the light of the Inquiry, they risk becoming commodified as narratives of suffering and trauma and labelled Stolen Generation stories.⁶ If the process is forestalled or the story not validated, as has been the case

of many in Australia, tellers can be called upon to justify and reiterate their testimony, thus becoming trapped within the painful and limiting confines of victimhood. For the listener, this engagement activates an identification with the victim that can enhance a recognition of cultural difference, but it can also obscure that difference, motivating listeners or readers to imagine the teller in terms of the self; reducing the teller's alterity to the limits of the respondent's own experience, feelings and knowledge. The process enacts an imagined participation in the suffering of others, what Dominic La Capra calls a "surrogate victimage" (La Capra 182) that engages the listener's feelings in ways that might actually short circuit the distance required for the respondent to register the legitimate claims of the other. In addition, it confers on listeners a "special status," that of the defender or enabler of the rights of others. These dimensions of the telling, listening and healing process complicate the situation, especially when, as in the HREOC example, no apology has been forthcoming.

Despite widespread public support for recommendations contained in *Bringing them Home*, little government action has resulted. There has been no apology, and only minimal compensation in the form of limited counselling, the creation of a national archive through the oral history project of the National Library, and an extension of Link Up services to enable reunions between the children and their families. But painful reunions also carry a heavy price, as stolen generation children and their descendents struggle to reunite with estranged families and to manage their lives in the contexts of their multiple communities of identification. And even while the desire for telling and healing is there, the emergence of these narratives in an uneasy national forum means that their reception can still face a climate of hostility and resistance to listening.

Does this mean that there can be no healing? No reprieve from the sentence of victimhood for survivors?

Recently, the universal applicability of a psychoanalytic model, with its emphasis on the closed interiority of trauma, has been contested as inadequate to address the diverse experiential histories, languages of suffering, structures of feeling and storytelling modes evidenced in diverse cultural traditions both in Australia, and around the world (See Bennett and Kennedy 1–15). For many survivors of a painful past this model for understanding trauma and healing may have little relevance. Or, even if relevant, it fails to account for processes of recovery that can proceed in the absence of institutional, communal, national or personal responsibility. Being an intra-psychic model, it also ignores how stories and memories exceed the personal. That is, they are imbricated in institutional and political structures and practices of a particular time and place. For Indigenous tellers and non-Indigenous listeners those structures and practices embedded within the layerings of history produce very different sets of memories, meanings and responses. Furthermore, the psychoanalytic model cannot address the

genealogies and architectures of cultural memory, the ways stories are told retrospectively in relation to other stories, such as those emerging from slavery, or those evoking the Holocaust as event, emblem, haunting, history and transcendent myth on a world stage. A healing process based on the psychoanalytic model privileges the respondent (and this is a particularly salient feature in post-colonial contexts), while also occluding differences in power relations, subject positions, histories, memories and experiences across cultures of difference.

My growing awareness of the deficiencies of the psychoanalytic model in accounting for the complexities of a healing process led me to seek out Indigenous narratives published in the wake of the HREOC Inquiry.⁷ To look to the life narratives for signs of healing. My remarks here are tentative, and I am open to advice, counsel and correction. But I seem to detect several distinctive characteristics that are new to the writing. Rather than tentatively explore the scars and wounds of the past in search of understanding, as many pre-Inquiry narratives had done, these texts produce confident narrators “telling truth to power,” to invoke Foucault’s phrase. They utilize a language of human rights in which to explore the meanings of the authors’ past experience. In adopting this narrative stance, narrators move from positions of objectivity to subjectivity, from being victims to agents, from expressing a passivity and suffering to exercising a critical awareness, from feeling shame to expressing anger, pride and collective healing; from recounting their individual experience to understanding themselves as collective subjects, connected not only to other Indigenous communities in Australia, but also to victims of human rights abuse around the world.

The narratives attest to many, varied subject positions for Indigenous narrators. They tell of different kinds of separation. Some recount growing up in government dormitories or reserves like Ruth Hegarty’s *Is That You, Ruthie?*, Veronica Brodie’s *My Side of the Bridge*, and Albert Holt’s *Forcibly Removed*. Others tell of Christian Mission experiences, like Ambrose Mungala Chalarimeri’s *The Man From Sunrise Side*, Edie Wright’s *Full Circle: From Mission to Community a Family Story*, and Iris Burgoyne’s *The Mirning: We are the Whales*. An increasing number are cultural maintenance narratives, told by people in remote traditional communities, for whom English is their second language. They address their stories to family and community, as does Jessie Lennon in *I’m the One that Know This Country!: The Story of Jessie Lennon and Coober Pedy*, and Tex and Nelly Camfoo in *Love Against the Law: The Autobiographies of Tex and Nelly Camfoo*. And some narratives, written by urban based and Western-educated commentators, like Stan Grant’s *The Tears of Strangers*, have begun to investigate the complexities of braided lives, of being caught between two cultures, as a result of mixed heritage experience.

These narratives differ significantly from those published prior to the HREOC Inquiry, perhaps made possible by the validation of Stolen Generation testimonies, the political framing of those testimonies in terms of human rights viola-

tions, and the ethics of recognition called into play by the Report. Textual elements include: a clear and forthright negotiation around collaboration; authoritative voices that exhibit a knowledge and pride in an Indigenous heritage and a critical awareness of the modes through which it was threatened; a rendering of individual experience in which narrators speak as communal subjects and tie their experiences to other histories of oppression around the world; and, most notably, an interpretative framework that locates the speakers as subjects of human rights.⁸

COLLABORATION

The government/dormitory and religious mission narratives are told by Indigenous elders. In contrast to many of the Indigenous life stories that emerged earlier, these texts overtly attend to the politics of collaboration. The Wright, Chalarimeri, Burgoyne and Brodie stories all grow out of oral narratives that have been transcribed from tapes in an overt process of negotiated collaboration with editors. Edie Wright's intergenerational text was written by a granddaughter and based on tape-recorded and transcribed narratives of her mother and grandfather. Ambrose Chalarimeri's story was taped and transcribed by his partner Traudl Tan. Iris Burgoyne thanks her collaborator Tania Perre in the acknowledgement for helping her put the book together. Perre provides a foreword that attests to the richness of Iris' stories and the importance of oral traditions. In her preface to Veronica Brodie's narrative, non-Indigenous linguist Mary-Anne Gale comments on the process she engaged in with Veronica. She says, "it's hard to get published even if you are an accomplished writer, but even harder when your skills are in speaking and not writing. So with Veronica's skills as a storyteller and my determination to tell Veronica's story in her voice and not that of a white writer or editor, together we set about committing Veronica's remarkable, humorous, and at times tragic story to paper" (Brodie and Gale ix-x). There is an acknowledged consciousness here of different cultural legacies and a negotiation of differential power relations that was largely absent in previously published narratives.

The Lennon and Camfoo texts are cultural maintenance narratives told by traditional elders to anthropologists. Their primary address is to family. Not being members of the Stolen Generation/s, these storytellers detail other consequences of the Aboriginal Protection Acts for themselves and their more traditional communities. Both were transcribed from oral narratives that utilize Indigenous storytelling techniques that blend traditional and pidgin language and cadences. In order to communicate to a broader reach of readers, the anthropologist-as-collaborator adds textual supplements, such as annotated photographs, maps, textboxes, glossaries, historical details, legal references and other scholarly com-

mentary that explain references to traditional law, practices, customs, kinship relations and language. For example, in the Jessie Lennon narrative, *I'm the One that Know This Country!*, compiled by Michele Madigan, the first words of the text that appear on the title page are in Anangu language and are addressed to the Indigenous reader: Madigan provides a counter-text to Jessie Lennon's narrative through the extensive use of annotated photographs and maps that visually narrate for non-Indigenous readers the traditional elements in Jessie's transcribed stories. She also includes prefatory notes on language, a pronunciation guide, a glossary of abbreviations, a contextual introduction, an Aboriginal timeline and a list of references that facilitate the use of the text in secondary schools. In *Love Against the Law*, recorded and edited by Gillian Cowlshaw, the anthropologist relates the different processes of transmission that occurred between herself and Nelly as opposed to herself and Tex, and the difficulty in eliciting and recording Tex's biography because of her ambiguous ascribed kinship relationship to him. She negotiates the distance between Indigenous storytellers and non-Indigenous readers by presenting a polyvocal text. This approach enables the Indigenous storytellers to communicate directly and in familiar modes of address to family and community and to render their stories as closely as possible to oral discourse. It also means that stories are accompanied by the sometimes-intrusive appearance of bracketed translations of language and the use of textboxes and other aids that visually interrupt the flow in order to make them accessible to non-Indigenous and Indigenous readers from other geographic and language areas. Through various methods of presentation, these texts attempt a form of dialogue between black and white Australians that was rare in previous publishing. These cultural maintenance narratives, read in community schools and prized by family, carry on Indigenous traditions while at the same time adapting non-Western styles of transmission and forms of address.

NARRATIVE AUTHORITY:

All of the narratives exhibit a sureness of voice, partially enabled by knowledge gleaned from government records, new revisionist histories and the human rights framing of the *Bringing them Home* testimonies, as well as the legitimacy given to Aboriginal witnessing by the HREOC Inquiry. These are storytellers with agency, attesting to traditional and adapted knowledge, customs and practices that speak back to power from the other side. They tell of recorded and unrecorded massacres and murders and encounters with characters from white history like Daisy Bates, Burke and Wills, RM Williams and Bob Hawke. The Lennon and Camfoo narratives, written for family, contain assertions of traditional knowledge against received knowledge and white settler interpretations. Jessie Lennon in *I'm the One*

That Know This Country! testifies to displacements of her people through processes of colonisation and the British nuclear tests at Maralinga. She supplements her memories of displacement with details that could only have been recovered from new and archived government documents released in the 1980s and 90s. She connects that evidence and data to her own knowledge of miscarriages and cancer that resulted for many members of the Anangu community. From the assertive title of the book to the final words of the author: “I’m the one who know everyway. *Ngura nyangatja nyayuku*—This is my home!” (Lennon 147), the author and collaborator deploy rhetorical strategies that enable Jessie Lennon to retain control over her story.

Tex and Nelly Camfoo live in Arnhem land in traditional country where they attest to ongoing cultural traditions and blackfella ways against the ongoing incursions of white Australian politics and politicians. “I didn’t get my culture from Mr Keating,” says Nelly (Camfoo 107). “Aboriginal law is still here,” states Tex (102). Veronica Brodie’s *My Side of the Bridge* presents a writing back narrative that relates her life experience and perspective against the denial of Njarrindjeri women’s traditional knowledge that culminated during the Hindmarsh Island bridge controversy. Iris Burgoyne’s stories in *The Mirning: We are the Whales* tell of a recollected past suffused with episodes of sexual abuse, poisoning and other racist practices that have only recently been exposed by contemporary historians. She responds, however, not with shame and guilt but with anger, accusing the missions of multiple human rights violations. A comment made at the end of her narrative underscores the agentic positionality of the speaker. She comments that she hopes her reminiscences “may have provided some insight into the spiritual and cultural wealth of a nation that has endured hardship and injustice with stoicism and good humour” (Burgoyne 136). The nation here is not the white settler nation, but the nation constituted in, by and through Indigenous histories and their ongoing traditions. Here, Burgoyne confronts white Australian readers, asking them not to understand how Indigenous stories fit into white accounts of nationhood but to alter their frame of reference and confront their own role in Indigenous histories of separation (See also Kennedy and Wilson).

LANGUAGE OF HUMAN RIGHTS

One of the most striking features of this collection of texts is the deployment of the language of human rights. The texts include chapter titles made familiar by the *Bringing them Home* report, like “Removal,” “Stolen Generation,” and “Reconciliation.” They include words and phrases that resonate with the language of *Bringing them Home* and the terms of reference for the Inquiry—separation, institutionalisation, destruction of culture and heritage, the loss of language, limited

educational opportunities, restrictions on freedom, segregation, physical and sexual abuse, mental and physical cruelty, unjust detention, coercive practices and the ongoing intergenerational effects of separation on families and communities. The narrators understand their treatment in terms of a violation of human rights. “They were treated like a people who had no rights” (Hegarty 13); “such a disregard for human dignity and human rights” (Holt 74); “Our people knew they were deprived of basic human rights [. . .] Our destiny was controlled” (Burgoyne 56, 61); “We had no rights!” (Brodie 61).

In many of the intergenerational narratives, like Edie Wright’s *Full Circle* and Iris Burgoyne’s *The Mirning*, narrators tell their stories with confidence, place their experience within an historical perspective, and grant retrospective agency to themselves, their mothers and their grandparents, and their life experiences. Through reference to past histories of suffering around the world, enjoined to the moral weight of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, narrators connect their experiences to a world memory of human rights violations. These narratives attribute awareness to those being dispossessed: “They understood that they were being taken over. [. . .] My grandfather knew he was entitled to something” (Burgoyne, 10, 28). They accept that the readers will have a common knowledge of the processes of separation and assimilation. Prior to *Bringing them Home* Indigenous life stories had told of victimization and subordination in which tellers were shamed into positions of “little nobodies,” denied of subjectivity within the dominant culture. In these new narratives the tellers establish themselves as knowing subjects of history claiming a legitimate position within the sociality of nation.⁹ Narrators assume that they are in dialogue with readers who share a common knowledge of the past.

INDIVIDUAL SUBJECTS TIED TO OTHER HISTORIES OF OPPRESSION

Indigenous narrators assert the validity of their claims. They bring a conscious agency and a restoration of personal and communal subjectivity to the texts, aligned with their critical awareness of and identification with the suffering and abuse of minority peoples in other parts of the world. Many compare their experiences to those of the Jews in Nazi Germany, the blacks in Apartheid South Africa, the Catholics in Northern Ireland, West Bank Palestinians, slaves and black militants in US civil rights history, and the victims of the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia. Brodie, breaking her indirect mode of authorial address in a way that implicates the reader and the nation in relation to the process of tattooing full-blood Aborigines proposed by the Northern Territory authorities, asks, “Do you realize that Hitler’s system of tattooing Jews comes from what they wanted to set up in the NT?” (Brodie 102). She uses the simile “like a concentration camp” (72) to de-

scribe the look of an institutional Aboriginal women's home in South Australia. Iris Burgoyne utilizes a similar simile: "when the farmers fenced off the land, the mission felt like a concentration camp" (41). Albert Holt deploys the language of the Holocaust to relate his family's removal to Cherbourg, 765km away from traditional lands: "the Holt family was herded like cattle into the train and taken on a journey that they had no opportunity to refuse and to a destination in which they had no choice" (3).

A number of narrators compare their experiences and express a solidarity with victims elsewhere. Iris Burgoyne states, "they said black Americans were treated badly, but the Aboriginal people were equally oppressed" (129), and later: "we were not the only people ill treated, robbed, and stripped of everything. The Khmer Rouge did awful things, as well as the many lives that were lost during the holocaust" (137). Albert Holt in *Forcibly Removed* reports that, as in the Apartheid era of South Africa and the segregationist period in the southern US, "toilets were signposted 'not for the convenience of natives'" (Holt 16). He remembers, in relation to his induction into the workforce, "sometimes you would be physically brought to the parade area, publicly humiliated, and possibly sent to jail [. . .] we were like placid zombies because we were under absolute control" (71). About Worrabinda, Holt comments dryly, "it had nothing to recommend it, third world conditions prevailed" (83). Authors imbricate their stories with the cultural memory of oppression from elsewhere, enabling new scripts of identity, affiliation and belonging.

Indigenous narrators bring a conscious agency and a restoration of personal and communal subjectivity to the texts, aligned with their critical awareness of and identification with the suffering and abuse of minority peoples in other parts of the world. "We are a people with a struggle," comments Brodie (7). "I first began to realize that I was a person with feelings, that I was important too," confides Hegarty (113). "The white men tried to shoot Aboriginal people out because they were in good country. I suppose, they wanted it for themselves," remarks Tex Camfoo (12). Iris Burgoyne relates that "[t]he Mirning began to realize that their land was being taken away. [. . .] They understood that they were being taken over. They became restricted and distressed as they could no longer roam" (Burgoyne 10). She concludes, "[o]ur people knew they were being deprived of basic human rights" (Burgoyne 56). Jessie Lennon testifying to the ongoing campaign for justice after Maralinga comments: "I'm the one who know everyway" (Lennon 5). She cautions, "Shouldn't be givin in, we poor things" (Lennon 39).

BRAIDED LIVES

Of all the texts that have been published in the last few years, Stan Grant's *The Tears of Strangers* (2002) is the one that has the potential to reach most readers world-wide. Published and promoted by HarperCollins, an international press, and written by a well-known and controversial journalist and news reporter,¹⁰ it is a complex narrative of braided lives in which the dark history of separation that affected his family is told through official sources of knowledge, records and scholarly accounts, and contemporary critical theories of identity construction. In Grant's provocative text he declares "I am a white success, [. . .] in my whiteness, I've gained the world but I've lost something of myself. I can't pretend to be a black success. There's really no such thing" (Grant 155).

A repetitious motif in the text is Grant's critique of the inherent acceptance of subordination of black subjectivity that was part of the colonial regime. Often cynical and forthright, the text offers a scathing assessment of both Indigenous and white politics. In relation to an Indigenous politics of identity, Grant comments that contrary to popular belief "Aboriginal identity is not a privilege or an identity card, but a victim position" (5). "Australia," he claims, "has trapped us in its pervasive whiteness" (5). As a third generation, urban-based, tertiary educated descendant of an Aboriginal great grandmother and an Irish convict great grandfather, he traces the difficulties and ambivalences of mixed-race liaisons. His unfolding narrative melds family and community genealogies with historical and anthropological perspectives on black struggle and survival. He harbours no sympathy for an urban Indigenous nostalgia for a lost Aboriginal culture, claiming the impossibility of an attachment to a pre-contact, authentic connection to land and culture for many urban-based descendants of Stolen Generation families, asserting that it does not exist and must be imagined and idealized through white texts that mirror a blackness as seen through white eyes. Nor does he support a divisive radical politics of confrontation. All positions, in fact, come under scrutiny for their failure to deal with a messy and constantly shifting ground.

His own family history combines the courageous resistance story of Wiindhuraydhine, a warrior of the Wiradjuri people, nearly a third of whom lost their lives in battles with whites in Bathurst in 1824. He comments "the remnants of Wiradjuri society would never again enjoy their sovereignty: our identity would be fashioned as much by our conquerors as by our ancestors" (80). For Grant, the history for such lost victims in the colonisation process is neither grand nor uplifting. He remembers being raised in a black world of death, danger and violence, with an alcoholic father who "beat him with all the fury only a black man could muster, hitting someone he imagines to be white" (14). Grant's mother "who could pass," accepts the promise of assimilation. Grant concludes that, for many members of his generation, there can be no healing through apology. It has

to come from other means. He experiences black otherness as a scar.

Grant would be the first to admit that his appearance, his education and the opportunities that he has gained from his career place him in a special position, an opportunity denied to other members of his family. He speaks with an awareness of cultural forms of oppression and the processes of healing taking place globally. His memoir draws upon postcolonial theory and a macro-history of power relations and human rights abuses around the world. This macro-history forms a backdrop to the events, experiences and memories of Indigenous people in Australia's white settler history who, like those who suffer policies of oppression elsewhere, know "the maligned influence of history" (84).

At the end of the book, Grant considers the turning points that might presage a different kind of politics in Australia: a politics of inclusion and recognition. He cites Paul Keating's Redfern speech, that defining moment of a new nation that "turn [ed] pain into hope" (234); the 1992 Mabo decision and the judgments of the High Court Justices Deane and Gaudron that "separate [d] mere law from the higher ideal of justice" (236); and Cathy Freeman's gold medal win at the 2000 Sydney Olympics, a victory that brought to Australia a "spiritual revival, one which rendered denominations obsolete, that dispensed with dogma" (233)—all powerfully affective events that signalled an ethics of recognition. Missing from this list is the Stolen Generation report. Indeed, Grant eschews the title "Stolen Generation": "A life can't be reduced to a catchy slogan," he cautions (145). He views the "history wars" and debates about guilt, shame, blame and responsibility as whitefella business. *The Tears of Strangers*, in its entirety, presents a compelling testimonial to stolen lives. It imagines a future for Australia beyond racial divisions in which the black and white heritages of second- and third-generation descendants of stolen children might be more intensely interrogated, especially for those whose mixed heritages have transected each other or been closely intertwined. Grant writes with an attachment to personal and communal loss. *The Tears of Strangers*, however, unlike some more recent memoirs of urban-based, Stolen Generation descendants like those of Steven Kinnane or Fabienne Bayet-Charlton, imagines a future untethered from the pull of connection to the past. The memoir presents a perspective from one connected to but moving beyond the national imperatives of reconciliation.

CONCLUSION

This brief summary of some recent Indigenous life narratives leads me to several tentative conclusions. First, in relation to Dorothy Green's essay cited earlier, there is no longer a need for Indigenous communities to look to white supporters to initiate change. Contemporary Indigenous narratives assume a subjectivity,

agency and power of voice in dialogue with non-Indigenous readers on equal terms despite ongoing inequalities of power. Secondly, there are many paths to identity that are being pursued by different Indigenous speakers around the country. For some living on traditional lands, cultural lifeways and affiliations remain strong and viable. For others, a commitment to native title claims and an activist politics of resistance remains a necessity. For still others, new possibilities exist in the in-between spaces of braided lives, hybridized cultures and indeterminate futures. Thirdly, there are many paths to healing. A national apology has not been forthcoming, but neither have Indigenous people remained trapped in the impasse. A healing process may have been initiated by national events like the Redfern Speech, the Mabo decision, and the *Bringing them Home* report, all of which called forth a national ethics of recognition that continues to evolve through autonomous conversations and events within Indigenous communities across the land. The narratives under review, in many different but equally compelling ways, bring to voice new subjectivities—transformed from victimhood, suffering and shame, to agency, self-assertion, critical awareness and pride. Evidence of newly self-constituted subjectivities in a national arena are visible in the texts: in the overt politics of collaboration and negotiation of textual spaces in relation to the production of the texts; the emergence of new voices telling truth to power in the language of human rights; and the positioning of narrators in relation to the macro-histories of unequal power relations around the world. These texts mark a departure from the past, from mainly white-controlled monologues to mutually-constituted dialogues between Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants in the production of stories. They enable new conversations in productive textual spaces of reconciliation otherwise occluded by national politics of denial. They make possible for readers and writers, tellers and listeners alike, a new politics, not of identity, stasis and being, but of subjectivity, change and becoming that has the potential to radically alter perceptions for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous respondents.

Some final cautions: The preceding discussion makes reference to a select number of texts. It is only a small facet of a far more complex assemblage. It is not intended in any way to let the government off the hook for its recalcitrance. Political decision-making continues to impact negatively on the lives of the Stolen Generation/s and their families. The list of active issues that seem further than ever from adjudication is long—including native title claims, environmental and communal degradation, redress for past violations and, with the abolition of ATSIC, a voice for self-determination and culturally-appropriate national representation. Governments do make a difference.

Secondly, the recent narratives with their assertive modes of address were produced in relatively narrow, safe and privileged spaces of collaboration. Not everyone has or wants access to that privilege. And although these stories have been told, there are many others to tell and still others that can never be told: stories of

those who find the paths to recovery increasingly difficult, stories of those unable to trace their families, or having found them discover a cultural chasm that maintains the separation, and the silenced stories that protect the spaces of Indigenous difference. And it remains the case that stories continue to be chosen, shaped and censored by publishers. Even in relation to the narratives surveyed here, there is no gainsaying on how they will be received and interpreted, by whom and to what ends. Some, like Veronica Brady's *My Side of the Bridge*, bring about new contestations even within her own community. Nor can we know how the voices and narratives might circulate and be received beyond the borders of nation.

The HREOC Inquiry, while important in its own right, did not deliver significant human rights advances for those who testified. In fact, it offered hopes that were dashed, promised remedies for redress that were not forthcoming and opened up new wounds for survivors and their communities. It did, however, offer a new discursive threshold, to invoke Gillian Whitlock's provocative concept (Whitlock 144), that made possible multiple modes of moving forward towards greater freedoms and self-determination. New beginnings are possible; other forms of healing, in the absence of a national apology, are taking place. Most importantly, HREOC initiated an ethics of recognition enabling new forms of national involvement and personal and communal subjectivity for Indigenous Australians. That ethics, forged through human rights advocacy, has become enfolded into the cultures of Indigenous community-building and continue to unfold, unpredictably, within the contours of the nation.

ENDNOTES

- 1 The issues canvassed here will be presented in a chapter on the significance of Stolen Generation narratives in human rights campaigns in Australia in the book *Human Rights and Narrated Lives: The Ethics of Recognition* (Palgrave Macmillan, in press), co-authored with Sidonie Smith (U Mich.).
- 2 In several essays Dorothy Green makes reference to T.G. Strehlow's *Songs of Central Australia*. She comments that there readers can find "[t]he oldest of oral literature is that of our own Aborigines" arguing that "Strehlow shows how Aboriginal literature often anticipated philosophical or religious ideas which we regard as the property of younger European or Eastern civilizations" ("The Writer, the Reader and the Critics").
- 3 For a discussion of the limitations of the telling, listening and healing processes undertaken by the HREOC, see also Kennedy and Wilson 119–40.
- 4 It should be noted that the concept of shaming has different meanings for Aboriginal people and in Indigenous as opposed to white settler contexts.
- 5 Witnessing offers people who had been objectified through various rights-violating processes an opportunity to take up enabling subject positions

through which they might become agents of history and claim legitimate positions within the sociality. “Through the processes of bearing witness to oppression and subordination,” suggests Kelly Oliver in *Witnessing: Beyond Recognition*, “those othered can begin to repair damaged subjectivity by taking up a position as speaking subjects.” She continues, “the speaking subject is a subject by virtue of address-ability and response-ability” (7). The voices of those who testified were legitimated by processes of listening through which their voices were heard, their experiences acknowledged.

- 6 The commodification of Doris Pilkington Garimara’s life narrative contained in *Follow the Rabbit-Proof Fence* (1996) and made into an international box-office hit with director Phillip Noyce’s film *Rabbit-Proof Fence* is a case in point. For a discussion of the impact of commodification on audiences see Tony Hughes D’aeth (2002) and Emily Potter and Kay Schaffer (2004).
- 7 I would like to acknowledge the able research assistance of Jennifer Jones in this process.
- 8 This is not to say that none of these elements were present in pre-HREOC life narratives. Rather the new narratives combine many elements in ways that signal an important shift in narrative voice, collective identifications and modes of audience address.
- 9 Kelly Oliver makes a useful distinction relating to subject positions and subjectivity. “Subject positions,” she argues, “although mobile, are constituted in our social interactions and our positions within our culture and context. They are determined by history and circumstance” (17). Subject positions are political. They affect how it is that “selves come into existence in relation to other selves” and to “material and discursive structures” that “establish relations among selves and shape the coming into existence of selves in dramatically different and unequal ways” (17).
- 10 Grant was the first Indigenous newsreader then host of a current affairs program in Australia. His private life attracted widespread attention in the popular media when his marriage broke down after he fell in love with a white broadcaster, Tracey Holmes, whom he met when they both covered the Olympic games in Sydney. He is now located in Hong Kong where he works as a media journalist and presenter for CNN.



WORKS CITED

- Bayet-Charlton, Fabienne. *Finding Ullagundabi Island*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2002.
- Bennett, Jill, and Rosanne Kennedy. *World Memory: Personal Trajectories in Global Time*. London: Palgrave, 2003.
- Brodie, Veronica, and as told to Mary-Anne Gale. *My Side of the Bridge: The Life Story of Veronica Brodie*. Kent Town, SA: Wakefield P, 2002.

- Brewster, Anne. "The Poetics of Memory." Conference presentation. *Endless Horizons: Looking Inwards & Looking Outwards*. Association for the Study of Australian Literature Conference. Australian Catholic University, Brisbane. July 2003.
- Burgoyne, Iris. *The Mirning: We Are the Whales*. Broome, WA: Magabala, 2000.
- Camfoo, Tex and Nelly. *Love against the Law: The Autobiographies of Tex and Nelly Camfoo*. Ed. Gillian Cowlshaw. Canberra: Aboriginal Studies P, 2000.
- Chalarimeri, Ambrose Mungala. *The Man from the Sunrise Side*. Broome, WA: Magabala, 2001.
- Clunies-Ross, Bruce A. "Review of 'Nellie Melba, Ginger Meggs and Friends.'" *Australian Literary Studies* 11.1 (1983): 126–31.
- D'aeth, Tony Hughes. "Which Rabbit-Proof Fence? Empathy, Assimilation, Hollywood." *Australian Humanities Review* (September 2002). September 2003 <<http://www.lib.latrobe.edu.au/AHR/archive/Issue-September-2002/hughesdaeth.htm>>.
- Docker, John, Drusilla Modjeska and Susan Dermody. *Nellie Melba, Ginger Meggs, and Friends*. Melbourne: Kibble, 1982.
- Grant, Stan. *The Tears of Strangers: A Memoir*. Pymble: HarperCollins, 2002.
- Green, Dorothy. "Behind the Glittering Prizes." *Writer, Reader, Critic*. Ed. Dorothy Green. Leichhardt, NSW: Primavera, 1991. 177–90.
- . "The Writer, the Reader and the Critics in a Monoculture: The Colin Roderick Lectures 1985." *Foundation for Australian Literary Studies* 12 (1986).
- Greenfield, Cathy and Tom O'Regan. "K.S. Prichard: The Construction of a Literary Political Subject." *Local Consumption* 1 (1982): 93–113.
- Hegarty, Ruth. *Is That You Ruthie?* St Lucia: U of Queensland P, 1999.
- Holt, Albert. *Forcibly Removed*. Broome, WA: Magabala, 2001.
- Iseman, Kay. "Katharine Susannah Prichard: Of an End a New Beginning." *Arena* 54 (1979): 70–96.
- Kennedy, Rosanne and Jan Tikka Wilson. "Constructing Shared Histories: Stolen Generations Testimony, Narrative Therapy and Address." *World Memory: Personal Trajectories in Global Time*. Eds. Jill Bennett and Rosanne Kennedy. Houndsmills and New York: Palgrave, 2003. 119–40.
- La Capra, Dominic. *History and Memory after Auschwitz*. Ithaca and London: Cornell UP, 1998.
- Laub, Dori. "Bearing Witness, or the Vicissitudes of Listening *and* an Event without a Witness: Truth, Testimony and Survival." *Testimony: Crisis of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*. Ed. Soshana Felman and Dori Laub. New York: Routledge, 1992.
- Lennon, Jessie. *I'm the One That Know This Country!: The Story of Jessie Lennon and Cooper Pedy*. Canberra: Aboriginal Studies P, 2000.
- Mellor, Doreen, and Anna Haebich, eds. *Many Voices: Reflections on Experiences of Indigenous Child Separation*. Canberra: National Library of Australia, 2002.
- Morgan, Sally. *My Place*. Fremantle: Fremantle Arts Centre P, 1987.

- Nannup, Alice, with L. March, and S. Kinnane. *When the Pelican Laughed*. Fremantle: Fremantle Arts Centre P, 1992.
- Oliver, Kelly. *Witnessing: Beyond Recognition*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2001.
- Pierce, Peter. "Muddled Musings in Cultural History." *The Age*, 25 September 1982: 13.
- Potter, Emily and Kay Schaffer. "Rabbit-Proof Fence and the Commodification of Indigenous Experience." *Australian Humanities Review* 31–32 (2004) <<http://www.lib.latrobe.edu.au/AHR/>>.
- Power, Katrina. "Keynote Address." Paper presented at the AWSA (Australian Women's Studies Association) Conference, Adelaide 1998.
- Schaffer, Kay. "Legitimizing the Personal Voice: Shame and the Stolen Generation Testimony in Australia." *Resistance and Reconciliation: Writing in the Commonwealth*. Ed. Bruce Bennett, Susan Cowan, Jacqueline Lo, Satendra Nandan and Jennifer Webb. Canberra: ASAL (Association for the Study of Australian Literature) and UNSW-ADFA, 2003. 47–63.
- . "The Stolen Generation and Public Responsibility." *Antipodes: An American Journal of Australian Literary Studies* 16.2 (2002): 5–10.
- Throssell, Ric. "Letter to Kay Iseman, Acknowledgements, in Katharine Susannah Prichard: Of an End a New Beginning." *Nellie Melba, Ginger Meggs, and Friends*. Ed. John Docker, Drusilla Modjeska and Susan Dermody. Melbourne: Kibble, 1982. 124–61.
- Van Toorn, Penny. "Indigenous Australian Life Writing: Tactics and Transformations." *Telling Stories: Indigenous History and Memory in Australia and New Zealand*. Ed. Fiona McGowan. Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 2001. 1–20.
- Whitlock, Gillian. *The Intimate Empire: Reading Women's Autobiography*. London: Cassell, 2000.
- Wilson, Sir Ronald. *Bringing them Home: National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families*. Canberra: Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 1997.
- Wright, Edie. *Full Circle: From Mission to Community—a Family Story*. Fremantle, WA: Fremantle Arts Centre P, 2001.





Boundary Work: Australian Literary Studies in the Field of Knowledge Production

ROBERT DIXON, UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND

What I would insist upon is the importance of keeping in mind when doing a local or a national case study the wider frame of reference within which any case can be situated. [. . .] Nothing occurs in a vacuum. (Ian Tyrrell, “New Comparisons” 360)

[. . .] people, ideas, and institutions do not have clear national identities. Rather, people may translate and assemble pieces from different cultures. Instead of assuming that something was distinctively American, we might assume that elements of it began or ended somewhere else. We may discover that what people create between national centres provides a promising way to rethink many topics in American history. (David Thelen, “Of Audiences, Borderlands, and Comparisons” 3)

[. . .] the study of Australian history in the near future will be less a single focused entity than it has been, and more a form of scholarship that is diffused through various kinds of transnational histories. (Ann Curthoys 142)

Literary studies have changed. (Ross Harvey 127)

A friend of mine who is a well-known writer told me a few years ago that whenever he goes into a library anywhere in the world, the first thing he does is to go to the catalogue and type in his own name in order to see which of his books the

library holds and how they are organized in its collections. I pretended to be surprised by his confession while secretly wanting to admit that I sometimes do the same thing myself. It can be an interesting window on to the structure of the various disciplinary fields in the humanities and how our own work in Australian literary studies fits within them.

I've always thought of myself as a specialist in Australian literary studies but that is not always the way my work appears in library catalogues. My first book, *The Course of Empire*, is described by its library classification as being about eighteenth and nineteenth-century Australian history. It is actually catalogued in the Dewey system at 994. My second book, *Writing the Colonial Adventure*, is said to be about imperialism in English literature with a Dewey number of 823. My third book, *Prosthetic Gods*—in some ways the least literary of the three—came in closer to home with a Dewey number of A820, the number for Australian literature, and with the subject headings of Australian literature and Australian postcolonialism.

When I look at my own work through published bibliographies and electronic databases, something else happens: only about two thirds of what I have published appears there. What disappears, of course, are the chapters in books edited by professional historians or art historians, and the articles published in journals in fields like cultural studies, postcolonial studies and art history. Perhaps this means that I'm not, after all, a specialist in Australian literary studies. Or it could mean that doing Australian literary studies is a much broader activity than we sometimes think.

What this does suggest, in fact, is that as a disciplinary field, Australian literary studies is neither pure nor autonomous: it exists in relation to a series of distinct though overlapping domains that together make up the total field of knowledge production in the humanities. What I want to reflect on in this paper is the current place of Australian literary studies within that broader field. I'm prompted to do this for two reasons, both historical. On the one hand, and especially since the end of the 1990s, I think we've begun to see Australian literary studies in historical perspective, as a discipline whose origins lie in a period that in certain respects we no longer feel to be contemporary. This has to do, among other things, with our changing attitudes to issues of nation, race and gender. On the other hand, many commentators are now saying that for the last ten years or so we have been living through a major reconfiguration in the broader field of knowledge production, pre-eminently in the sciences and technology, but also in the humanities and social sciences. These two historical trends—our sense of the historical boundedness of Australian literary studies, and of the contemporary dynamism of the field of knowledge production in which it sits—prompt a number of questions. What is the place of Australian literary studies within the changing field of knowledge production? Is it—or should it be—moving forward in the

same direction as these broader changes? If so, what are the apparent trends in the field of knowledge production to whose logic Australian literary studies might now be exposed? And what might this mean for Australian literary studies' relation to its own past, to the various scholarly projects that we have undertaken and many of which we are still engaged upon? Does Australian literary studies as we have known it stand to lose or gain by being subject to the new logic of the field of knowledge production? And anyway, do we have a choice?

THE CONTEMPORARY FIELD OF KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION

In using this term “the field of knowledge production” I’m alluding to work done over the last ten years in the discipline of social epistemology or, as it is sometimes called, knowledge studies. Simply put, it refers to the relationship between all of the elements, including institutions, disciplines, policies and practices, that make up the structured and structuring field in which knowledge is both conserved and generated. Whether we like it or not—and I’m not entirely sure that I do—this is increasingly the discourse that is coming to structure the field of the possible in research in both the sciences and humanities in Australia. It now pervades the documents and policy statements not only of the Federal Government, but also of our most important research management institution, the Australian Research Council (ARC). One of the key questions we’ll need to explore is how the older language of Australian literary studies, and the kinds of institutions and research projects it has bequeathed to us, might be made to speak to this new language of pro-active research management. I believe that it can, in ways that can take advantage of the enormously stimulating ideas that are currently being proposed, though the translation will not necessarily be easy.

By general consensus, the book that initiated the present debate in knowledge studies is *The New Production of Knowledge: The Dynamics of Science and Research in Contemporary Societies*. Written by an international team led by Michael Gibbons, it was published in 1994 and has since been very widely cited in the literature on research management, not only in Britain and the United States, but also in Australia. Gibbons draws much of his evidence from the sciences, and his chapter on the humanities is perhaps the least convincing in his book. Yet he and his colleagues believe that the trends they describe amount to nothing less than a paradigm shift across the entire field of knowledge production.

Perhaps the most influential aspect of Gibbons’ book has been its terminology, which has been widely taken up in the literature. He argues that the traditional form of knowledge production, which he calls Mode 1, is progressively being replaced by a new form, which he calls Mode 2. Whatever reservations we might have about Gibbons’ argument, these terms are actually quite useful for descrip-

tive purposes. Mode 1 is largely the system we know, although it is increasingly, according to Gibbons, a residual formation. It is academic and discipline-based, prefers pure to applied research, and its institutional forms tend to be hierarchical, centered and relatively stable over time. In Mode 1, “individual creativity is emphasized as the driving force of development and quality control operating through disciplinary structures organized to identify and enhance it”; knowledge is “accumulated through the professionalization of specialization largely institutionalized in universities” (9).

Mode 2 is the emergent form of knowledge production and its features are the opposite of of Mode 1. In Mode 2, the universities and the disciplines no longer set the agenda for innovative research: knowledge production is now dispersed outside the academy in broader social contexts; people other than academics take part in it and judge its outcomes; it tends to be applied rather than pure, driven by a series of individual contexts of application; it is inter- or transdisciplinary; it is heterogeneous in its forms of organization and these tend to be transient and dynamic rather than enduring.

Central to Gibbons’ argument is that transdisciplinarity is “the privileged form of knowledge production in Mode 2.” New knowledge emerges not from the core of disciplines, but in the “interstices” between them, the pressure of innovation causing their boundaries to become increasingly “fuzzy” (147). This unsettles not only the authority of disciplines, but also the explanatory power of discipline-specific theories and bodies of knowledge. Gibbons, then, is at once postmodern and post-theoretical, seeing disciplines and the master theories they have built up as outmoded—barriers, in fact, to new knowledge. What comes first is the project and it is that which determines both theory and practice, neither of which can necessarily be carried across whole to the next project, which will generate its own new theory and practice: “Its theoretical-methodological core [. . .] is [. . .] locally driven and locally constituted” (29–30).

In its demand for personnel, too, this new field is highly dynamic, each new problem requiring its own particular cluster of researchers from across the disciplines, no one of which sets the theoretical agenda. Such a field is not best served by enduring institutional arrangements, including discipline-based departments, professional bodies and learned academies. Rather, networks of researchers will form and reform in ever-changing contexts of application. This challenges not only what have been the key institutional sites of disciplinarity in departments and professional bodies, but also what has been, in the humanities at least, an ideal of excellence: the individual researcher writing a monograph. In Mode 2, then, a research career is at once more social and more entrepreneurial, demanding participation in multiple networks and serial collaborations. More important than the monograph will be the symposium on a “hot topic,” bringing together researchers from various knowledge domains, and perhaps resulting in a series of

reports or collaborative publications in more than one medium and with more than one type of audience. The members of a network will soon migrate to different problems, reconfiguring into new networks with other personnel. A discipline, a professional body or a learned academy may be too stable, too inflexible to contribute to this kind of research unless it can become a broker in mobility, or learn itself to network with other institutions.

In reflecting on the kinds of institutional reconfigurations required for Mode 2, Gibbons recognizes that individuals and institutions tend toward inertia. Despite the growing “fuzziness” at their edges, “disciplinary structures are long-term and relatively stable” (149). This inertia is also present in the habitus of our profession. The careers of Mode 1 researchers are often “embedded” in national systems and disciplinary identities (40). For these reasons, Gibbons advocates that governments and research management bodies be pro-active in stimulating Mode 2 characteristics, including the development of dynamic networks, transdisciplinarity and mobility beyond national boundaries. “National institutions,” he argues, “need to be de-centered—to be made more permeable—and governments through their policies can promote change in this direction.” If necessary, governments should “punch holes” in the very institutions they have previously supported (15).

A second influential writer on knowledge studies is the American scholar Julie Thompson Klein. She is the author of two frequently cited books: *Interdisciplinarity: History, Theory, and Practice* (1990), and *Crossing Boundaries: Knowledge, Disciplinarity and Interdisciplinarity* (1996). Although much of what Klein has to say is based on the American academy and on the sciences, her second book, *Crossing Boundaries*, draws extensively upon work in the humanities, includes a major case study on the interdisciplinary history of literary studies, and also refers to a number of Australian examples. Her methodology is wide ranging, including interviews, surveys, ethnography, citation analysis, archival research and bibliometric analysis. I want to look briefly at Klein’s work because, like Gibbons, she offers some extremely useful terms.

The organizing concept of *Crossing Boundaries* is “boundary work.” This is a term that emerged in studies of scientific disciplines in the 1980s and 1990s. It refers to “the composite set of claims, activities and institutional structures that define and protect knowledge practices” (1). Klein’s innovation on previous studies is that she views boundary work positively as well as negatively. That is, instead of emphasizing only the processes of boundary policing, which treat boundary crossing as an anomaly, Klein argues that “the interactions and reorganizations that boundary crossing creates are as central to the production and organization of knowledge as boundary formation and maintenance” (2). The institutional expression of this trend is an historic shift from what she calls the surface to the shadow structures within and between our institutions. Surface structures include the relatively stable organiza-

tional units like discipline-based departments, faculties, learned academies and professional bodies—these are Gibbons' Mode 1 institutions. Klein's argument is that at present new knowledge is most often produced by boundary crossing in the form of interdisciplinary and cross-cultural research, and that this tends to be located in the shadow structures—the dynamic, informal networks and collaborations that form beneath and across the surface structures. These networks are Gibbons' Mode 2 institutions. They form what systems theory calls a messy or complex system rather than a neat or simple one (21).

One of the reasons Klein uses interviews, citation analysis and other empirical techniques to map the complex system of Mode 2 is because activities in the shadow structures are not always visible to Mode 1 institutions. This is why some of our own publications in fields like cultural studies, cultural history or feminist studies do not show up in Australian literature bibliographies. Klein makes the point that we need to distinguish between the surface organizational structures of academic life and what we actually do as researchers. Interviews and citation analysis show that in practice “individual faculty members embody [. . .] the complexity of the system” (21). Although we tend to think of disciplinarity in terms of stable boundaries, Klein's evidence suggests that the opposite is true: that “boundaries are [. . .] also permeable membranes” (38). It is in the very nature of humanities disciplines, she argues, that their boundaries are open, their cognitive border zones ragged and ill-defined. Discipline is not a “neat” category: “on closer inspection, disciplines are actually fissured sites comprising multiple strata and influenced by other disciplines” (55). One symptom of this permeability is cross-disciplinary citation, which quantitative analysis reveals to be the rule rather than the exception in the humanities. For example, articles in the two or three most recent issues of *Australian Literary Studies* draw frequently for their key concepts on cultural studies, women's studies and several kinds of history, including urban history, the history of public memory, and the new imperial history. Equally, historians make direct, even foundational contributions to Australian literary studies. I'm thinking, for example, of the work of Richard White and Ros Pressman on travel writing, Martyn Lyons on the history of reading, Richard Nile and David Walker on the history of publishing, Tom Griffiths on nature writing, Hsu-Ming Teo on romance fiction, and feminist historians such as Jill Roe, Kate Darian-Smith, Angela Woollacott and Fiona Paisley on Australian women writers.

A second symptom of boundary permeation is “speciality migration,” which is closely tied to innovation (42). Here is one of Klein's examples: “A member of a French department who was educated in traditional models of reading literary texts may migrate to a new specialism such as interpretive theory or contribute to an established hybrid field such as women's studies or move on to a new hybrid field such as cultural studies” (43). We might think here of Meaghan Morris and Stephen Muecke, both trained in French, who played a pivotal role in introduc-

ing poststructuralism into the humanities in Australia in the 1980s, and have gone on to make major contributions to Australian literary studies, cultural studies and cinema studies. We might think of Paul Eggert, a speciality migrant from the field of scholarly editing, not originally an Australianist, who is now General Editor of the Australian Academy of the Humanities series. French cultural historian Martyn Lyons is General Editor of the History of the Book in Australia Project. And Graeme Turner's frequent observations on Australian literary studies, such as his 1998 keynote address on "Australian Literature and the Public Sphere," are illuminating precisely because of his cross-disciplinary borrowing from the field of cultural studies.

At the conclusion of her book, Klein distances herself from an earlier, utopian form of interdisciplinarity that had sought the collapse of boundaries in the quest for a unified knowledge. In contrast to Gibbons, her preference is for a field in which boundaries are not dissolved, but maintained and at the same time constantly transgressed. Understanding the boundary better, she argues, is likely to produce more informed collaboration, not a wide-scale breakdown of boundaries (74). The term "boundary work" as Klein uses it, then, does not simply mean either the policing of disciplinary boundaries or their collapse, but is meant positively to embrace the sum-total of all boundary work, including boundary crossings, especially between disciplinary neighbours. Drawing on the lessons of interdisciplinary women's studies, Klein advocates what she calls the "professional paradox of being 'both in the disciplines and in opposition to them'"; "scholars [. . .] work with the grain and against it, operating both inside and outside [their] discipline" (119).

THE AUSTRALIAN RESEARCH COUNCIL: INTERDISCIPLINARITY AND RESEARCH NETWORKS

Anyone even passingly familiar with the literature on research management will already have recognized that these ideas from the field of knowledge studies have begun to have a powerful impact in the Australian academy. In this section I want to look briefly at the way these ideas have shaped the rhetoric and research policy of the ARC, since this is the institution that has the most direct role in determining the environment in which we conduct research in Australian literary studies. If we were to sum up the ARC's situation simply, it would be this: that it is, in Gibbons' handy terms, a classic Mode 1 institution rapidly transforming itself by fostering Mode 2 practices, many of which are already present in the shadow structures of our institutions. And two of the definitive Mode 2 issues that have been taken up in recent ARC position papers are inter- or transdisciplinarity and research networks.

The ARC recognizes that the evidence in knowledge studies suggests that advances in both pure and applied research now take place through interdisciplinarity. Yet its own internal administrative structure and assessment processes are still discipline-based. In 1997, it therefore commissioned a review of how it deals with cross-disciplinary applications. The result was the 1999 discussion paper, *Cross-Disciplinary Research*. The paper begins by outlining the standard definitions of interdisciplinarity and surveying the standard texts in the field. These include the 1972 and 1998 OECD reports on *Interdisciplinarity*, and the work of Michael Gibbons and Julie Thompson Klein. While acknowledging that there are some differences of definition, the ARC basically accepts postmodern accounts of knowledge production which identify the “disintegration of knowledge” as a key driver of research. This is manifest in the genesis of hybrid disciplines, new research paradigms, new cross-disciplinary fields arising from particular problems and applications, and from the diffusion of research methodologies and techniques (5). While different disciplines are differently implicated in these activities, citation analysis suggests that they are endemic, with some disciplines being especially permeable to outside influence. Significantly, the ARC regards some fields, including literary studies, history, anthropology and geography, as “intrinsically cross-disciplinary” (6). While it accepts the view that interdisciplinarity drives new knowledge, it does retain one important qualification derived from the 1998 OECD report; namely, that “the researcher who conducts inter-disciplinary research should be ‘an excellent specialist of a discipline’”; again, “highly competent proficiency in a single discipline is the only acceptable basis for inter-disciplinary success” (xii). This puts the ARC paper closer to Klein, who argues for both the retention and crossing of boundaries, than to Gibbons, who implicitly favours their dissolution. While stressing the importance of collaborative networks, the ARC also continues to acknowledge the role of individual researchers. The “defining core” of inter-disciplinarity lies in the process of confrontation between different knowledge paradigms. This confrontation, the ARC insists, “may take place in the mind of an individual researcher” as well as between practitioners in collaborative research” (8–9).

Implicit in the ARC documents is also an understanding that interdisciplinarity means something different in the sciences and the humanities. In the sciences, it does not necessarily mean “punching holes” in disciplines, but collaborating with other disciplines on a project that is not amenable to a single approach. The problems of the Murray-Darling river system, for example, will involve teams of scientists from several disciplines. In the humanities, by contrast, new research actually does punch holes in the disciplines, though it is often the individual researcher who performs the migration. What this means is that the Gibbons model is perhaps more strongly biased toward the sciences, and that Klein’s account is more responsive to the fact that the field of knowledge production is not homogeneous, and that

any predictions of trends should acknowledge these differences across the field.

A survey of currently funded ARC Discovery Projects confirms that the overwhelming majority in the field of Australian literary studies are indeed interdisciplinary, at least in Klein's sense, and even when mainly literary involve some form of comparative, cross-cultural research. Let me cite some figures that convey the extent of boundary work taking place in these projects. I've gone through the grants commencing in 2002 and 2003 respectively, marking them according to four criteria: whether they identify as being about Australian literature; as having an interdisciplinary method; as having a cross-cultural, international or imperial context; or as being purely literary. In the year commencing 2002 there were 719 grants, of which 13 were in Literature Studies. Of those 13, 4 dealt with Australian literature, 9 involved some form of interdisciplinarity, 5 involved some form of cross-cultural comparison and only one was purely literary. Looking just at those in Australian literature, 3 of the 4 were explicitly interdisciplinary and cross-cultural. In the year commencing 2003 there were 921 grants, of which 16 were in Literature Studies. Of those 16, 5 dealt with Australian literature, 11 involved some form of interdisciplinarity, 7 involved some form of cross-cultural comparison, while only 4 were purely literary. Looking again just at those in Australian literature, in 2003, 5 out of 5 involved some kind of interdisciplinary research or cross-cultural comparison. If anything these figures understate the extent of boundary work, since several grants involving substantial literary research are actually listed under categories other than Literature Studies, such as Historical and Cultural Studies.

What these statistics mean is that while we continue to work inside the surface structure of Australian literary studies bequeathed to us by the period of cultural nationalism, the discipline is increasingly being driven by and, at the same time, dispersed into, other, neighbouring forms of scholarship. Although I haven't the space here to characterize individual projects in detail, the chief investigators of currently funded projects involving some form of boundary work are Mary Besemeres, Patrick Buckridge, Ken Gelder, Robert Dixon, Lucy Frost, Helen Gilbert, Ian Henderson, Andrew McCann, Wenche Ommundsen, Kay Schaffer, Meg Tasker, Hsu-Ming Teo, Elizabeth Webby and Gillian Whitlock. These projects are innovative because they involve boundary work across the three major axes that transect the discipline of Australian literary studies as it developed during the cultural nationalist period: that is, they go beyond the national paradigm, placing Australian literary culture in national-comparative, transnational, imperial or global contexts; they go beyond the literary by drawing upon the discourses and in many cases the methodologies of neighbouring disciplines, including history, cultural studies, art history, politics, ethics and anthropology. And some go beyond the academy, involving collaboration with non-academic personnel. My own project on Frank Hurley, for example, requires intensive collaboration with staff at the Mitchell

and National Libraries responsible for the digitization of the Hurley diaries. At a later stage I will work with library exhibition staff on a multi-media exhibition of Hurley's photography, cinematography and writing which will, in turn, generate navigational pathways through a planned internet site.

In its most recent discussion paper, the 2003 *ARC Research Networks*, the ARC has again drawn on the work of Michael Gibbons and Julie Thompson Klein. The paper explains that the ARC has identified a "structural gap" in its National Competitive Grants Program above the level of Discovery and Linkage Grants, but below the level of research centres: this is the level of "network formation." In Gibbons' phrase, the ARC has decided to "punch holes" in existing institutional arrangements which are embedded in national and disciplinary paradigms, and encourage the development of Mode 2 forms and practices. The proposed selection criteria are strongly biased toward Mode 2 values. The new ARC research networks will cut across existing institutions, encourage the dispersal of knowledge production beyond universities, privilege interdisciplinarity, and focus on research problems with an emphasis on application rather than *a priori* theories. They will "assist groups of researchers to coordinate and communicate their research activities across disciplinary, organizational, institutional and geographical boundaries" (2). It is not a question of either Mode 1 or Mode 2, but of both; of what Klein calls the "professional paradox" of being both inside the discipline and outside it; of being an individual researcher in a network. As I understand it, however, the ARC's intention is that these networks will not simply pool together Mode 1 practices and institutions: they must also generate new knowledge. In other words, they will be required to produce something greater than the sum of their parts.

The scale of these networks will not be easy for researchers in Australian literary studies to achieve. As it stands, the proposal is that networks will be funded at up to \$500,000 per annum for up to 5 years. Approximately 15 networks will be funded at this level. The ARC believes that "the level of research activity embraced within a Network generally will correspond to at least 25 projects currently funded under the ARC's Discovery Project and Linkage Project programs" (10). I believe that the ARC has erred here, basing the projected scale of networks too much on the science and technology examples that dominate knowledge studies. At this rate, only one or perhaps two projects in the humanities may succeed. In reality, we might expect numerous networks to emerge in fields such as cultural studies, history, Australian studies, postcolonial studies, feminist studies and, of course, Australian literary studies. It may be that the ARC will have to modify its scale for the humanities. Rather than forcing several projects together to form one or two large aggregations, as is currently proposed, it may find that aggregations in the humanities reach their optimal level well below the projected equivalent of 25 grants, and that it is more appropriate to support several networks in the humanities, though on a reduced scale.