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Significant Shadows

Ethics and Affect in Australian Cross-Cultural Research

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Abstract

In current Australian cross-cultural scholarship, difference remains a problematic theme. Tensions between the recognition of universal features that all people share, and the acknowledgment of incommensurable differences between cultures, are unresolved. This thesis provides a snapshot of the various ways in which these tensions are being negotiated in ethical, affective work across the disciplines of history, anthropology, cultural studies, literary studies and performance. All of the work discussed enters into intersubjective scholarship, and offers various models that raise the ethical dimension of engaging with cultural difference. Rather than a genealogy of theoretical movements, this thesis is a partial exploration of the ethical and historiographical questions being raised.

The disciplines of history and anthropology have been premised on the notions that the past and culture are explicable through reason. Yet it is argued that if we take cultural difference seriously, all experience cannot be interpreted within the logic of cause and consequence. How pasts that are resistant to rationality – and hence, historicism – can be represented, is explored in this thesis largely through two models of conceptualising cultural difference.

One emphasises difference through the use of juxtaposition and the placement of texts in parallel. This model respects difference, whilst also suggesting similarities without being prescriptive. This is evident in work on incommensurable pasts by Klaus Neumann, and on unrepresentable cultural differences by Stephen Muecke.

Another model focuses on commonality, rather than difference, through attention to lived experience. The later work of Peter Read, for instance, prioritises the subjective experience of loss, suggesting that it undercuts difference. Through this focus his work turns towards autobiography.

However, I argue that this kind of focus raises, but does not address, the impact of the subjective in research on cultural difference. In this thesis, the ethical possibilities and constraints of cross-cultural research are articulated with reference to the work of Gail Jones. In Jones' model, knowledge is partial, which makes it imperative that the singularity of the other be recognised –

yet that recognition is inextricable from the self's projections and desires. From this perspective, cross-cultural scholarship is inevitably compromised.

Juxtaposing one's own historicisable, lived experiences may offer a model for opening out towards others'. I explore this possibility through the work of a non-professional historian, William Yang. The multiplicity of ways of being in the world discomforts theoretical certainty, and, I argue, this defines the current situation in cross-cultural scholarship.

Declaration

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text.

I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University Library, being available for loan and photocopying.

Robyn Tucker
2 December 2003

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Our pasts suffuse our presents in this transformed, translated, interpreted, encapsulated way.

(Dening, *The Death of William Gooch* 13)

In memoriam

Fiona Kay Stockel

1980 – 2003

1 INTRODUCTION

Cultural difference is a charged topic in Australia's past and present. Accounts of the relations between the indigenous populations and people who arrived from 'elsewhere' (and amongst these later arrivals) have recorded specific instances of tensions between people, tensions involving places and distinct practices and meanings. The terrain of these histories can be referred to as that of the 'contact zone', which Mary Louise Pratt has described as the 'social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other' (4). At stake in this space is the very question of what it is '*to be readable*' (original emphasis; Pratt 4). To what extent can cultural difference be understood? And how much can be known of the past from its traces in the present?

Debates about Australia's past, and how that past is known, inform current historical research. Understandings of cultural differences and their consequences are being discussed through the question of the adequacy of historicist accounts of this past. This thesis explores the turn to affective, intersubjective writing on contact zones in an Australian context. For each of the writers on whom I will focus, the ethical dimension of negotiating the past and the other is a central concern. In this introductory section I will outline the critical lineage which backgrounds this turn, arguing that it is informed by humanistic, rationally-based concerns but yet aims to recognise the significance of differences between people. I will situate the recognition of the value of difference as occurring within an intersubjective approach, before introducing affect as the site at which humanism's limits are exposed, and alternative possibilities enabled. Affect will be explored as it is being studied in the humanities, and I will consider work from trauma studies to highlight the limits and possibilities of working with affect, before briefly sketching the direction of the thesis.

In recent critical work in the humanities and social sciences, there has been a renewed critical interest in humanism.[1] Humanism here is understood as an orientation towards stressing the worth of human beings that developed within European philosophy and science. Its belief in an essentialised, universal human nature found its 'proper fulfilment' as part of an Enlightenment

[1] I.e. see Gregg (2002) and Simon (2003).

narrative 'that challenged an oppressive feudal order and reenvisioned "man" as rational, autonomous, unique, and free' (Gandhi 28; Simon 4).

The logic that underpins rationalism is typified in René Descartes' statement *cogito ergo sum* (I think therefore I am). It works on the principle that abstraction leads to the concrete: to think analytically constructs, or makes actual, one's existence. Abstract representation here *creates* space; that which is generalisable is meaningful.[2] Likewise, the universal, conceptual features of human nature create the individual citizen. Humanism is 'revealed in the common language of rationality' (Gandhi 27). It is the quality of rationality that grants a right and legitimacy to the individual.

According to this approach, the abstract can be moved and employed anywhere; the actual – place, for instance, or embodied experience – has less significance than the theoretical. There is a disconnection from what is concrete and particular, and little room for any meaningful role these features might have. It also presumes that there is a homogeneity to 'mankind': all individuals can be understood in terms of the common, secular language of rationality.

In this context, 'difference' is a loaded term. That which is different is that which is not generalisable and not explicable according to the rational. Difference is posited as a category of polarised views of knowing. What – or who – is different is consequently considered irrelevant, aberrant or classed as irrational: even 'backwards' and superstitious.

The 'return' to humanism that is apparent in recent criticism occurs after a movement away from humanism. Humanism has been critiqued from a variety of theoretical perspectives, each intent in a specific way on '[u]nmasking the coercive interest of one or another form of universalism' (Lezra 75). Humanism's exclusive focus on theoretical human attributes as separate from and dominating the 'natural' environments in which people live has the corollary of ignoring the material situations within which lives are led. Work bringing attention to the significance of embodied experience has critiqued the rational tendency to generalise specific features as universal. The abstract characteristic of rationality is itself historical, it is argued, and discursively constructed.

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[2] This is opposed to Michel de Certeau's argument that lived experience creates space. See *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Trans. Steven Rendall. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984.

Humanism's appeal to the universal appears to mask an 'imperial subordination of particular identities and interests to a regulative image' (Lezra 75). From post-structuralist attention to the 'challenges of otherness and difference', the 'self' humanism valorises can be read as being raced, classed and gendered (Gandhi 27). The subject that it includes – and excludes – is constructed. Moreover, humanism's focus on general aspects refuses the particularity of the concrete, reducing all to the same.

However, lived experience suggests that there may be incommensurable ways of being in the world that have a significance that abstraction fails to admit. People are unwilling to live anywhere in the world, for instance, but have attachments to specific places. Likewise, people do not always form relationships for rational reasons. Difference matters: '[y]ou are not another, but a you: a face that I see' (Ramadanovic 62).

Attending to difference opens up the 'politics' of who can speak (Alcoff 97); a variety of 'other' people need to be included in any viable concept of humanism. As Leela Gandhi points out, these concerns with difference are connected with postcolonial issues (27). The emergence of postcoloniality as a strong interdisciplinary direction has expanded these challenges towards giving a 'force and a usefulness' to difference (Muecke, *No Road* 182).

'Postcolonial studies' is invoked here as 'a descriptive not an evaluative term', to refer to analyses of the on-going legacies of colonial encounters (Hulme 120). Key to this approach is an engaged critique of colonial ideologies and structures – in particular, of colonial definitions of the citizen. In postcolonial criticism it is argued that colonialism constructs as its 'other' that which it deems irrational, and that the irrational is not inherently unintelligible because rationality and irrationality are not absolute or 'natural' categories. Instead, these classes – and how they have been valued – are culturally and historically specific. Postcoloniality extends the poststructuralist attention to difference, to acknowledge colonialism's actual effects, such as:

> violence, state and capital formation, cultural incommensurability, the development of disciplines of subjection on the one side and resistance to negotiation and contact on the other; and even colonised indifference to (or, indeed, intermittent co-operation with) western settlement. (During 32)

Postcolonial work aims to unfold the construction of people as 'irrational others', and in addition to work towards an ethical and political recognition of cultural difference. It seeks to valorise cultural difference in order to assert a plurality in ways of knowing and being in the world. As a result, postcolonial studies is partly orientated towards the past: exploring its relics to recover the effects the historic and culturally specific definitions of 'self' and 'other' have had, and seeking out other stories about the past that do not remain within the logic of such categories. This involves working with post-structuralist theories of history, 'insisting that there is no single history but a "multiplicity of histories"' (Loomba 13).

Such an approach raises questions of historicism. Historicism, notes Dipesh Chakrabarty, with its belief in general laws of historical development, 'has been a very close ally' of rationalism (*Provincializing Europe* 237). If how rationality has been imagined is contextually specific and constructed, then understandings of the past that are based on a historicist model need to be reconsidered. This thesis is specifically concerned with how this issue is highlighted in disciplinary engagements with contact zones. If the authorised stories about the past and the other that have been told have been from within such constructions, can we conceptualise – and realise – alternative histories of difference? Can history itself, 'the rational-secular discipline, understand and represent' something that is different from its own intellectual context (Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe* 237)?

A tension emerges here between two different models of history. The first model is developmental (in which the individual transcends the particular through her/his possession of universal characteristics). The second is concerned with identity-politics (according to which particularities are acquired and performed, diversity is meaningful and identity specific [Chakrabarty, 'Reconciliation and its Historiography' 11]). Valuing difference, postcoloniality leans towards the latter, where speaking positions matter and are 'acquired and performed in contexts in which unities are seen as always contingent and shifting' (Chakrabarty, 'Reconciliation and its Historiography' 12). Postcolonial work is not based on the concept of progress; 'Diversity is not a developmental paradigm' (ibid). Yet what are the consequences of its position? If ethical and political attitudes depend on some kind of consensus, does attention to incommensurable differences make invalid a shared belief in a common value – justice, for instance?

When agreement occurs between different cultures, it is less from debate on equal terms and more from the forces of differing, inequitable investments. Even what is considered at all possible is 'already structured...in favour of certain outcomes' (Chakrabarty, 'Radical Histories' 757). The prioritising of rationality, Chakrabarty suggests, is an example: 'our systems of knowledge tend toward an a priori valorization of "reason"' (*Provincializing Europe* 236). If 'to know' is dependent on reason, we are back in the exclusionary logic of humanism. Is it possible to give difference value outside of this perspective?

The return to humanism has occurred with a perception that the value of human beings has been neglected in the face of technological and economic models of life. Whilst critics are 'skeptical and concerned' with humanism's premises, a radical post-humanism does not appear to be a feasible option because politically its focus on human lives remains necessary: 'we are not unaware of the importance of these human(ist) remains' (Simon 4). Yet humanism is now entangled with a desire to recognise the significance of difference, rather than a stress on some universal, 'regulative image' of humanity (Lezra 75). Can these two differing impulses be productively reconciled?

One possibility is to relocate the humanistic attention on people towards relations between peoples and their various environments. Homi Bhabha, for example, writes that: '[t]he place of differences and otherness, or the space of adversarial...is never entirely on the outside or implacably oppositional. It is a pressure, and a presence': cultural differences are located as always existing in relations between people and cultures; without human life they have no force (*The Location of Culture* 109). Moreover, that which is perceived as different is partly defining of the self: it is not its definition, but it highlights the boundaries of the 'same'. Differences are only evident when there is something *else* to make a comparison with: '[t]here is no vantage *outside*', Edward Said stresses. 'When we consider the connections between...we are so to speak *of* the connections, not outside and beyond them' (original emphasis; 'Representing the Colonized' 216-217). Without deflating the significance of differences, Said highlights that they only exist when in relation to something else. Difference exists between people, for instance, but need not be conceptualised as making them alien to one another, for it also throws into relief a certain community. This is a point of tension: a reminder that there is always 'this sense of strange smoke seen on the horizon, of one's own world always implicating the world of others' (Jackson, *Minima Ethnographica* 2). This is emphasised in Sara Ahmed's conceptualisation of an

ethics that is 'attentive to difference, otherness as well as the connected, relational nature of the subject' (*Differences That Matter* 52). Stephen Muecke terms this a 'neo-humanism' ('The Archaeology of Feeling' 5).

This thesis is focused on work which has been published and performed in Australia that can be considered in the context of such concerns. This field of work draws upon the humanist tradition by considering the inter-connections between lived experience, the political and the ethical. It does not, however, consider them in terms of an abstract reasoning: 'knowledge' is understood as 'lived and moved in a realm of human feeling', and ideas are seen as 'firmly rooted in human culture – shaped by and shaping a particular historical moment' (Morris 181). This approach does not reify humanism's prioritisation of the human species or its exclusionary definition of the human subject. In contrast, there is a tendency to embrace the variety of the 'energised articulations' people make with their particular environments: a 'feeling, thinking body codes humanity via multiple modalities and technologies, rituals and practices', Muecke writes ('The Archaeology of Feeling' 5). 'Culture' and 'nature' are no longer oppositional, hierarchically-valued terms but forces that are constantly being negotiated. The 'self' is recognised as a subject, historically and culturally situated.

The occasion for the work that I discuss is history: histories revealed in the past's traces, stories that circulate about them, and 'also the *feelings* of those who suffered in those times' (original emphasis; Muecke, 'The Archaeology of Feeling' 1). In the work I explore, people of different cultures and times are approached as affective bodies and subjectivities, both separate objects and experiencing subjects. This extends to the subject who writes. Such an enfolded understanding is referred to as 'intersubjectivity', and it often generates a reflexivity in the text.

An intersubjective approach works from the recognition that there is no accessible outside position from which to 'know': what is known is always known from an engagement of a particular context towards another. As a consequence, the 'other' that the 'self' perceives subjectively as an object also experiences the 'self' subjectively as an object. In an influential articulation and consideration of the term, Emmanuel Levinas describes intersubjectivity as the reflexive meeting of the subject and object. He illustrates this with reference to Maurice Merleau-Ponty's description of a handshake: when the two hands clasp each other, the experience of touching is at once reflected in the experience of being touched: intersubjectivity is this

'community', focused on the '*interplay* of subject and object' (Levinas 101; original emphasis; Jackson, *Minima Ethnographica* 6). They exist in and are shaped by their relation to each other.

Using intersubjectivity as an approach for knowledge is to draw upon it as a certain 'sensibility' (Levinas 101). This means that rather than focusing on a singular instance, it is a mode of thinking and feeling: the 'ongoing reciprocal movement in consciousness between a sense of being a subject for oneself and being an object for others' (Jackson, *Minima Ethnographica* 77). This shifts attention from the instance as if it were 'spontaneous', to occurrences within situations of influential and meaningful relations (Jackson, *Minima Ethnographica* 7). Portraying an instance in isolation is 'interventional': it gives a specific shape to something less formally structured, 'arrested moments artificially isolated from the flux of "interindividual" life' (Jackson, *Minima Ethnographica* 6). Focusing on the subject as an autonomous individual is to perceive her or him 'caught, stuffed into a role, like a statue' (Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse* 4). In contrast, an intersubjective account draws upon the relations between the self and others, working with the complexity of 'the body and not just the figure' (Kruger and Mariani xi).

However, if 'the whole and its parts are conceived as interdependent', pressure is placed on the singularity of the other (Jackson, *Minima Ethnographica* 4). Steven Gans describes the ethical as being the recognition of the other's singularity: '[t]o allow the Other to be means to let someone speak independently, apart from any other aim we have in regard to that person. We cannot place the Other in our own light, and incorporate the Other into our own story' (Gans qtd. in Kerr, 'Sympathetic Topographies' 109). The ethical imperative is to realise difference. Yet if we focus on the relations between subjects, and the singular is considered as 'simultaneously part of a commonalty', how is this to be achieved (Jackson, *Minima Ethnographica* 6)? Is it possible to maintain the tension of multiple singulars, and of differences that matter?

Rather than uniformity, intersubjectivity involves proximity to different others. Levinas cautions, for instance, that the term 'community' does not efface 'radical separation' (Levinas 102). Or, to put it differently, '"[n]eighbourliness is not sweet"' (Jackson, *Minima Ethnographica* 4). Although the subjectivity of both the 'self' and the 'other' is apparent, they are not apprehended equally; the intersubjective is 'a ground that belongs to no one', not a 'synonym for shared experience, empathetic understanding or fellow-feeling' (Minh-ha 71; Jackson, *Minima Ethnographica* 4). This leads Elspeth Probyn to describe intersubjectivity as a 'closeness that

upsets the protected space of the dominant' (*Outside Belongings* 29). Difference remains unreconciled, maintained and continually experienced in a context of nearness. Just as in shaking hands one experiences both touching and being touched, the subject is questioned, as well as questioning.

By focusing on the interplay, or the 'relations between', an intersubjective approach operates at the level of particular subjects. They form 'a network in which each point is distinct, distant from even its closest neighbours, and has a position in relation to every other point in a space that simultaneously holds and separates them all' (Foucault, 'Maurice Blanchot' 12). Petar Ramadanovic expresses this interdependence as 'entanglement', emphasising the inextricable ties between that constitute any event (54).

This recognition is useful, because it makes prominent the (im)possibilities of texts negotiating cultural differences. The use of the intersubjective in such work has been taken up as an approach that aims to do something different from a methodology that would operate on relations of mastery, slavery and liberation (Hodge and McHoul). It aims to take up the '*possibility* of knowing differently – of knowing difference in and for itself', whilst being aware of the limitations to realising this (original emphasis; Gandhi 41). Not wanting to replicate positions of dominance and subordination, such an approach is thus focused on '"intersubjective" *obligations*': trying to suggest that 'any given self' embraces '"more than a single human being"' (my emphasis; Michael Sandel qtd. in Gandhi 140). This attempts to avoid conflating practice with the achievement of the ethical realisation of the difference of another; the other cannot represent her/himself independently of the writer in the latter's text, for instance, and in this obvious way the text will always be complicit in some form of mastery. To admit such a limitation to the realisation of an ethical practice means that stress is instead placed on the *attempt* at being ethical. The ethical is thus introduced as an orientation, rather than an accomplishment. To borrow Chakrabarty's phrasing, 'what is unrepresentable is at least allowed to make visible the laws and limits of one's system of representation' ('Marx After Marxism' 433).

The intersubjective writing I will be exploring has been referred to as 'cultural writing and research' that is 'energised by the presence of its cultural other' (Muecke, 'The Archaeology of

Feeling' 2; 4). Reflexive texts make this generative relation prominent, thereby acknowledging that they are not 'outside' history or culture, but part of it.

To admit to the partiality of the writer, without (disingenuously) relinquishing all claim to authority, would be to work at modest knowledges. In such an instance, 'the emphasis is not on the join, the smoothing over of the gaps', but on 'leaving open what I might call an ethically charged "space between"' (Kerr, 'Shakespeare – Postcoloniality – Adelaide, 1999' 102). Heather Kerr suggests thinking about the postcolonial approach to difference through the model of therapy. If the 'structuration of western academic knowledge' is 'complicit with colonialism', perhaps it can be negotiated in a way that approaches it as both 'enabling and restrictive': the aim of therapeutic practices (During 32; Chakrabarty qtd. in Kerr, 'Shakespeare – Postcoloniality – Adelaide, 1999' 104). This would involve working reflexively, and with direct and proximate address. Things are changed, Kerr argues, when you are writing to someone from somewhere ('Shakespeare – Postcoloniality – Adelaide, 1999' 107).

Like Kerr, Leela Gandhi articulates this approach as being modelled on therapy:

> [T]he colonial aftermath calls for an ameliorative and therapeutic theory which is responsive to the task of remembering and recalling the colonial past. The work of this theory may be compared with what Lyotard describes as the psychoanalytic procedure of anamnesis, or analysis...In adopting this procedure, postcolonial theory inevitably commits itself to a complex project of historical and psychological 'recovery'...[which entails both the] scholarly task...[of] the carefully researched retrieval of historical detail...[and] an equally compelling political obligation to assist the subjects of postcoloniality to live with the gaps and fissures of their condition, and thereby learn to proceed with self-understanding. (8)

The strand of postcolonialism aligned with therapeutic practices works against the imperial ideal of rational, 'linear, historical progress' (McClintock 10). It reviews what is known of the past with an agenda of the present – that is, to recover that which has previously been excluded from historical accounts of the past, 'to represent the interests of a particular set of "subjugated knowledges"' in order to better understand the present (Foucault qtd. in Gandhi 43). Simon During describes such a postcolonialism as 'primarily a historical form of knowledge', 'an intellectual effort at managing the aftermath of the colonial past in an era when official political relations of colonialism had all but ended' (33). Without belief in political objectivity or neutrality, it takes everyone – privileged or subjugated – as 'a contemporary, a legitimate citizen

of the present' (During 34). This he terms a 'philosophical reconciliatory postcolonialism' (During 37).

Postcolonialism as articulated here has similarities to narrative therapy (Kerr, 'Therapeutics'). Both postcolonialism and narrative therapy maintain that narratives that develop around experience can 'shape and constitute' that experience (White and Denborough 3). Consequently, 'problems' may be 'external', rather than entirely subjective, gesturing towards the importance of material and structural realities of pasts (ibid). There is an intention in both to create contexts in which problems can be critically discussed. This involves 'exploring the history of the influence' of these narratives, which increases an understanding of their constructed nature and their real effects – and makes it possible to identify situations which 'do not fit' the dominant narratives (White and Denborough 5-6). 'The dominant story', explain Cheryl White and David Denborough in an introduction to narrative therapy, 'directs attention away from these "exceptions" and prevents them from being recognised', yet through 'historical exploration' they can be acknowledged and used productively for 'alternative knowledges', 'different ways of thinking and action' (ibid). The task – as for postcolonialism – is to find a 'way of understanding and working', rather than to resolve problems (White and Denborough 2). This is to engage with the past in order to work at constructing a present in which the past is not repeated (there is an attempt to act differently) nor denied (discomforting aspects are accepted as irreconcilable), and subjects may act with an awareness of what is (mastery can be negotiated) rather than how they would wish things to be (free from mastery) or how they once were (assuming mastery is inevitable and that there is no other possibility).

This account omits any reflexive practice by which the therapist/scholar negotiates the affectivity of his or her role in listening to and re-membering stories of the past. By including in this approach consideration of embodied presence (which takes as connected the corporeal and the mental), the scholar provides a way of orientating theory in a direction different from the abstract. This is offered in the intersubjective, affective mode.

Gandhi situates her invocation of therapy in relation to postcolonialism politically. The project of postcolonialism is not justified by moral outrage stemming from empathy for those who have suffered within colonialism. Rather, Gandhi writes, it involves both the 'scholarly task…[and] an equally compelling political obligation' (8). During also disagrees with feeling-motivated

postcolonialism – yet he goes further by refusing to ask that theory and history perform the tasks of political refashioning and mourning. This position is based on a reading which historicises postcolonialism and situates its work in relation to the politics of globalisation.

During describes the 'philosophical reconciliatory postcolonialism' as in fact serving 'within the academy as globalisation's historicisng and theorising handmaiden' (37). He argues that instances of colonisation and globalisation were present from at least the 1700s in England, though they have recently become more visible through economic flows (see 41-46). Through globalising forces, national identities of colonial countries are weakened; postcolonialism begins as a response to this, to 'the delegitimitation of colonial pasts under forces we name "globalisation"' (During 37). Philosophical reconciliatory postcolonialism, in providing a history 'appropriate for, and implicitly geared towards, globalisation as an interpretation of the present', is thus complicit in globalisation – which in turn produces instances of colonialism and energises postcolonialism and so on (ibid). They are entangled 'forces which work…in transaction with one another' (ibid).

This conceptualisation weakens the force of historicist accounts of the past that are grounded in the destruction and suffering caused by processes of globalisation. During suggests that it makes for a 'tepid' postcoloniality, being without 'concepts like difference, hybridity...progress [and] liberation' (ibid). David Lloyd also worries over this outcome, pointing out that with the conception that the 'injunction to mourn' is therapeutic, is the assumption that with commemoration the past can be left behind and those in the present can 'overcome our melancholy…shake off the burden of the past and enter modernity as fully formed subjects' (221). He questions whether this is 'not in fact reproducing the attitudes of the colonialism that destroyed [those in the past]' (222)?

During concludes that 'one *cannot require* theoretical analysis and historical research to do the work of political self-fashioning or, indeed, the work of mourning and commemoration' because he understands them to be smoothing the way for globalisation (my emphasis; 38). Taking global forces as always already implicated in colonial activities, postcoloniality is interpreted as 'healing' the present in order to make those in the present proper subjects to participate fully with globalising forces which produce colonialisms and so on. If globalisation is always already at work, the force and usefulness of difference and struggle are weakened, and the present is

depoliticised: political movements appear as complicit, less radical or disruptive than entangled and repetitious. Losing any distinctions and tensions between alternatives which could lead to 'synthesis or reconciliation', a reconciliatory postcolonialism focuses on space rather than 'temporality',

> especially in relation to a history of the present, because within the globalisation paradigm the world's communities are analysed less in terms of how some have been granted full access to modernity and others...have been 'othered' and primitivised than in terms of how distance has been reduced to form a global system with a shared economy, a shared set of technologies and...repertoire of cultural modes. (During 37)

It becomes no longer possible to imagine postcolonialism as Said once articulated it, as 'ideally, perhaps even impossibly..."life-enhancing and constitutively opposed to every form of tyranny, domination, and abuse; its social goals...[as] non-coercive knowledge produced in the interests of human freedom"' – or even as contributing to recovery (Gandhi quoting Said 52). Postcolonialism's therapeutic agenda 'to assist the subjects of postcoloniality to live with the gaps and fissures of their condition, and thereby learn to proceed with self-understanding' becomes understood as enabling orientation towards global forces (Gandhi 8).

However, because colonialism, postcoloniality and globalism are entangled, they are all continually being reconstituted. This, During argues, has affirmative aspects: if each are continually constituting the others, then one cannot be considered as definitive. They are not 'set against' each other, but always already implicated in each other (During 46). Globalisation is not an 'end' to 'ethnic and colonialist struggles', but is 'a force though which these struggles are continually re-articulated and re-placed, and through which the transitivity of relations like coloniser/colonised, centre/local is continually proved' (ibid). This background, then, makes possible a therapeutic postcoloniality – even as it puts pressure on its realisation.

In amongst this, Nicholas Visser argues – like Gandhi – that postcoloniality must be politically motivated. If an aim of postcolonialism is the recovery of the past for a certain 'redress', conflating postcolonialism with a 'moralized politics based on empathy' is insufficient (Visser 216). Empathy, 'that ability to feel what others feel', is unreliable: 'deeply human and humane feelings...are transient' (ibid). Instead Visser calls for a postcolonialism that is expressly political, proposing that it be based not on 'moral insight' but on 'political demand' (ibid).

Empathy – despite Visser's distrust of it – is a powerful force. As his comments indicate, in critical understandings it is linked to morality and feelings. Empathy gained critical prominence in the eighteenth century in Europe through literature and philosophy. David Hume, a Scottish philosopher, argued that reason is itself a mode of feeling, and feelings are the basis of morality: specifically, that the experience of common feelings enables people to evaluate moral action (see Bell 43). According to this view, 'we know others' emotions by coming to feel for ourselves the same emotions others experience' (Sherman 88).

Adam Smith, another Scottish philosopher whose work moved out from Hume's, contended that empathy is the 'epistemic mechanism by which we come to understand others' mental states' (Sherman 83). (Nancy Sherman points out that 'empathy' is a term that has a recent history, being coined only in the 1900s; in Smith's work, he referred to this understanding as 'sympathy' [83].) In Smith's account, empathy is essential for morality: 'the capacity for moral judgement...rests on an empathetic mechanism' (Sherman 84). We need to 'appreciate just what circumstances the other is responding to, and what attitudes and motives she brings to those circumstances if we are to be informed in our appraisals' (Sherman 90). For Smith, our understanding of others is limited by our own experience; consequently, to intuit what another feels we draw upon the faculty of the imagination:

> As we have no immediate experience of what other men feel, we can form no idea of the manner in which they are affected, but by conceiving of what we ourselves should feel in the like situation...[However, our senses] never did, and never can, carry us beyond our own person, and it is by the imagination only that we can form any conception of what are his sensations. (Smith 47)

The 'celebration of humane feeling' attempts 'to base the moral life itself on feeling' (Bell 2). Nancy Sherman highlights this definition of sympathy because she is arguing that 'whatever the status of the claim that a legislative capacity of reason enables us to step beyond the egocentric perspective', we do move out from 'the egocentric point of view' through an everyday act of the sympathetic imagination or 'fellow-feeling' (83). This is not to conflate the movement of sympathy to the action of universalising, she stresses; whilst the universalising mode is exclusionary – though appearing inclusionary – sympathy 'is far more protean and deeply embedded in our social existence' (ibid). In sympathising, we can imagine the other, but we do not categorically *know* the other; sympathy is 'an aid to understanding, rather than the literal truth' (Motooka 206). For Smith, sympathy is undertaken by an objective observer: judgements

are 'a matter of imagining how a disinterested observer would view the case' (Bell 44). Sympathy involves transcending the subjective experience, and at the same time imagining it: it 'has to be both emotional and judgemental at once' (ibid).

Smith's impartial spectator is suggestive of an 'internal theatre': internally imagining and judging the other indicates that the 'world of public values [is] within the individual' (Bell 45). Sympathy operates in order to apply a particular moral code: the imagining of another's feelings and circumstances is evaluated according to certain standards. As Michael Bell writes, '[t]he early eighteenth-century appeal to the values of sentiment could be made only because these values had already found widespread, largely unreflective acceptance' (17). Sherman concludes, for instance, of Smith's approach that: '[p]ropriety and reasonableness, rather than empathetic understanding for its own sake, prevail...Smith views the process of sympathy as an important mechanism of social adaptation and compliance' (90). Although it can be used to draw lines of communication between different people and thus to open up possibilities for concrete change, the sympathetic imagination provides 'no guarantee of a non-appropriative "realising the other"' (Kerr, 'Sympathetic Topographies' 110).

A neo-humanist position, informed by the ethical imperative to recognise and value the difference of the other, problematises a 'humanistic understanding' of sympathy (Kerr, 'Sympathetic Topographies' 111). The purportedly impartial nature of the observer is considered suspect, and what is valued is not the opportunity for judgement but sympathy itself as an imaginative movement towards the other: 'to be genuinely sympathetic...does not itself require that we be "in sympathy"' (Sherman 89). Yet there remain remnants of Smith's model in present-day culture. Sherman points out they they underlie the 'psychoanalytic technique', for instance, in which the analyst works by 'supportively acknowledging an analysand's feelings and thoughts' and aims '[t]o be a good listener, to be caring, to communicate not just through action but also through affect' (Sherman 84).

To consider the postcolonial aim to realise difference and give it a force in light of this model also highlights the risks it carries. To imagine another in order to empathetically feel for her/his situation does not necessarily entail recognition of the other's singularity. Sherman's own conclusion implicates her understanding of sympathy in a framework that maintains a 'regulatory image' rather than recognising any force to difference. In her final sentence, she writes: 'it may

just be that it is only when we concretely imagine those others as *rational agents* alongside ourselves that we are really disposed to take seriously their claims' (my emphasis; 114). Here, it is only when others are conceptualised as acting within the model of the rational self that they are counted. There is no impetus to acknowledge any heterogeneity in human existence.

1.1 Thinking Affect

Because of its ability to capture a material moment in the past, the photograph is commonly used to convey and authenticate histories. As Roland Barthes makes evident, photographs also introduce affect as an intersubjective force. What the photograph inspires in people and what people see in photographs are relationships that resonate throughout this thesis, and will be addressed explicitly in chapter seven through the work of William Yang.

Cautious about sympathetically imagining the other, in *Camera Lucida* Barthes writes reflexively from his own position. Barthes admits to a sense of frustration with books on photography that have generalised theories: 'I realized with irritation that none discussed precisely…[those examples] which interest me', and 'I found myself at an impasse and, so to speak, "scientifically" alone and disarmed' (*Camera Lucida* 7). Abstracted analysis does not concur with his lived experience; his response is to write of his own felt reactions about photographs, 'ones I was sure existed *for me*' (original emphasis; *Camera Lucida* 8). He works with the singular instance, rather than from a general position to an interpretation ('Nothing to do with a corpus: only some bodies' [ibid]). This performance of knowing keeps knowledge particular and avoids the claim of a final Knowledge of Photography, instead promoting knowing as a process that is specific and ongoing, from instance to instance.

In *Outside Belongings*, Probyn articulates this use of the particular instance through the terms 'specificity' and 'singularity' (22-24). Specificities – categories or contexts with specific histories – are not understood as fixed positions, but are explored through singularities, particular actualities that are lived out instances of specificities. Singularities cannot be generalised, but are particular and distinctive. They are the concrete particular, what occurs when the specificity is enacted, like the shapes a falling scarf traces out, 'a series of loose, shiny and undulant arabesques' (Jones, *The House* 27). The singularity – as an *actuality* – is in process, or 'in the act of'. Meaning lies in what the act traces out or gestures towards.

For Barthes, to start with what he is confident of is to start from embodied experience. He begins with the question: 'What does my body know of Photography?', and turns to the images that move him, 'which give me pleasure or emotion' (*Camera Lucida* 9). Affects are used as the distinguishing principle to structure thinking on photography: 'I wanted to explore... [photography] not as a question (a theme) but as a wound: I see, I feel, hence I notice, I observe, and I think' (Barthes, *Camera Lucida* 21). Affect informs what he thinks, and has effects: it is Barthes' jumping off point for an exploration of presence, absence and subjectivity. 'The photograph itself is in no way animated', he writes, 'but it animates me: this is what creates every adventure' (Barthes, *Camera Lucida* 20).

The study of affect is a growing interdisciplinary field. Brian Massumi locates it with ethics: 'a designation for the project of thinking affect: [is] Ethics' ('The Autonomy of Affect' 222). As Probyn acknowledges, using the affective 'explicitly or implicitly demands a wider variety of response than is the norm in academic research' ('Dis/connect' 2). Is it asking us 'to respond to the personal connection?' (ibid). Why is it being used? And where?

Affect designates a particular movement. 'To affect' is a verb: to do to, to produce an effect or change upon; it is to have an impact, to move, to influence, to touch. 'An affect', when used as a noun, refers to the experience of a feeling. It is an everyday occurrence that is felt bodily, both banal – 'a condition of reiterated ordinary conventionality' – as well as 'the experience of deeply felt emotion' (the sight of a newborn baby's fontanelle, for instance, inspiring a feeling of tenderness) (Berlant 60). Homi Bhabha places affects textually as overflowing the sentence: 'affectivity exceeds the linearity of the written or spoken transference and allows us to grasp the space of the body in writing as a kind of present-absence or absent-presence' ('Postcolonial Authority' 56). It is *experienced.*

The critical concentration on affect has been influenced by feminism and postcoloniality, with their emphasis on embodied experience and respecting difference, and deconstructionist and poststructuralist work on unpacking essentialist assumptions. These theoretical currents have converged in a sense of caution about speaking for others, and particularly about abstract, 'natural' and universal qualities of humanity. Whilst lived experience indicates that differences between people are significant, it also emphasizes that people are not alien from one another, and

that it is often strategically necessary to assume a certain commonality. One of the ways of marking out this commonality is to focus on affectivity: with the experience of affects, Probyn argues, comes a sense of 'humanity' (see 'Dis/connect'). This relocates the basis for humanism from abstraction to embodiment. Does it, however, escape the other criticisms of humanism?

An affect occurs 'from in-between unequal and often antagonistic sites without the certainty of imagining what happens or emerges at the end' (Bhabha, 'Postcolonial Authority' 57). It is not as strong as an emotion. To invoke the noun 'affect' is not to make a definitive claim: an impact is registered, but its significance is not secured. The affect Fredric Jameson infamously declared was 'waning' in contemporary Western culture has a different emphasis from this understanding (Jameson 10). Jameson's affects are authoritative 'modernist emotions', whereas this takes an affect as a *force* (Woodward, 'Bureaucratic and Binding Emotions' 282).

This latter understanding of affect is 'intensified' by Brian Massumi, drawing upon the work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. In the essay 'Requiem For Our Prospective Dead', Massumi outlines the operation of affect in American politics in the 1980s. In this instance, affect was made to perform as the 'legitimation of State violence' (Massumi, 'Requiem For Our Prospective Dead' 32). Out of respect for those Americans who died fighting for their nation – in Vietnam, Korea or World War II – it became 'political suicide' for politicians to display 'anything approaching a peaceful outlook on US international relations, or [respond] with "softness" towards designated internal enemies' (ibid). That the dead 'had felt' was an attitude prioritised over any of the other possible perspectives on the past, and the present (ibid). Massumi argues that with the (first) Gulf War, this retrospective force had become *prospective*: criticism 'of the eventual use of armed force' by the government was equated with acquiescing to the death of soldiers 'at the theoretical front', making any US action 'justifiable as the prevention of death' ('Requiem For Our Prospective Dead' 33). Instead of thinking, all Americans needed to do was 'feel' in order to generate 'a oneness with the prospective dead hero, and based on that, hostility for the hypothetical enemy' (Massumi, 'Requiem For Our Prospective Dead' 34).

This example gives a specific instance in which affect is used as a political force. Massumi describes here the deployment of affect as *legitimating*: it makes ineffectual 'moral reasoning and critical thinking' and 'constitutes a social stratum' for command ('Requiem For Our Prospective Dead' 34; 53). It is employed as an 'apparatus of power', as is further illustrated by its circulation

in mass media, where it operates as a 'normative control mechanism (a channelling of attention)' that feeds into other levels and 'command systems' (Massumi, 'Requiem For Our Prospective Dead' 53). Affect here is used for particular ends; Massumi is working – to borrow Probyn's term – to explore the particular 'effects of affect' ('Dis/connect' 1).

Affect is not inherently subjective: it is 'an impersonal *flow* before it is a subjective content' (original emphasis; Massumi, 'Requiem For Our Prospective Dead' 53). It is 'emotion [that] is a subjective content'; emotion and affects 'follow difference logics' (Massumi, 'The Autonomy of Affect' 221).[3] Consequently, affects can undercut differences between individual identities (and, Massumi cautions, because being affected means 'something is happening out of mind in a body directly absorbing its outside [it] cannot exactly be said to be experienced' – when experience presumes a subject ['The Autonomy of Affect' 223]). This means that it avoids the regulatory image of humanism: it occurs prior to the individual as conscious agent. It also raises questions of responsibility in the writing of history: can there be an ethical subject that writes history, for instance? Are ethics 'felt' by individuals or groups of scholars, or are they similar to the affects Massumi writes about?

What Massumi sees as needed is a (in his essay's context, capitalist) critique that will 'redefine affect' from the point of 'a variety of autonomic apparatuses – including but not limited to innocently complicitous bodies' – instead of with reference to 'the supposedly autonomous subject' ('Requiem For Our Prospective Dead' 53). He describes what such an approach – or such a redefined affect – would look like by using Deleuzian terminology: it would explore 'deterritorialised circulation' by way of '*forces* and *movement*' (my emphasis; 'Requiem For Our Prospective Dead' 53). In such an approach, searching for the source of a cause would have little significance. With 'mass media circulation of violence-legitimating affect' is a 'seriality that makes questions of origin and sequence moot points' (Massumi, 'Requiem For Our Prospective Dead' 36). Instead, analyses could concentrate on the present situation: 'whatever it is, it is here and it is now, in our anticipatory present' (ibid).

Anna Gibbs' work takes up such a perspective; its concern is situated with these 'complicitous bodies', away from the 'autonomous subject' (Massumi, 'Requiem For Our Prospective Dead'

[3] Probyn offers further a distinction when she writes: 'affect is not strictly speaking the same as emotion in that it designates a slightly different location in the body' ('Dis/connect' 2).

53). Also exploring the functioning of affect in mass media, she draws upon the work of psychologist Silvan Tomkins in her configuration of affect. In Gibbs' writing this takes the form of 'rethink[ing] the role of innate or categorical affect in human communication' (Gibbs, 'Disaffected' 335).

Agreeing with Massumi, Gibbs locates affect as *prior* to subjectivity; both stress not 'the concept of cause' but '"effects and their interweavings"' (Massumi qtd. in Gibbs, 'Contagious Feelings' 7). As the examples both Massumi and Gibbs draw upon illustrate, this amounts to an interest in 'the production of the thought it might become' – not 'the obviousness of the thought it has' (Berlant 59). Gibbs argues that affect needs to be thought about with reference to embodiment. Rather than 'our cognitive capacity, rationality or technology', Gibbs follows biologist Humbert Maturana in suggesting that 'it is "the configuration of..."emotioning" that we live as Homo sapiens [which] specifies our human identity"' (Humberto Maturana qtd. in Gibbs, 'Disaffected' 336). (Gibbs notes that he does not use the term affect, but she places this statement in the context of research involving affect.) Avoiding the nature/nurture debate, she views the body as limiting what it is to be human, but not as definitively constraining it. Affects themselves are 'socialized in ways particular to historical period, cultural and social setting, as well as to unique family organizations', but are not simply 'culturally constructed "feelings" and "emotions" substantially divorced from the materiality of the body' (Gibbs, 'Disaffected' 338; 337). They have been found by Tomkins, for instance, as having their own 'neurological profile and distinct pattern of physiological response' (Gibbs, 'Disafffected' 336).

In what is a challenge to the idea of the autonomous, individual subject, affects can be passed on bodily: affects are 'contagious'. As Gibbs describes it, '[b]odies can catch feelings as easily as catch fire' ('Contagious Feelings' 1). This is a form of '"sympathetic communication"', or 'form-sharing' (Gibbs, 'Disaffected' 338). Whilst Sherman suggests that from Adam Smith's work sympathy is considered 'the contagion of affect', Smith's conception of sympathy as involving impartial observation and judgement troubles this (Sherman 86). 'Catching' another's affect occurs before the subject's conscious negotiation of them; as Massumi writes, 'the skin is faster than the word' ('The Autonomy of Affect' 219).

Affects in this way – that is, bodily – fuse the self and another, prior to individual identities. Although the actual experience that provokes the affect is not identical, the feeling is 'imagined'

bodily. This ability for sympathetic communication is what makes humans social, and binds them together: 'when the joy of the other activates joy in the self', for instance, or when 'fear of the other activates fear within' (Tomkins qtd. in Gibbs, 'Disaffected' 338).

Although affects occur before subjectivity, it is important to note their effects: affects can also influence knowing, for example. Knowing can 'take on an affective colouring', and 'call forth certain ideas and attitudes with which it has become associated in the inner world of the individual' (Gibbs, 'Contagious Feelings' 1). This is not necessarily a conscious occurrence. Massumi describes the non-conscious impact of an image in terms of levels of intensity, and explains: 'Intensity is embodied in purely autonomic reactions most directly manifested in the skin – at the surface of the body, at its interface with things' ('The Autonomy of Affect' 219). Catching another's fear, the hair on my arms might rise in sympathetically-communicated trepidation. It is possible, Gibbs adds, that in an affect that is 'caught', ideas might also be 'smuggled along': that what is frightening to the other may also make me frightened (Gibbs, 'Contagious Feelings' 1).

The attitudes of affective sequences bring with them basic understandings of the world (ibid). These ideas are not articulated, and are potentially 'outside awareness'; consequently, individuals can receive ideas in a way that is different from autonomous decision making, undercutting the sovereignty of the rational subject (Gibbs, 'Contagious Feelings' 2).

Affect's entanglement with memory also unsettles the definition of the rational individual. A specific instance of this is the function of memory within the text. In the Enlightenment model, following philosopher John Locke, memory is required for the existence of the self:

> [S]ince consciousness always accompanies thinking, and it is that that makes every one to be what he calls 'self,' and thereby distinguishes himself from all other thinking things; in this alone consists personal identity, i.e., the sameness of a rational being: and as far as this consciousness can be extended backwards to any past action or thought, so far reaches the identity of that person... (Locke 247)

Here, extending consciousness back establishes the self; preserving 'consciousness through time,' Lisa Moore writes, 'guarantee[s] identity' (113). Yet Gibbs suggests that affects and the ideas they smuggle 'have their roots in "emotional memory", which is a "felt residue of the…past"' ('Contagious Feelings' 6). Emotional memory, as something that is felt rather than consciously

recalled, exceeds the boundaries of the distinct individual. Furthermore, it is affect, Gibbs argues, that is the 'major' influence 'in the organization of self-experience, in creating intersubjective relatedness and a shareable inner universe' ('Disaffected' 336). How we act in the world and react to experience is not determined by conscious memory, but primarily shaped by feelings that can be caught bodily, and that carry attitudes with them. Affects, although commonly associated with interiority, are not private or a property of the individual self, again disrupting Smith's understanding of morality as resting on sympathy. 'If we let affect truly into our thinking', asks Probyn, 'how does it re-arrange both the conceptual landscape and the body that writes?' ('Dis/connect' 2).

Rather than the Enlightenment belief in the individual who sympathetically imagines others in order to evaluate their actions, neo-humanism is orientated towards affects and their effects, and by implication with a less-bounded subject. Probyn defines being affected as being 'placed', or placing oneself, 'in proximity to': being affected by something, one is immediately implicated in a relation to it ('Dis/connect' 1). In this way it is a form of sympathy, but one that is caught rather than consciously chosen. Consequently, it can bind people together irrespective of their identity differences.

In this thesis, ethics are repeatedly raised as an issue in affective, intersubjective criticism. Recognising the singularity of the other requires dis-connection, a space between 'you' and 'I' (Levinas' 'radical separation'). However, being affected occurs prior to subjectivity, and thus it blurs the boundaries between subjects, altering 'the connections between and amongst us' (Probyn, 'Dis/connect' 6). Any assumption of the ethical in neo-humanism is disturbed by the experience of affect.

Looking at the effects of affects enables the possibility of political action: experience becomes 'open to local interventions' (Gibbs, 'Disaffected' 340). Yet, as Bell reminds, 'to argue for the constitutive role and positive importance of feeling in the ethical life is not to deny that there are good reasons for distrusting it' (9). Affect can be politicised, and so manipulated for particular ends. It is not inherently ethical, raising for Probyn the question of the need for 'an ethics of the representation of affect – writing and reading affect' ('Dis/connect' 2). What can affect do as a way of knowing, and when is it appropriate to employ it? 'Perhaps we need an ethics of response,

one that would include an ethics of representing affect' (Probyn, 'Dis/connect 1). These are prominent issues in trauma studies.

1.2 Trauma and Histories

The work of both Massumi and Gibbs is concerned with affect in mass media reception. By drawing upon Deleuze and Tomkins, Probyn's essay 'Dis/connect: Space, Affect, Writing' moves out from Massumi's and Gibbs' work, considering the issues of affect that are raised by reading narratives of people who experienced the Holocaust. This in turn raises questions of history and its continuing effects in the present.

Karyn Ball outlines a genealogy of trauma studies that implicates it in theoretical concerns with '[t]he "representation of difference," or "otherness"', including postcolonial criticism (Ball 3). Postcolonial and multicultural criticism, she writes, share 'an interest in demystifying and dismantling those institutional mechanisms that reinscribed a power structure that favored the interests and continuing privilege of certain groups and nations' (4). This interest is informed by a 'conjunction of trauma and oppression in the discourses of the social movements from the 1960s and 1970s', such as feminism, which lead to 'the institutionalization of the multiculturalist agenda in the 1980s and the emergence of trauma studies shortly thereafter' (Ball 5).

Trauma studies is also informed by the poststructuralist scepticism towards humanism and its definition of 'human' – a scepticism that 'extended to...the discourse of civil rights presumed as a foundational concept for Western democracies' (ibid). Cathy Caruth proposes that the history of trauma works in a similar way to trauma itself: citing Shoshana Felman, she links the study of trauma to these concerns with difference, but interprets the latter as a broad, '"profound, less definable crisis of truth...proceeding from contemporary trauma"' that asks 'how we in this era can have access to our own historical experience, to a history that is in its immediacy a crisis to whose truth there is no simple access' ('Trauma and Experience' 6). The history of trauma, like trauma, 'is referential precisely to the extent that it is not fully perceived as it occurs'; 'its truth is bound up with its crisis of truth' (Caruth, 'Trauma and Experience' 8).

The traumatic event is registered as it occurs, rather than consciously experienced; later, and elsewhere, it is returned to repeatedly: as an 'unforgettable if not always remembered reference-

point' (Hartman 539). It is in 'its inherent forgetting' that the traumatic experience 'is first experienced at all' (Caruth, 'Trauma and Experience' 8). Studying trauma thus gives prominence to the limits to conscious understanding, and raises the question of how to negotiate the unrepresentable. As James Berger points out, 'a concept of trauma can be of great value in the study of history and historical narrative, and also of narrative in general, as the verbal representation of temporality' (572). Thinking about trauma attends to the 'representational means through which an event is remembered and yet retains the importance of the event itself'; it acknowledges the event, as well as recalling 'that the effects of an event may be dispersed and manifested in many forms not obviously associated with the event', and that 'this dispersal occurs across time' (ibid). Although the initial traumatic experience occurred in a time now past, the experience continues to be played out in the present in a 'tendency compulsively to repeat, relive, be possessed by, or act out traumatic scenes of the past' (LaCapra, *History and Memory* 10). Trauma, and histories, entangle past and present, disrupting a linear understanding of time.

In critical thinking about trauma, the subject of memory is raised. If memory cannot be consciously controlled, what is prevented? If we can sometimes choose what is remembered, what is forgotten, and why?

Caruth argues that '"history, like trauma, is never simply one's own…history is precisely the way we are implicated in each other's traumas"'(Caruth qtd. in Berger 578). She advocates a model of listening to the survivor of trauma, and in doing so hearing the 'repeated suffering of the event, but…also a continual leaving of its site' (Caruth, 'Trauma and Experience' 10). It is in this movement of departure that change is made possible. In the departure repeated in the survivor's testimony, the isolation of the traumatic experience is not replicated: instead, there is a turn towards connecting to others – or to the listener – via communication. The listener is thus implicated. As a 'speaking and a listening *from the site of trauma'*, the history of trauma is intersubjective: this history can 'only take place through the listening of another' (original emphasis; Caruth, 'Trauma and Experience' 11). Constructing a history of trauma, then, creates some form of community.

Consequently, Caruth suggests that trauma can provide occasions of overcoming the separation of different identities: the specific identities of groups of 'historically oppressed' people representing and acting on their experience 'to counter and, if possible, depose oppressive and

demeaning constructions of themselves' (Ball 7). Speaking from a site of trauma relies on what we do not know about our pasts, not on what we know; speaking requires an audience, and as 'the bodies that listen' are capable of being affected, this may then form a link between people (Probyn, 'Dis/connect' 1).

This position has been taken further to identify a collective humanity, through the sympathetic identification with the experience of suffering. Paul Gilroy writes, for example: 'the recurrence of pain, disease, humiliation and loss of dignity, grief, and care for those one loves can all contribute to an abstract sense of a human similarity', which, he continues, is 'powerful enough to make solidarities based on cultural particularity appear suddenly trivial' (17). Suffering is promoted as something people can imagine and identify with, irrespective of various differences in identity. Melissa Gregg concurs, proposing that with suffering there is a 'certain identifiable level where a response only explicable as human comes into effect. Gilroy urges us to recognize this as the precious force for political practice, rather than older constructs such as nation, race or culture' (Gregg 280). This, she claims, leads to a humanism that 'animates a respect for others, and recognizes the equally genuine and urgent political commitments of differing political choices' (282).

However, there are risks in accepting that 'traumatic history and our implication in each other's experiences mark the moment when "we"...comes into being' (Ramadanovic 58). As Australian histories indicate, this 'we' is not neutral.

Using the position of 'victim' as founding an identity is a powerful strategy in present-day Australian culture. Ann Curthoys reads 'a special charge' in the 'status of victim in Australian historical consciousness', adding that 'it is notable how *good* non-Aboriginal Australians are at memorialising their own sufferings' (original emphasis; qtd. in Jopson 8). Referring to the significance of Gallipoli in stories of Australian national identity, Curthoys admits that whilst there are aspects of this orientation that she enjoys – a preference for the soldier over the general, for example – there are discomforting implications for Aboriginal history: 'they help people not to face the fact that they are the beneficiaries of this process of land-taking. If you're a victim, you can't be responsible for bad things, but you're not even a beneficiary, really. It wiggles you out of that' (qtd. in Jopson 9). Such comments draw out the significance of the particular histories that circulate in the present, a theme that I will consider in chapter two. As Joy Damousi argues,

analysis needs to be concentrating on 'why we choose the stories we do, to tell about ourselves at this particular moment in time' (100).

Also worthy of consideration 'is what we forget, that which we disavow': the significance of the stories about the past that do *not* circulate in the present (ibid). For an example, Damousi suggests that the prominence of ANZAC day commemorations 'points to the need for ritual and community at a time when we have none' (101). Differences between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians are less significant from such a perspective: concentrating on Gallipoli establishes a sense of distance from a national settler-aggressor identity. This in turn informs current non-indigenous Australians' attitudes towards Aboriginal Australians; the argument against any different – 'special' – treatment for Aboriginals, for instance, and the implication that material inequalities favouring the non-indigenous would be 'their [Aboriginals'] own fault' (Curthoys qtd. in Jopson 8). With the focus on Australians as battlers, indigeneity may also be perceived as a threat to non-indigenous identity, with its suggestion that the latter are actually 'aggressors, bringing adversity upon others' – not 'struggling heroically against adversity' (ibid).

Such a broad adoption of the role of victim gives experiences of suffering a truth-value by which to orientate understanding. In Lauren Berlant's discussion of the role of pain in models of subjectivity, she critically examines the consequences of adopting such a position. Berlant argues that traumatic experiences have become the truth-value against which much is evaluated in Western culture: 'utopian/traumatized subjectivity has replaced rational subjectivity as the essential index of value for personhood' (57). Painful feeling has become widely accepted as self-evident, and unjust (virtuous pain versus 'bad, unethical power'): 'Questions of social inequity and social value are now adjudicated in the register not of power but of sincere surplus feeling' (Berlant 76; 57). The position of the most disenfranchised or powerless is commonly the perspective by which the adequacy of propositions is evaluated; this is considered the 'only politically ethical thing to do' (Berlant 70).

It has also come to have a charged investment in subjectivity: challenges to 'the claim of painful feeling's analytical clarity are frequently characterized as causing further violence to already damaged persons' (Berlant 58). One's agency becomes tied to painful experience, 'making pain count politically' (Berlant 70). Sufferings remain distinct, but are positioned as being 'universally *intelligible*': undercutting differences between identities, the experience of trauma is seen as a

common characteristic of humanity and everyone is encouraged to identify with it, making it 'a property of rhetoric that claims to represent not the universal but the true self' (original emphasis; Berlant 72).

The focus on traumatic experience as providing a sense of humanity sets up a model in which a community is fostered through the act of looking 'elsewhere', away from the differences within the present, and away from lived experience. This belittles connection with the immediate situations in which people live, and negates their significance: starting at a limit point and working from there makes everything else 'lesser'. Accepting pain as the 'true self' also makes invalid experiences that are not tied to suffering. It makes for a 'narrow ethnicity', arising 'as a replacement for encompassing communities based on constitutions, legislation and widening attributes of citizenship. The program for this new ethnicity is as symbolic as it is substantive. It aspires pre-eminently to the recognition by other groups of its own suffering and victimhood' (Charles Maier qtd. in LaCapra, *History and Memory* 15).

This separates the self from agency and responsibility: 'you know that you are hurt not because of your relation to history but because of someone else's relation to it…someone whose privilege or comfort depends on the pain that diminishes you' (Berlant 72). Focusing on sympathetic identification with painful experience risks connecting people to a passive and immobile position: that of sufferer or victim, thereby reinforcing that position, which is a 'turning away from the scene, from situatedness, from living persons', from the everyday (Gans 85). With this focus comes a 'loss of historical direction': there is 'no future…which triumphs over this pain' (Wendy Brown qtd. in Berlant 76).

Yet in specific circumstances, basing collectivity on identification with experiences of suffering can be a powerful – and necessary – tool to drawn upon as a political strategy: even if it risks the ethical imperative of realising the other. Wendy Brown suggests, for example, supplanting 'the language of "I am"' – or 'I feel' – 'with the language of "I want"', a 'subjectivity articulated utopianly' taking 'from pain the energy for social transformation' (qtd. in Berlant 76; Berlant 77). To be ethical does not necessitate the political; adopting the ethical *in place of* the political risks the possibility for collective social and cultural action. Lawrence Buell identifies a propensity in cultural criticism 'for deploying a critical vocabulary of "ethics" in rivalry to "politics" as a way of theorizing principled social engagement', an action which ignores that they have different ends

(10). As Bhabha comments defensively, '[f]or emergent communities…it is often a historical and psychic necessity to pend [sic] for their creative sustenance on a communal response (often contestatory) from an "interest group" or interpretive community' ('Dance this Diss' 20).

Encouraging identification with suffering from the experience of trauma for a political outcome does put pressure on the ethical historical narrative. Bain Attwood writes that '[h]istory can be seen as a form of knowledge which is produced by the fusion of two horizons': the present and the past ('Oral Narratives, Autobiography and History' 217). However, caution is needed around this fusion. The line that the horizon forms 'relates "them" back "there" to "us", "here and now", but it is a line that folds, bends and ruptures connection' (Probyn, 'Dis/connect' 4). Prioritising sympathetic identification with suffering can act as a fold to place the self and the other in proximity to each other. However, without appropriate attention to the existence of the horizon as a mark of distinction, the fold may be mistaken for a *fuse* that makes the distinct into the same: as when indigenous and non-indigenous Australians are understood as 'equal' victims. This is an unethical manoeuvre: 'We cannot place the Other in our own light, and incorporate the Other into our own story, without destroying the possibility of meeting in the genuine sense' (Gans 86). If the other is only recognised in terms of a suffering that the self knows, there will be no force to the distinction between the two. An alternative approach is suggested by Dominick LaCapra's reformulation of the relation between suffering and identity, when he writes: '[t]rauma should be seen as raising the question of identity, rather than simply founding an identity' (*Writing History, Writing Trauma* 162).

What, then, of the experience of affect? The point of contention here is the role and possibility of difference within identification. If all people can be affected, in a finite number of ways, is drawing upon the experience of affect to orientate a humanism (neo or otherwise) an unethical move, in that it fails to realise differences between the self and the other? While it is necessary to 'foreground the ethical impossibility of allowing the voice of trauma' – or any voice that affects – 'to become mine', it is also productive to 'acknowledge the effects of affect': to explore what it opens up, what it can do, as well as what it cannot (Probyn, 'Dis/connect' 1). Doing so is the concern of this thesis, most specifically in chapter six when looking at the work of Gail Jones.

In contrast to the valorisation of suffering, thinking with affect can allow the ethical as a possibility: a 'pause before one makes connections, to respect the disconnections imposed by

circumstance, time and space' (Probyn, 'Dis/connect' 7). Being affected does not necessarily entail ignoring the other's singularity; although affects are contagious, their consequences are provisional. To draw upon a psychoanalytic model: the affected subject can consciously 'work through' their experience and 'disengage' from the ideas smuggled along with the affect, when there is a self-consciousness about this experience. To do so is the 'ethical imperative' (ibid). Affect is entangled in the ethical, but does not signpost an ethical response; 'reading writing affect offers no immediate guarantee' of the ethical (Probyn, 'Dis/connect' 4).

LaCapra extends this point to the construction of history. Taking a psychoanalytic approach to the historian and her or his task, he writes strongly that 'awareness or recognition of the other...requires vigilance and the mounting of conscious resistance to deadly tendencies that are fostered but never simply determined by certain historical conditions whose genesis should be controverted in every legitimate manner' (*History and Memory* 34-35). LaCapra argues against a mode of reading that encourages connection between the reader – or historian – and the past. He refers to this as 'acting out': by listening, one becomes a secondary witness to events, undergoing 'a transferential relation' by which one is 'emotionally implicated in the witness and his or her testimony with the inclination to act out an affective response to them', ignoring his or her singularity (*History and Memory* 11-12). 'We are always implicated in the things we analyze and try to understand', he writes; '[t]o the extent that an issue is not dead, [it] provokes an emotional and evaluative response, and entails the meeting of history with memory...one becomes affectively implicated' (*History and Memory* 40). Yet this does not mean abandoning the ideal of objectivity. He argues that identification can be 'worked through': empathy is experienced, but unsettled in critical reflection. Although 'the process of projection cannot be entirely eliminated', it is possible to 'check projection' (LaCapra, *Representing the Holocaust* 35). This involves realising the other in a way that differs from Smith's model of movement in the sympathetic imagination: 'that we listen to the other, not that we efface or transfix the self. It may also require that we examine carefully the complex manner in which the other is in the self and the self in the other' (ibid). This is the task of working through: 'acknowledging the problem of values and norms and recognizing their distinction from empirical reality, which they do not redeem or transfigure but which they enable one to evaluate and possibly to transform' (LaCapra, *Representing the Holocaust* 201).

Working through is described by LaCapra as an embodied process of mourning: 'a process that may be called for with respect to victims of traumatic events' (*History and Memory* 20). Mourning is a process of acknowledging loss. Eric Santner clarifies that this is done through 'remembering and repeating it in symbolically and dialogically mediated doses; it is a process of translating, troping, and figuring loss' (Santner 144). The experience of mourning plays a 'constructive role' by emphasising the present, and the 'pain of a past' bound within it (Bann 99; Michael S. Roth qtd. in Bann 99); there is an 'intensification of the experience of personal identity through the mourning-process' (Bann 99).

To bring this back to a context of postcoloniality raises questions about this psychoanalytic turn. Is it appropriate to employ psychoanalysis as a model for cultures? Psychoanalysis arose in a specific cultural and historical setting; can it be transferred to the interpretation of other historical events, particularly events involving people in non-European cultures?

Not working at recognising disconnections can extend to what Eric Santner refers to as 'narrative fetishism': 'the way an inability or refusal to mourn employs traumatic events; it is a strategy of undoing, in fantasy, the need for mourning by simulating a condition of intactness, typically by situating the site and origin of loss elsewhere' (Santner 144). Such a narrative promotes 'tendencies towards normalization', refusing the force of trauma's difference, 'the event's essential incomprehensibility, the force of its *affront to understanding*' (LaCapra, *History and Memory* 7; original emphasis; Caruth, 'Recapturing the Past' 154). This can occur through language itself: listening to words, and failing to hear the gaps and silences between them, can smooth over the ongoing effects of trauma. As Caruth admits, the 'danger of speech…may lie…in that it understands too much' ('Recapturing the Past' 154). Focusing only on difference is divisive to any sense of community. Yet, suspicious of universalism, what alternative is there?

For Probyn, LaCapra's account has another weakness: it is too abstracted from experience. From her reading of LaCapra's work, she turns attention back to the bodily experience of affect. In his work, she writes, trauma has 'happened back then…it is in the past, an object to be accounted for' ('Dis/connect' 6). This has 'the effect of closing it off'; it does not account for the way affect 'connects bodies', entangling 'past and present' (ibid). Contagion has always already happened; LaCapra's focus is on its appropriateness, and the possibility of consciously working through it. Yet what happens, Probyn asks, if we 'conceive of the radical disconnection between concept and

everyday present, *as well as* their productive interconnections' (my emphasis; 'Dis/connect' 4)? What happens if we 'let affect truly into our thinking?' (Probyn, 'Dis/connect' 2).

Giving examples of everyday affects – deep tiredness, grinding teeth while dreaming, for instance – Probyn introduces affect as a bodily experience that is a potential of learning, via reading, writing or listening: that is, of various modes of communication. Turning towards trauma and shame, she asks what affect enables – and obstructs – when considered as a way of understanding ('Dis/connect'). Trauma is not an affect, but has similar effects. Admitting that focusing on traumatic histories is a bit of a 'detour from the line of questioning I want to pursue about what happens when the affective is invoked in matters less monumental', Probyn nonetheless holds that the Holocaust is a 'limit' event 'in ways that other affective experiences cannot be', and consequently it raises 'more starkly' questions of affect and ethics ('Dis/connect' 2).

Probyn is careful to state that she is 'not merely "using" this material to think through another set of issues. That would be to usurp the singularity that the Holocaust must retain for us' (ibid). With this acknowledgement of the particularity of the event, she attempts to realise its difference by acknowledging that, ethically, she cannot invoke the Holocaust to (merely) perform a role for her own ends. There is an 'ethical imperative to pause before one makes connections, to respect the disconnections imposed by circumstance, time and space' (Probyn, 'Dis/connect' 7). She is interested in thinking *with* and *through* affect, asking: 'If we let affect truly into our thinking, how does it re-arrange both the conceptual landscape and the body that writes?' (Probyn, 'Dis/connect' 2).

To look at the everyday affects at work in traumatic situations is to move the focus from daily experience to an extreme occurrence. Their connection is held to be through felt experience: indicating that the traumatic is not an extreme that 'ordinary' people could not experience. Whilst others cannot know what it was 'really' like because of the experience's singularity, focusing on the affects experienced does not alienate those who were there and those who were not – because they too experience affects. Consequently, Probyn's invocation is 'instructive rather than emotive or inflammatory' (Bhabha, 'Dance this Diss' 20). Probyn is taking the affects of intense daily experience – of learning – and juxtaposing them 'laterally into historical and esthetic [sic] experience': the shame of survivors imprisoned in concentration camps under Nazi Germany at the arrival of US soldiers to 'liberate' them (ibid). The Holocaust in this way is defining of limits,

but it is not introduced as the definition of the limit. Probyn is also then able to speak 'specifically from and of a group' – Jews – and also of a 'spirit and technique of survival' (ibid).

Probyn stresses the importance of listening to the 'voice of trauma' to stress that theory 'must also acknowledge the effects of affect' ('Dis/connect' 4). Simon Critchley locates ethics at this point: not 'at the level of consciousness or reflection', but 'at the level of sensibility or pre-conscious sentience...The bond with the other is affective' (100). Affects can act to bind people together, not inevitably, but potentially. Ignoring this possibility in favour of disconnection 'is not an ethical option' (Probyn, 'Dis/connect' 4).

Connection through affect enables lines to be drawn joining the historically and geographically particular, and the abstract: between a daily sense of right and wrong, for instance, and a more general idea of justice. This is what Paul Gilroy sees as a use for affect: it connects people 'to "knowledge"', and can therefore be used 'as a resource for present politics' (Probyn, 'Dis/connect' 4). Probyn's reading of Primo Levi's work is suggestive of such a movement. In the passage of writing by Levi that she quotes, Levi describes the shame he and others who were imprisoned in a concentration camp in World War II experienced when Russian soldiers entered the camp to 'liberate' them.

> This shame is what "the just man experiences at another man's crime; the feeling of guilt that such a crime should exist, that it should have been introduced irrevocably into the world of things that exist, and that his will for good should have proved too weak or null, and should not have availed in defence". ('Dis/connect' 6)

This 'extends the line of affect' from the men 'to beyond the camp' (ibid). The reader is also potentially affected, experiencing with those in the camp, feeling shame too under the eyes of the Russian soldiers.

Yet in the instance Levi describes, affect is also the cause of disconnection between people. Feeling compassion, the soldiers empathise with the prisoners, but they also experience a sense of restraint: they feel shame that this has been allowed to happen. Complicit with the soldiers, the reader too is shamed, which in turn 'sow[s] the seeds of shame in the inmates' (ibid). This sense of shame 'repels any easy connection' (ibid). As Deborah Bird Rose points out: 'In hearing the story we are drawn...into an unwilled complicity' (*Hidden Histories* 262). The listener is

implicated before having any conscious choice; the past is brought into the present through the act of listening.

Admitting that she wishes to find some redemption or transcendence in all of this, Probyn argues that 'shame and more generally affect forges connections that trauma cannot' ('Dis/connect' 7). She suggests that trauma is part of the cultural horizon of the present, and that we must take it into account when theorising the reading of – and listening to – trauma. Trauma informs our present; it is not an optional aspect but something we need to address.

By way of concluding, Probyn stresses the 'ethical imperative to pause before one makes connections, to respect the disconnections imposed by circumstance, time and space' ('Dis/connect' 7). Paraphrasing Bhabha (writing about the poetry of Sylvia Plath that draws upon imagery of the Holocaust and suicide), one way of reading Probyn's work here is as drawing attention to the 'spectacular performance of survival' ('Dance this Diss' 20). Prioritising listening to the 'voice of trauma' attempts 'to counter the privacy and primacy of the individual self with the collective historical memory', and highlights that it – and its effects – are part of our culture (ibid). Those who experienced the Holocaust and those who did not remain distinct, but they are placed in proximity to each other in Probyn's work; there are connections between what is assumed as part of the everyday, and that which is held to be a limit point. When Roberta Culbertson quotes from a Holocaust survivor's testimony to talk about survivor testimony more generally, she includes a footnote that articulates this point:

> I am in no way suggesting that the experiences of other survivors are the same as those of holocaust survivors. But there are unavoidable similarities, and the struggles of holocaust survivors pave the way for others along the continuum of survival. (191)

Survival is singular, and it is also part of our cultural landscape. There are 'complex forms of *living on* that do not simply preserve belated and dysfunctional practices, but potentialities for producing and reproducing a life that lies athwart modernity' (original emphasis; Lloyd 219).

Probyn is not making the characteristic of 'surviving' a replacement for suffering as a point from which to identify a human community. Reading her essay as an exploration of survival highlights survival's very ambiguity, being hinged to its opposite. Levi's death – due to a fall from a staircase, perhaps a suicide – reinforces the ambivalence of survival: 'If indeed Levi killed

himself because he could no longer endure the trauma re-enacted by and in his writing…[are] we the living…more indebted, more connected to his death?' (Probyn, 'Dis/connection' 4). What is it we read in his work but this ambivalence, a survival that is 'predicated on a break in the structures of continuity' (Bhabha, 'Dance this Diss' 20)?

Bhabha points out that this ambivalence is also about the existence of community, 'a crucial location for the dialogic practices of art, criticism, and culture':

> But if sharing within the community allows for historical revision and the invention of tradition, then by that very token it must be remembered that our sense of community is an imagined and creative performance enacted across the double injunction of survival – cessation and continuance. (ibid)

There are limits to the meaning of survival, and they are present in the ambivalence of remembering trauma: recalling it and conveying it to others also recalls the destruction of community, bringing attention to the construction of the present community. What, then, is an appropriate representation of trauma? 'To forget trauma is to be amoral and amnesia', Bhabha writes; 'to remember trauma alone is to refuse to turn cessation into continuance, to resist the ethic and esthetics [sic] of survival' (ibid). The representation of trauma may be for the survivor a turn outwards towards a community, but it carries no guarantees.

Embodied, from 'where people live', 'new vocabularies of pleasure, recognition, and equity must be developed and taught': vocabularies that are not tied to suffering and do not presume to heal suffering, but do include recognition of it (Berlant 83). From here, 'ecstasy and theory and unpredicted change can be mapped into a world that will not look like the opposite of the painful one' (ibid). Traumatic events inscribe the present; rather than treating them as if newly unveiled, and thereby deferring the 'need for mourning', considering them as already there rearranges our understanding of the present, and the histories we tell (Santner 144).

In this thesis I focus on cross-cultural scholarship. Difference in such work plays a generative role in knowledge. Historian Greg Dening highlights that we commonly learn through engaging with 'otherness', and through the past. For Dening, the beach is indicative of the space of the contact zone, where both the past and the other are negotiated by the self. He maintains that the past and the other are readable, but there are limits to their intelligibility, and that we need to

learn how to read them. I suggest that his work outlines a speculative, intersubjective model of history.

The focus of Klaus Neumann, also a historian, is on these limits to historicism, and on the ways pasts are publicly remembered: how they are officially memorialised, and how they are individually experienced. Neumann is concerned with the inheritances of history as a form of disciplinary knowledge complicit with imperialism. I focus my discussion of his work in terms of the possibility of writing histories that do not colonise difference, as exemplified in his practice of placing histories of incommensurable pasts alongside each other: not to claim universalising connections between them, but for his reader to highlight potential similarities – in the context of their differences – between the ways they are remembered.

Stephen Muecke also draws upon this model of parallel texts. The question of what a history that gives difference a 'force and a usefulness' would look like is addressed through Muecke's work (Muecke, *No Road* 182). Muecke, writing in the field of cultural studies, places texts from different cultural contexts alongside each other, rendering their differences visible on the page. This is an attempt to ethically respect and maintain distinctions. I draw out the possibilities of such an approach by looking at how he proposes (along with Adam Shoemaker) to use mimicry to write biographically, before considering the ambivalences in this project, as raised by a literary critic, Susan Hosking.

From a stress on recognising difference, I turn to historian Peter Read's recent work, which questions the consequences of such recognition in Australian history. He argues that the focus on valuing the other negated by colonial practices, whilst ethical, has resulted in the diminished value of the (colonial-descendent) self, and that, as a consequence, the self's validity needs to be re-established. I consider the affects of history and their effects in this section, with particular reference to Read's use of the autobiographical and historicist modes.

Like history, anthropology has been questioned as a disciplinary knowledge whose lineage is entangled in imperialism. I examine the work of anthropologists Michael Jackson and Diane Losche as exemplifying the turn in anthropology from an imperialist approach to an intersubjective, reflexive one. Jackson's work highlights issues of universalism and knowledge, whilst Losche's stress on the productivity of cross-cultural comparison, despite its inaccuracy,

returns my attention to the possibility of the ethical in work on contact zones: an issue addressed explicitly by Gail Jones. Jones, from the field of literary studies, explores the inheritances and ambivalences of disciplinary knowledges in terms of postcolonial concerns with valuing difference. The ethical imperative to mourn the damage of colonial pasts is raised, and questioned as suspect. Given the influences of affects and desire in the scholar, the viability of alternatives to suspect knowledges is a theme I pursue in this section.

William Yang's slide show performances are considered as part of a broader turn in historiography towards non-professional history work. Yang's shows exemplify the authority of embodied experience as a way of knowing the past, and of the possible uses of affect in learning about contact zones. In exploring his work I return to the issues of the negotiation of difference, knowledge and ethics. Rather than assuming 'the obviousness of the thought it has', the affectivity of histories, when considered, stresses the force and relevance of the past in the present (Berlant 59). What is learnt about the situation of the present also indicates beginnings, proposing of a feeling 'the production of the thought it might become' (ibid).

2 PERFORMING HISTORIES

2.1 History Wars

Recent historical debates concerning the extent of frontier violence between colonial and indigenous people in the European settlement of Australia have raised questions of the discipline of history itself. The debates mark out a shift in historiographical interpretation, from an evidence-based model to a more speculative one. Tracing out the models as they have been debated provides an introduction to the issues around the affective, intersubjective histories that this thesis is concerned with. How do we learn about the past? How do we evaluate its traces in the present? How can we convey knowledge about the past? This chapter will explore these questions through the work of Greg Dening and Klaus Neumann.

History's 'moral virtue', as Bain Attwood describes it, is that it is a 'dialogic enterprise': the historian must refer to and interpret traces of the past (sources), and make this work public in order that it can be challenged by others ('Oral Narratives, Autobiography and History' 218). In this way history offers 'the possibility for a democratic, pluralistic community characterized by an ethical search for and commitment to historical truths' (ibid). This is an 'ethical search' because it involves realising the singularity and value of the past, and of other cultures. As Greg Dening puts it, the 'generous history lets the past be different, not just us in funny clothes' ('Prologue' xi). Given that we cannot ultimately know the past exactly as it was experienced, history also carries the ethical characteristic of being an imperative: an ideal that is strived for, but never reached, for no one can ultimately know the past as it was experienced.

Histories do, however, act as that horizon 'against which we understand our own cultural landscape', functioning as a line 'which allows you to be oriented, to pinpoint "where you are"' (Probyn, 'Dis/connect' 4). They give definition to the present, articulating its lineage. However, whilst the line of the horizon 'relates "them" back "there" to "us", "here and now", it is a line that folds, bends and ruptures connection' (ibid). History can give a sense of the distance of the past from the present, as well as the proximity between them. The challenge of working with the past is to 'conceive of the radical disconnection between concept and everyday present, as well as their productive interconnections' (ibid). This is not an easy task, because the present infuses our

understanding of the past. The public debate over the veracity of historical accounts of violence in Australia's settler past is indicative of the difficulty of identifying appropriate connections and dis-connections between the present and the past.

Writing in a series of essays for *Quadrant*, Keith Windschuttle criticises revisionist histories of Aboriginal deaths in the settlement of Australia. Windschuttle argues that with the publication of Henry Reynolds' *The Other Side of the Frontier* in 1981, revisionist historians portrayed indigenous and settler conflict as 'more widespread and bloody than anyone had previously imagined' ('The Invention' 21). This interpretation, he suggests, is incorrect: 'when it is closely examined, the evidence for these claims turns out to be highly suspect', being ill founded, 'and some of it outright fabrication' ('The Invention' 9). It is Windschuttle's contention that these revisions of Australian history are motivated by a particular 'agenda': the aim has been 'to blacken the subject as much as possible' ('Massacre Stories' 8). 'As long as it takes the correct line', any 'fantastic claims' can be praised (Windschuttle, 'The Invention' 16). He writes: 'the criteria of evidence about incidents of this kind that have been considered acceptable until now need re-assessment', for such histories have led to the 'questioning [of] the very legitimacy of the British colonisation of this continent' ('The Invention' 12; 13).

Windschuttle pinpoints a further significance to this debate: 'It's both a political issue now...[and] it is also an issue that is distorting the kind of research being done in our universities and generally' (in Jones, 'Debate Rages' 8). At stake are questions of how to 'do' history: '[t]o guess at or make up the figures is irresponsible. To do so is to fail the historian's duty to his profession, to his readers and to the people whose lives he is portraying', Windschuttle argues ('The Fabrication' 23). What constitutes appropriate evidence for interpretations of the past?

As Windschuttle outlines it, revisionist histories have been based on hypothesis and speculation, in contrast to documentary source evidence. Educated guesswork is insufficient: '[h]istorians should not have to ask people to take them on trust' (Windschuttle, 'The Fabrication' 20). They must utilise primary sources and adhere to a 'firm line' or minimum 'criteria of evidence'. He interprets the latter as being

> reports by people who were either genuine eyewitnesses or who at least saw the bodies afterwards. Preferably, these reports should be independently corroborated by others who saw the same thing. Admissions of guilt by those concerned, provided they are recorded first-hand and are not hearsay, should also count.

('The Invention' 12)

Historians must check that claims 'are corroborated anywhere in the contemporary documentary record' (Windschuttle, 'The Invention' 13). They must place 'evidence on the public record where their readers can assess its plausibility and other scholars check its authenticity', and they are required to inform readers of the value of sources used: if they are 'direct observations or from rumours several times removed', 'contemporary with events or made months or years later', and whether made by impartial observers or those with 'axes to grind' (Windschuttle, 'The Fabrication' 20).

Windschuttle thus places history firmly within the tradition of empirically-based reason. Guesswork by historians that is '[w]ithout either evidence or argumentation...is most *un*reasonable' (original emphasis; 'The Fabrication' 18). Historians must admit that 'in the absence of proper, empirical research, we cannot presume *any*' generalities: this is 'the most reasonable position to take' (original emphasis; Windschuttle, 'The Fabrication' 22). A reasonable history is one that can be discussed 'openly, critically and impartially' (Windschuttle, 'The Fabrication' 17). Examining historical accounts of several massacres of Aboriginals by non-indigenous people during the pastoral settlement of Australia, Windschuttle argues that historians have not maintained an 'unjaundiced eye' ('Massacre Stories' 8). The estimation of violence against Aboriginals has been based on interpretation, which for Windschuttle is 'not how you do history': 'If you don't have the records, you can't say' (in Jones, 'Debate Rages' 6).

Other historians, however, are less confident with such a strict categorisation of what constitutes evidence and what can be said about the past. Raymond Evans and Bill Thorpe argue in response to Windschuttle that the 'shifting, unreliable quantitative evidence' of the number of indigenous people killed in frontier violence means that comparisons with settler deaths – which were better recorded – are not viable (see Evans and Thorpe 22-23; 27-28). Empirical evidence is inadequate in the context of frontier violence: such events were explicitly not documented, except on occasion, because those actions were often illegal, and therefore they remain in the realm of other, more speculative evidence. This includes what can be calculated from overall patterns, and what is suggested in more anecdotal social memory. Evans and Thorpe, for instance, pay attention to the repetition of incidents, to the way they are reported, to whom, where and in what context, in order to essay the 'ubiquity of frontier violence' and 'the atmosphere of acceptable

terror' that surrounded it, coming to infer 'a colonial world-view that accepted such violence as normative and probably inevitable' (Evans and Thorpe 29; 31; 29). Their contention is that Windschuttle's empirical requirements for history are unrealistic in this context. 'It is intensely discomforting to conceive of an Australian social order where the mass murder of certain people, identifiable by their ethnicity, was a way of life', they hold (29). Unsettled by the implications of a pervasive culture of violence, Windschuttle's analysis, they suggest, is impelled 'into denial, distortion and disremembering while contributing to its [British culture and law's] credibility' (ibid). Portraying Windschuttle as seeing 'an unsullied Union Jack proudly flying over the Australian continent', unwilling or unable to be affected by the discomfort of history, they describe themselves in contrast as being 'compelled to examine the realities of what it [the Union Jack] hides' (33).

Such a justification remains within, but requires an expansion of, the 'evidence' model of historical work. Henry Reynolds argues against limiting history to only that which is quantifiable on record. Reynolds identifies 'perception and preference' as the significant 'barriers' to historical understanding: *not* 'source material or methodology' (Reynolds 163). He extends this model of historical work when he argues that accurate historical accounts depend on 'having a lot of experience of researching the material and having some sense of what is likely' (in Jones, 'Debate Rages' 6). This is indicative of a more speculative historiographical approach that allows that there are various ways of knowing the past. Partially, for instance: a speculative history is aware that it is a highly informed account of the past, but it can never be as definitive as the past itself. A speculative history also acknowledges that there are varied histories of the past, and varied ways of conveying these histories; there is no single, finally authoritative version. Rather than focusing only on the available documents of the past, a speculative history also attends to the many ways in which the past was experienced. As David Rood elaborates: a 'preoccupation with facts and figures as a point of entry into historical understanding...creates an anonymity in the experience...and shifts historical concern to the outcome...rather than its lived experience' (4). A speculative historian asks what a history would be like if it focused on what the past felt like: on the experience of it as *present*?

2.2 Histories and Beaches: Greg Dening

The beach is between sea and land. It is the place where they meet. 'The beach' is an abstract term; Greg Dening says of beaches that they are 'spaces of defining rather than definition' (*Readings/Writings* 86). Victor Turner has described such a space between as 'liminal', emphasising the variable nature of 'interstructural' situations that are between phases of separation and aggregation (93). Such a space 'denies the dominance of the absolute boundary, border or demarcation', Kylie Message elaborates, 'by being itself essentially dialogical and mobile' (167). It is not a delineated state, but a transition: 'a process, a becoming...even a transformation' (Turner 94). Turner comments that this liminal phase will accompany '*any* change from one state to another', a comment which indicates the key characteristic of the liminal: it 'is constructed for and in and by the moment of contact' (original emphasis; Turner 95; Message 167).

'The beach' generally refers to where the waves break on land. This is not a fixed point. 'Land ends at low-tide mark', John Stilgoe observes, but waves can at times reach far into land, further than one would expect, and extend the realm of the beach (2). In nautical usage it also extends the other way, referring to any part of the coastline where a boat sits at anchorage. Not only a space between, then, the beach is also a place between, a particular spot where variable practices occur.

Greg Dening is someone who is comfortable on beaches. 'There is no greater joy for me', he reflects, 'than to walk on a beach' (*Readings/Writings* 91). He likes to write in sight of the sea, watching the waves that are his 'worry beads' (*Readings/Writings* 92). In this section I will outline how his understanding of historical evidence, and how negotiates the limits to historicism that cultural differences raise.

With an academic background in the disciplines of history and anthropology, his geographical area of study is Oceania, 'where islands are everywhere and beaches must be crossed to enter them or leave them' (Dening, *Islands and Beaches* 3). Beaches are also useful metaphors for Dening; he draws upon them when thinking about social practices, experiences of cultural difference and life itself. Beaches, he muses, are places where 'ordinary moments of living are

interrupted'; as abstract spaces they provoke focus on 'identity and the meaning of things. Sometimes we call these moments ritual. Sometimes we call them theatre' (*Readings/Writings* 86). They are 'spaces of defining rather than definition' (ibid).

Dening writes from the disciplines of history (relating to the past) and anthropology (relating to the strange). His area of studies – Oceanic histories – combines concerns with recovering the particularity of the past through its sources, with concerns with the broader issue of cultural difference (between European travellers to the Oceanic area and its indigenous inhabitants). Dening describes his work in *The Death of William Gooch* (1995), for instance, as history with 'ethnographic reflection' – or 'the anthropology of history' – or 'historical anthropology' – or 'anthropological history' (*The Death of William Gooch* 13). Whichever term is chosen, from this perspective '[a]ll history is in some sense cross-cultural': to learning about the past is to learn as if about different culture (Dening, *The Bounty* 113).

The past and the other are exemplary occasions to raise questions of difference and knowledge. Other cultures and other presents surface differences more readily than do one's own. They appear to *stage* difference: their variance from one's cultural present is overt, and this difference enables reflection on the latter. In one's own present, meanings are practiced unselfconsciously, and are more difficult to observe objectively: 'I am more likely to see through the looking-glass than to see myself', Dening writes (*The Death of William Gooch* 50). Yet what is seen in another present and another culture, is more to do with who is looking, than what is observed. 'Knowing the past, which we call history, and knowing the other, which we call anthropology, are the two great cultural metaphors by which we know ourselves and knowing ourselves constitute ourselves' (Dening, *Performances* 200). Consequently, Dening sees histories as 'the medium of *our present relationships*': 'history is metonymy of the present' (my emphasis; *Performances* 30).

Those in the present cannot reproduce either the past or a culturally-different other in their full singularity. Yet nor are the representations and interpretations of them simply reducible to the particular cultural present from which they are being studied. They retain some difference: 'Representing the past – re-presenting the past – is always a challenge to perform cross-culturally. It always means crossing a beach' (Dening, 'Performing on the Beaches' 22).

Dening aims to write 'two-sided history – the histories of the indigenous peoples and of those who intruded upon them' (Dening, *Readings/Writings* 41). What he takes as evidence for such pasts is much broader than Keith Windschuttle's criteria. Windschuttle's model applies present-day definitions of evidence to the past. However, Dening argues that those in the past and in different cultures had their own ways of encoding experience. Consequently, we need to learn their cultural poetics – to see how others *saw* – to learn about others. This involves learning their various systems of meaning: their ways of understanding and being in the world. Dening illustrates this idea by looking out from the beach towards the sea's horizon: 'On the horizons of the sea…things loom through the glim. For a moment, in the glim's shimmering light and haze we see beyond the horizon, beyond the ordinary limits of our vision' (*Readings/Writings* 7). Through studying otherness, as well as learning about ourselves we can potentially get a glimpse of a different present.

How different this other cultural present is from our own is hazy in Dening's work. Dipesh Chakrabarty's discussion of 'Minority Histories, [and] Subaltern Pasts' offers a distinction which makes some clarification of Dening's work. The 'minority' of minority histories, Chakrabarty argues, can be interpreted in two ways. One is the construction of narratives that concern 'a group hitherto overlooked' ('Minority Histories, Subaltern Pasts' 16). The other understanding draws upon 'minority' as meaning inferior and immature (following Immanuel Kant); in the discipline of history, minority histories might be read (politically) as those 'pasts which do not prepare us for either democracy or citizenly practices because they are not based on the deployment of reason in public life' (Chakrabarty 'Minority Histories, Subaltern Pasts' 18). Chakrabarty gives as an example people's explanations of past events that involve supernatural forces as active agents. Such pasts 'resist historicisation': they cannot be interpreted or explained rationally because they operate within a different logic. These are what he calls 'subordinated or "subaltern" pasts' (ibid).

Calling attention to what the glim makes visible, Dening invokes 'subaltern' pasts, but he does not claim to represent them. What he can do is 'master the problems' which come when studying subjects 'where the usual archives do not exist', and write 'minority histories': those that can be incorporated within historicist logic (Chakrabarty, 'Minority Histories, Subaltern Pasts 16). Through this, one might catch a glimpse of that which is different, but it cannot be translated into

historical knowledge. Rudolf Bultmann (as cited by Chakrabarty) provides a description of what the historian can do within historicism: 'the task of the historian', Bultmann writes,

> is to come to know the motives of actions. All decisions and all deeds have their causes and consequences; and the historical method presupposes that it is possible in principle to exhibit these and their connection and thus to understand the whole historical process as a closed unity.
> (qtd. in Chakrabarty, 'Minority Histories, Subaltern Pasts' 21)

In writing two-sided histories, Dening is not claiming to include within history pasts that do not meet its rational criteria; he is trying to learn how others made sense of events – and he believes that this is possible through historicism. In order to do this – to historicise an other's past – he anthropologises it, '(i.e. convert[s it]...into somebody's belief or...[makes it] into an object of anthropological analysis) before it finds a place in the historian's narrative' (Chakrabarty, 'Minority Histories, Subaltern Pasts' 21). Writing about another way of understanding the world, Dening interprets and explains how others believed: he does not write from *within* such a perspective.

Yet through what can be learnt of the past in historicism, he does signal points at which there is something else beyond its scope. Histories and ethnographies are about more than *just* the present culture. People, Dening writes, are 'also re-shaped a little by things over whose production and introduction they had little or no control' (*The Death of William Gooch* 23). Learning about others one changes a little; there are both gains and losses to meeting on a beach. Stephen Muecke concurs: 'You cannot appropriate other peoples' magical symbols' entirely; 'sooner or later they will assert their strangeness' ('Devastation' 125). Difference retains a force, meaning that histories and ethnographies cannot be restricted, or made equivalent, to *only* the past *or* the present culture. Looking elsewhere might reveal the self, but '"Look at your navel long enough,"' Dening warns, and '"you'll only see a belly button"' (*Performances* 15). Histories are always both 'about something that is gone and about something that is made by the telling of it' (Dening, *The Death of William Gooch* 33).

To seek out the glim, Dening immerses himself in others' cultural artefacts, which he reads as 'histories, different modes of the texted past' (*The Death of William Gooch* 14). These sources are not restricted to documents and archives, but are readable just the same, if one knows the 'language' in which to read them; they are not indicative of a subaltern past, but are meaningful within the unity of historicism. The texted past is the past encoded in various forms in the

present. As soon as we try and capture the present, it becomes past: 'Our experiential world is all interpretation in the moment-after of its stimulus' (Dening, *The Death of William Gooch* 13). What we experience – the sights, sounds, smells, feelings etc. in the present – passes; experience is 'evanescent' (Dening, *The Death of William Gooch* 21). It does, however, leave traces. These traces can take the form of a memory, 'a meaning constructed' of the experience, or can be caught and 'made into…[an] artifact [sic]' (Dening, *The Death of William Gooch* 13; 21). Something may be written down, filmed, photographed, painted, or told as a story of an experience; making history is an everyday act that everybody does. Although the past cannot be experienced again directly or completely, evidence of its occurrence exists 'in this transformed, translated, interpreted, encapsulated way' in our daily lives (Dening, *The Death of William Gooch* 13). The past thus exists in shadows in the present, a cloaked presence. Immersing himself in these shadows, in these histories, provides Dening with a broad understanding of the time and culture being studied. It produces 'a sensitivity that can come no other way. It is an overlaying of images one on the other. It is a realisation that knowledge of the past is cumulative and kaleidoscopic' (Dening, 'Afterword' 155). From this accumulation comes 'History', the analytic concept, 'whose common character histories shape' (Dening, *The Death of William Gooch* 14).

In this way history is artificial. Based on inquiries from another cultural present, it is contrived, inextricable from 'artificial curiosities' (Dening, *The Death of William Gooch* 13). Moreover, it is motivated: it is a narrative fashioned to persuade a particular audience of an interpretation of another's past. In this sense histories themselves are 'cultural artefacts' (Dening, *Performances* 26).

Learning how to recognise histories is to learn how to read the past's traces: 'My first performance as a historian is to be a reader', writes Dening (*Performances* 3). By 'reading', Dening refers not just to what it is 'to be literary', but, more broadly, what it is 'to see, hear, touch, [and] smell all the signs around us with political astuteness' (*Performances* 33). It is to use a cultural poetic, a capacity to interpret meaningfully the varied forms of experience – which is something we do daily: 'Cultural poetics is living without footnotes' (Dening qtd. in Brady 11). Cultural poetics are particular to time and place. What we read, how, when and where varies. 'There are boundaries in time as well as space', Dening puts it, 'between Past and Present as well as Native and Stranger. The texted Past is inevitably cargo to successive Presents' (*The Death of William Gooch* 23). Dening uses the term 'cargo' generally to refer to those 'cultural material

things that come across a beach': artefacts that come from another time or culture (ibid). When the artefact is 'ours', we understand its meaning, but when the artefact crosses a beach and becomes cargo to others, it is beached in a present that will give its own significance to the artefact. 'Their encapsulated meanings...are transformed in the new environment of the present into other meanings – of heritage, of evidence, of art, of loot, of souvenir' (Dening, 'The History in Things' 97). Although the artefact will have a new meaning according to another cultural poetic, the strangeness of the object is not entirely eradicated. Cargo carries histories, and understandings of cargo must make some acknowledgement of the continuities they hold, *as well as* of their meaning in the present context: they 'will have to enfold the meanings of the present in which they were made and all the meanings of their successive presents' (Dening, 'The History in Things' 97). The challenge of an anthropological history is to learn others' meanings, whilst being aware of one's own.

Dening does not dwell on the limits to historicising, on those pasts and that cargo which cannot be explained in terms of cause and consequence; he is interested in what historicising can do, rather than what it cannot. He stresses the importance of crafting a history that admits to the complexity of the past-experienced-as-present – as 'processual and unfinished', the everyday negotiation of the past's presences in a variety of forms in the present; 'to write the history of men and women', he reflects, 'one has to compose them in their present-participled': rather than past, people are 'hoping, fearing, loving, apprehending what is to come only vaguely' (*Performances* 16-17). Given that the present is thus experienced as transient and blurred, this foregrounds the artificiality of historicism's stress on cause and consequence, though it does not abandon it. Similarly, cultures are not bounded, and they do not 'begin' and 'end' at a discernable point, yet history and anthropology commonly operate on the assumption that they do. If with 'cultural change there is no Before and After – only a Now...Identity in cultural change is continuous', then the challenge – the 'tease' – is to perform that understanding (Dening, 'Afterword' 155; *Performances* 23).

This extends the model of interpretation to include the imagination. Crafting histories involves 'not just the mind, not just rationality', but this additional element, in order to carry a sense of the past as present: as unfinished, ongoing and with only a hazy understanding of what the future may be (Dening, 'Afterword' 153). This is where he moves out from the evidence-model of history: from evidence, he argues, we interpret – and *imagine*. The past is not conceptualised as

'exemplary, still' – as lived – but as living: 'present with all the possibilities still in it, with all the consequences of actions still unknown. That gift to the past of its own present is always a reflective one. It is always accompanied by a sensitivity to the intrusions of the historian to the giving' (Dening, *The Death of William Gooch* 13; *Readings/Writings* 48-9). Giving prominence to the artificiality of historical and ethnographic narratives makes their distinction from actual experience overt, and this distinction makes possible critical analysis. Without it, there is nothing more than empathy with those in the past, which results in a situation in which representations of the past will only 'count' if they make an audience *feel*. Attending to the sculpting of histories involves more than the experience of the relics of the past: it enables a consideration of both the connections and disconnections between the past and the present.

This approach Dening describes as 'a Poetic for Histories': a concern with 'the authenticity of experience', referring to what 'actually' happened – to what the past felt like – in the context of what 'really' happened: the analytic, historicist interpretation of events (*Performances* 35). In hand-written documents, for example, he reads 'transience of the moment in which they were made. The hand that writes them is still trembling with anger or fear or sorrow' as he reads the words it inscribed (Dening, 'Performing on the Beaches' 3). From a reflection on difference, this opens out to the possibilities of more ways of being in the world than the rational. 'The advantage', observes Dening, 'in focusing on experience' – on the feel of an event – 'is that it breaks the hermeneutic circle' of Descartes' statement 'I think, therefore I am' (*Readings/Writings* 77). There is, Dening knows, a 'suspicion of cultural relativism' about this, but it is not a point he dwells on or finds unduly upsetting (*Readings/Writings* 31). He describes work that is aware of this as 'the new history': the comprehension of history as affective, as 'a performance art that engages the whole body, all the senses, all the emotions' ('Afterword' 153). History, the analytic concept, remains, but it is not the sole focus; there is a greater complexity to the actual than it admits.

Whilst histories may seek to address other ways of being, they cannot fully represent them in terms of cause and consequence. Like the liminal, and like the image of the beach, knowledge of that which is different is partial and inconclusive: it is not easy to see ourselves and 'others' clearly, whether pasts or cultures. 'We do not know what our visit[s] cost' others, Dening reflects, or what is 'the price of knowledge shared' (*Islands and Beaches* 2). In his earlier work, Dening admits to discomfort from the experience of difference. 'Dangerous liaisons', he has

subsequently commented, 'of expression and content, of theory and practice, of words, of metaphors, of strategies of persuasion are dangerous because they sometimes cost something and sometimes fail' (qtd. in Brady 21). In an 'Afterword' to *Islands and Beaches* (1980) – a history of the Marquesas islands – Dening acknowledges that despite its recent rise in population, 'the Land still seems sombre and silent' to him: 'That silence disturbs me: I ask myself where the silence is. My memory of the land is of sounds...my memory is of sounds and of silence in myself' (Dening, *Islands and Beaches* 290). He is aware of a lack of understanding about his own presence there, and his present:

> I discovered my limitations in language and knowledge...I should have known that the dead are easier to talk to than the living. I should have known the cost of hearing somebody through the silence. On the beach one is so deaf to words, so blind to gestures: on the beach one knows oneself in caricature because of the differences, but others hardly at all. That is my regret, then, that I do not know the living Men as I know the dead; and I have this half-suspicion that Aoe [outsiders/strangers] bring their silence with them. (ibid)

His inability to cross the beach causes discomfort and a sense of the failure of the ambition and ethical imperative to give a force and a value to difference. As his work has continued, this discomfort has eased. Over a decade later, in *The Death of William Gooch*, he confidently admits that: 'I have not the knowledge to decode all these [others'] symbols and gestures' (*The Death of William Gooch* 25). Rather than regret, there is a strong sense of the possibilities of the historicist project; what he *can* interpret is significant: 'I can't give life to the dead, but I can give them voice' ('Challenges to Perform' 3). Stopping because of historicism's limitations 'only makes the silence of native peoples more profound' (Dening, *Readings/Writings* 28).

This traces out a shift in focus: now he writes not of the failure to know another completely, but of the value of history's finite potential. In the Oceanic field '*there was, and is, still much to be seen*', even if one cannot see everything (my emphasis; Dening, *Readings/Writings* 28). Elspeth Probyn has commented that too much anxiety about the issues of speaking for others can lead to 'hesitancy, timidity and sometimes solipsism', and Dening indicates that he agrees that this degree of questioning is unproductive: 'I know the lethargy that too much reflection creates' (Probyn, 'Shaming Theory, Thinking Dis-connections' 48; Dening, *The Death of William Gooch* 13). Signalling unrepresentable cultural differences or wandering at historicism's edge are not his aims. There is little stress on 'overcoming' difference. The issue of the failure to completely know that which is considered different – whether it be the Past or the Other – is of little force,

being less a question of knowledge than of know*ing*: of actively participating in reading meaning. Because the present cannot be captured and yet is where we are, 'whatever we are is a process. We are neither insider nor outsider. We are the interplay of both' (qtd. in Brady 15).

Contending that the historian needs to bring all of this to the performance, Dening also reminds that a good performance should engage the audience in this manner: the reader, he recalls, is 'pro-active, creative', taking part in a 'babble of worldwide conversations' in her or his head (Dening, 'Performing on the Beaches' 4; 3). Thus histories can aim to be radical: to act persuasively and mediate someone's understanding in a significant way. As he concludes,

> I make no secret that I want to change the world in my writing. In small ways: make it laugh, make it cry, make it serious for a moment...But in larger ways, too. I can't give life to the dead, but I can give them voice. I can't give justice to the victims, but I can shake the living from their moral lethargy to change the things in the present that are the consequences of the past.
> (Dening, 'Challenges to Perform' 3)

The past and other cultures cannot be fully realised in the present. But in turning outwards towards them, the situation of the present is returned to, for where we are is the interplay of both.

2.3 Ghosts Crying in the Night: Klaus Neumann

Dening admits he feels uncomfortable with his engagement with artefacts of the past, rather than with the living. In the writing of *Islands and Beaches*, he confesses '[t]hat is my regret, then, that I do not know the living Men as I know the dead' (290). Elsewhere he ascribes his failure to successfully learn photography to this same problem: 'it is sometimes easier for a historian to picture the dead than to talk to the living' (*Readings/Writings* 10). Klaus Neumann, in contrast, is interested in the past as it is negotiated by those in the present. He takes photographs, and includes them in this essays. A historian, Neumann explores the histories that circulate in the present to reflect in his work on the 'locally very specific and varied ways of talking about (or being silent about) the past' (Neumann, 'Haunted Lands' 66). Neumann's essays share Dening's emphasis on histories as performances that we know how to 'read', but his focus is on the living: on how histories are told about the past in the present, and why these particular histories come to

have a 'presence felt in the present' (Neumann, 'Haunted Lands' 65). This unfolds out into a broader project, 'an ethics of writing history' (Neumann 'Cropped Images' 41).

For Neumann, the postcolonial agenda – to value the difference of colonialism's others – politicises the discipline of history and questions its adequacy. Who can speak? Who is heard? In what form? The disciplinary practices of history, he argues, have 'links and convergences' with 'the narrative of Progress, [and] the imperative to colonise' ('Remembering Victims' 15). They quantify the past according to the evidence model, objectify it and interpret it; with historicism the 'truth' of the past, it is argued, can be 'winnowed from documents in libraries and archives', and explained according to cause and consequence (Neumann, 'A Postcolonial Writing' 287). Disconnections between the past and the present are considered clearly discernable: those in the present can 'read' the past, and then close it, as if a book.

Questioning such an approach, Neumann asks: why do 'we pay so much heed to the factuality of the past? Why do we privilege certain narrative forms in our representations of the past' ('A Postcolonial Writing' 287)? Anthropology objectifies culture in order to study it, distancing the scholar from what is being studied. Can histories be told that avoid treating difference in a similar manner? Neumann also critically considers the role of the historian and whether it replicates the colonial negation of the other's validity. Can a white, Western academic ethically write on what he or she has 'learnt from people who have been historically subordinate in a power relation that made me part of the dominant?' (ibid).

Neumann raises these questions about realising difference in his essay 'A Postcolonial Writing of Aboriginal History' (1992). One way of representing difference is to let the other speak in the text, 'often necessary in order to decentre our own (white) histories' (Neumann, 'A Postcolonial Writing' 286). Yet it is not as simple as including minority pasts in histories: the historian's negotiation of the various voices can utilise or deflate differences. To illustrate this, Neumann invokes the poetry of Billy Marshall-Stoneking. Some of the poems in Marshall-Stoneking's volume *Singing the Snake: Poems from the Western Desert 1979-1988* are Marshall-Stoneking's presentation of oral histories told to him by Nosepeg Tjupurrula. Marshall-Stoneking (an American) does not make it clear in what context his reworking of the narratives arises. If Tjupurrula (an Aboriginal man) gave his consent to this retelling, it is not acknowledged; nor is the reader told how much the histories have been reworked, or if they have been transcribed and

formatted, for instance. What is presented is a polished response: a narrative arranged 'according to Western modernist aesthetics' that makes 'Nosepeg Tjupurrula's voice a subordinate part of a narrative that is constructed so as to enclose and control his voice' (Neumann, 'A Postcolonial Writing' 286; 284). The appearance of Tjupurrula's stories as poems is 'presented as "the open door" in precisely such a way that you never go to the other side of the door, that you never go to see "what is mastery?"' (Cixous in Cixous and Clement 138). This use of Tjupurrula's stories negates the meaning of their singularity, and replicates the structuring of colonisation, in which the other 'becomes the occasion for *our* speech' (original emphasis; Chow 130).

In contrast, Neumann is interested in constructing histories that ethically register difference, the process he calls the 'decolonisation of historiography' ('A Postcolonial Writing' 281). Rey Chow argues that historical work that does not replicate the colonial model 'can only be conceived [of] when we recognise the essential *untranslatability* from the subaltern discourse to imperialist discourse' (original emphasis; 132). Subaltern pasts cannot be historicised – but their existence needs to be admitted in histories. Can history – 'the orthodoxy under attack' – expand to do this (Neumann, 'A Postcolonial Writing' 281)? Neumann questions further: 'Is it another case of colonial paternalism or benevolent imperialism if white academic historians are engaged in this exercise, even when they are not claiming to act on behalf of those they are writing about?' (ibid).

Subaltern pasts suggest the need for alternative understandings of history, and ethically and politically the need for alternative occasions for history telling that do not rely on the silence of the other. Histories are required that take seriously that there are other ways of being that are not compatible with historicism and its prioritisation of rationalism. Neumann suggests that to realise alternative ways of writing history, 'we may need to experiment': 'be daring, leave...well-trodden paths, and try out forms of representations that have not yet proved to be either' suspect or ineffectual ('A Postcolonial Writing' 280; 281). Such an approach, he writes, could perhaps 'permeate the boundaries between a history and a novel, between fact and fiction, between science and art, while still insisting on' being history ('A Postcolonial Writing' 282). Stephen Muecke inserts a note of caution here, however, when he writes against talking 'freely of experimental writing as if its effects were harmless because they are sequestered in aesthetic domains' – clearly an issue in Marshall-Stoneking's poetry ('Experimental History?' 2).

Neumann raises these concerns in the textual construction of 'A Postcolonial Writing'. 'History' is presented in the opening section as a list of names and dates, and is introduced under the heading: 'a comprehensive, concise, chronological account of black-white relations in Australia between 1 January 1980 and 31 May 1989' (277). The list runs over two pages. It is not assimilated within Neumann's own narrative; he does not frame it with explanatory commentary. Starkly presented, the list speaks itself.

The presentation of the list provokes the reader to participate in interpreting its historical meaning, by making a connection with the title it appears under, for instance, or recognising some of the names. Not introduced as a settled – because overtly understandable – interpretation of the past, Neumann's representation thus avoids implying complicity with colonial histories. The presentation of the list also forces the reader to attend to the particularity of this 'other voice'. It is left as different, unsettling Neumann's narrative. It is only later, when he mentions black deaths in custody, that the alert reader may find a reference to a way of reading the list.

Neumann writes elsewhere that:

> I believe it is one of history's most important roles to make us blink: to make us momentarily close our eyes to the present and contemplate a past seemingly disconnected from the present – only to open them again to a present that may now appear in a new light. ('Fifth Columnists?' 1)

The list makes the reader blink. It brings attention to the past, and to the present: did the reader recognise the names, or not? Why use this form to refer to this past? It remains an unreconciled presence within Neumann's essay, juxtaposed against his writing. He does not lessen the potency of the double absence: the silence of subjectivities normally invoked by naming, and the lack of context. Has Neumann chosen this form because ethically he refuses to adopt historicism's objectification? Who do these names refer to? Are their histories incompatible with historicism? Who speaks here? Or does the list mark out an absence? The questions the list raises remain disquieting. Positioning the historical narrative in this way, Neumann makes the essay 'just a little more difficult for you [the reader], to assume the position you may have presumed was allotted to you' (Neumann, 'Cropped Images' 42).

As '"speaking" itself belongs to an already well-defined structure and history of domination', Neumann attempts to work differently by explicitly staging and thus drawing attention to

particular modes of speaking (Chow 132). The list, for example, provokes the reader, acting as 'a mode of reading that mimics a *listening'* (my emphasis; Neumann, 'A Postcolonial Writing' 280). Neumann himself, as he writes, tries to move away from the authority of the author towards writing in a way that 'reflects a reading-in-process' ('A Postcolonial Writing' 280). With the list he presents 'a statement...[that] is open to the reader, not better than the reader, not set apart from; not seeking the authority of the writer. Not even seeking the authority of the writing' (Blau DuPlessis 275). He does not provide a typical historicist explanation of the past, and in avoiding the impression of an authoritative account, he opens up 'history' to be a variety of engagements with the past.

Historicism's objectivity positions the reader in a similarly objective relation to the past. Trying to do something else is risky. As Neumann admits of the questions a text might raise, the reader as listener may 'assume that it did not warrant an answer' ('The Children of Bullenhuser Dam' 87) (Adorno cautions, because 'such learning remains exposed to error, so does the essay as form: it must pay for its affinity with open intellectual experience by the lack of security' [161]). Nor may the reader *want* to answer, for to accept a more active role in the text involves accepting a form of responsibility that ties the reader to the notion of the subject as a bounded individual. It creates a situation in which 'all the "duties" and "rules" that may be conceived are addressed solely to me, bind only me, constitute me and me alone as an "I". When addressed to me, responsibility is moral' (Bauman 50).

Is responsibility to be felt by the individual subject, or is it similar to affect? Is responsibility contagious, and *not* inherently subjective? If so, can there be an ethical subject that writes history?

Reluctance to take on an individually responsible role towards the past is commonly expressed when people make a distinction between 'then' (when bad things happened) and 'now' (which is different), or between 'them' and 'us': '"something like this, I would think, should interest them far more urgently than us"' (Neumann, 'The Children of Bullenhuser Dam' 87). It is also deflected when responsibility is shifted from the individual to the general: '"in the context of today...it is important to commemorate it"', '"I don't want always to be addressed [specifically]...but as a human being"' (Neumann, 'The Children of Bullenhuser Dam' 85; 86).

Evident in such attitudes is a desire to distance the past from the present, in order to render history unthreatening to the individual.

Yet Neumann advocates this direct address because, without it, distance and forgetting seem the most common (and comfortable) reactions: 'The first person plural extinguishes the moral responsibility of the first person singular' (Neumann, 'Remembering Victims' 10). This response is made evident in Neumann's essay 'The Children of Bullenhuser Dam' (2000). Here, Neumann opens up the relations between public and individual memories through a particular, public act of memorialisation: the naming of streets in Burgwedel (a subdivision of the suburb Schnelsen, near Hamburg) after twenty Jewish children murdered there in World War II.

This overtly staged memorialisation places individual residents in a relation of proximity to the past. Occurring in a residential area, it marks out the space of remembering as private and domestic. The public remembering affects particular people in the present. Several residents are prompted to grapple 'with the issue of whether or not they could in some sense be held responsible for what happened' (Neumann, 'The Children of Bullenhuser Dam' 89). This is in a particular sense (with regard to the children) and in general ('the crimes committed in the name of Nazi Germany'), but always personally: 'I' or 'my family' (ibid).

Interviewing the residents of Bergwedel, Neumann finds that previously, when an optional (and less personal) engagement with the past has been offered, it has typically been ignored. Neumann notes that although there had been 'ample opportunities to learn about the history of the children, as it had been recounted many times in the Hamburg newspapers...the majority of interviewees still possessed only scant relevant knowledge' ('The Children of Bullenhuser Dam' 84). In the suburb which signposts remembering, there is no such choice for the residents: every day the street names put the residents in a position to be affected by history. Remembering is 'triggered by the street names' and does 'not depend on whether or not residents approved of the naming of their streets' (Neumann, 'The Children of Bullenhuser Dam' 88). The particularity of the street names – this street, this child – is also significant: it makes a difference in people's responses that the children were not killed in Germany in general. Putting people in the present a direct relation to the past, the question *why me* 'more than anything else...set in motion processes of remembering' (Neumann, 'The Children of Bullenhuser Dam' 86-87).

Instead of asserting mastery over the past by claiming to be comfortable with it, as if it is finished and distinct from the present, it is, Neumann writes, perhaps 'apparent helplessness, and a preparedness to face the past encoded in the street names in Burgwedel…[that] is going to enable Germans to live with and work through the legacy of the Nazi years' ('The Children of Bullenhuser Dam' 91). A personal vulnerability in their responses, 'to be touched, to face the past and to remember', is evidence of a willingness to 'let the past intrude in their own lives without assimilating it' (Neumann, 'The Children of Bullenhuser Dam' 91; 92). 'Any entry into such otherness requires some giving', Dening reminds ('Time Searchers' 12). Perhaps in such unpredictable honesty is an appropriate response to the past.

The naming of the streets also gives prominence to questions of the politics, and ethics, of memorialisation. Neumann notes that there were no survivors to acts as witnesses to the murders, so '[a]ny account of the hanging that relied on the eyewitness accounts of the SS men was in danger of relating the murder from the perspective of the murderers' ('The Children of Bullenhuser Dam' 82). Does the act of naming the individual children avoid this: does it memorialise their lives, or their deaths? Or, as with the work and death of Primo Levi, is it the very ambiguity that they invoke that is significant?

Why, too, are these children recalled, out of the millions of people who were killed by Nazis? Can they be generalised to stand for so many others, and would that be appropriate? *The Diary of Anne Frank*, for instance, was for German teenagers in the 1950s and 60s the 'only detailed account of the persecution of the Jews' (Neumann, 'The Children of Bullenhuser Dam' 75). Neumann writes that this authorised Frank became *the* voice of all of the Jews killed in World War II, and as a text it implied naivety, passivity and removal from direct daily violence. It also promoted a singularity that denies the power of the massive number of acts directed against Nazi targets: 'through her, Auschwitz and Bergen-Belsen could be imagined as place designed to kill one particular Jewish girl' (ibid). This erases the individuality of those who committed such acts: 'murderers who also have names' (ibid). Nor is there a strong sense of responsibility borne by those in the present, something that enables the possibility of creating change. It obscures the relation between individuals and the past, which is important because although an individual's 'memories are shaped by collective discourses', they are not defined by them: 'German discourses about the Nazi past are also shaped by individual acts of remembrance' ('The Children of Bullenhuser Dam' 92).

In another essay on public memories and the Nazi past, 'Cropped Images' (1998), Neumann describes a memorial that stages this relationship between public and individual memories. This Holocaust memorial is in Berlin-Steglitz, a suburb of (once West) Berlin (see Figure 1). It has a reflective surface; as well as the inscriptions on its surface and the reflection of the memorial's surrounds, viewers will see themselves mirrored in its wall. Looking at the memorial, they find themselves placed in a contextual relationship to the past, to other buildings, nearby activity and passers by. As staged here, the past infuses the landscape of the present, and the viewer can see him or herself in 'a picture that was there before I arrived' (Neumann, 'Cropped Images' 41).

This highlights the partial nature of history. Visible to Neumann when standing in front of the memorial are other views, different aspects of the area that historicise and inform his understanding of it – just as there are other political or theoretical contexts from which the memorial could be approached than the ones Neumann writes about. Focusing on the memorial – 'the past as it manifests itself in the present' – is one way of approaching the past, yet this also 'obscures rather than illuminates' understandings of the past because it cuts out other perspectives (Neumann, 'Cropped Images' 27). Similarly, taking public instances of remembering as indicative of private memories obscures historical understanding. A cropped image is limited: it does not provide a full picture; it is only a singular instance. Emphasising this, Neumann cautions: 'There are many other angles from which I could have depicted the mirror wall' ('Cropped Images' 23). Taking seriously that 'where an individual speaks from affects both the meaning and truth of what she says', Neumann's approach attends to a 'non-prescriptive ethics which does not shirk attending to the issues of the present [by being]...particularistic rather than universal' (Alcoff 98; Neumann, 'Remembering Victims' 16).

Mindful of this, Neumann draws out the differences between written and oral narratives when considering Marshall-Stoneking's representation of Tjupurrula's oral history. In speaking, 'We engage the listener and frame our words with body language, facial expressions, and variations in the level and pitch of our voice or the speed of our speech' (Neumann, 'A Postcolonial Writing' 282). When this is turned into a written narrative, it is 'cleansed': 'we most likely will concentrate on the "information" an "informant" provides...[ie] cut out the rolling of the eyeballs, the pulling of a face...the intonation in the transcription' (ibid). The written transcript misses the physical performance experienced, removing the texture and immediacy of the

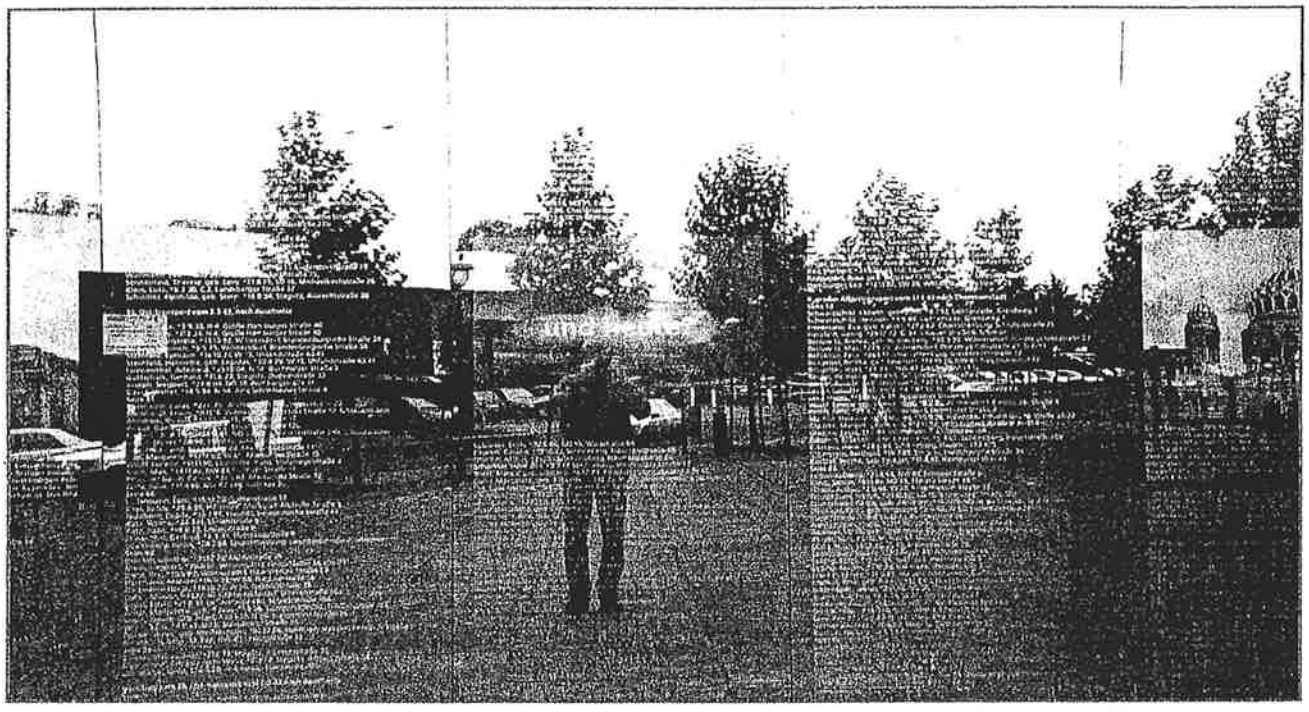

Figure 1

spoken, 'cooling down the oral' (ibid). It is important that histories attend to the lived experience of the past as present, because without these features it is made into 'something qualitatively different' (Neumann, 'A Postcolonial Writing' 293).

Neumann is consequently self-conscious about his own representations. He works to stress the artful composition of the text, rather than to mask its artifice in order to present it as 'natural', '[a]s irresistible as the course of history' (Neumann, 'A Postcolonial Writing' 287). One of the ways he does this is by including different textual modes in his essays: the list, for instance, and the photograph.

At the start of 'Cropped Images', Neumann includes a photograph of the reflective memorial. It is followed by a brief written description of this memorial and its broader socio-political context.

> The so-called Spiegelwand (mirror wall) is inscribed with the names, dates of birth and local addresses of 230 Jewish inhabitants of Steglitz who were deported to ghettos and concentration camps between 1942 and 1945. It is one of numerous memorials which have been built since the early 1980s in the Federal Republic of Germany to commemorate the victims of Nazi Germany. This proliferation of public memories of the Nazi past – given material form in museums and monuments – is specific to Germany, but it is also a symptom of what Andreas Huyssen has called the 'memory boom' of the past two decades.
> ('Cropped Images' 23)

This sketches out a historical context for the memorial and implies that Neumann's – '(and, by extension, my readers')' – semiotic reading of it comes from this static perspective; other views, omitted from description, 'presumably do not belong to the memorial' ('Cropped Images' 23-24). He initially likens his (implied) subsequent analysis of the memorial and the inclusion of his photograph of it to 'interpreting a poem as well as reading it' ('Cropped Images' 23). Yet if this was so, he notes, rarely would the poem's reader 'mention the typeface of the edition she read. She would not describe the texture of the paper on which the poem is printed, nor the table on which her arms rested while she savoured the poem for the first time' ('Cropped Images' 24). While these qualities might not be relevant to a literary analysis of the poem, they do inform historical understanding; the materiality of history has effects. Approaching the memorial as only text is to ignore its physical presence, which yet infuses its significance. As Dening comments, '[p]erformances also demand an understanding that communication is as much through the ambience and props of the performance as it is through individual sentences and words' (qtd. in Brady 9). The memorial as representation of the past is not always what is of interest to

Neumann: 'memorials themselves sometimes mattered less to me than their seemingly irrelevant surroundings. My heart beat faster when I felt that these surroundings talked to me, revealed themselves to me as part of a memorial *ensemble*' (my emphasis; 'Cropped Images' 24).

The past as it occurred was singular, but histories are not. Neumann is 'concerned about contexts which are easily left our of our field of vision when we focus on memorials', because '[t]hey help me to remember the subject matter of the actual memorials' ('Cropped Images' 30). The material, social, political and the subjective are all forces that construct and render histories; the ensemble approach 'compels us to think about the conjugation of forces: individuals, concepts and theories that at any time enfold the past within the present, constraining or enabling action' (Probyn, 'Shaming Theory, Thinking Dis-connections' 48-49). The sense of the past is not located in the material object (the memorial), or in the abstract concept. It is in the experience of these – and other – aspects. 'The past is never already there...Potentially, however, the past lurks behind every corner – if, and only if, it is recognized' (Neumann, 'Cropped Images' 31).

The ensemble is a form that does not require uniformity amongst its parts. It is expected that the parts are distinctive: without difference, it becomes a monologue. The ensemble is a model for Neumann's work in 'Cropped Images', where he includes 'incidental' histories alongside his overt subject matter (the memorialisation of the Nazi past in Germany). 'By establishing seemingly random connections', he loosens the association of the memorial site with the actual experience of remembering the past; 'The memorial as such does not remember; the person standing in front of it may, or may not, do so' ('Cropped Images' 31; 40). Roland Barthes invokes the photograph as a similar form: it is 'itself in no way animated, but it animates me' (*Camera Lucida* 20).

Drawing upon a 'seemingly irrelevant but parallel past', Neumann constructs a text that mimics what provokes the experience of the past ('Cropped Images' 31). Juxtaposing different pasts to create an ensemble enables readers 'to draw connections', and allows Neumann to ask: 'what do *you* remember?' ('Cropped Images' 41). Addressing the reader as a participant, Neumann refers to historical understanding (which is not located in objects or in the abstract, but is experienced), and models an ethical history: 'By leaving the safety of the didactic "we", the "I" can engage a "you"' (Neumann, 'Cropped Images' 41). 'In its reflexivity', this is 'necessarily autobiographical' (ibid).

The past was experienced as present only once and in a particular way. History, in contrast, is 'constantly repeated, never the same...possessed of the qualities of immediacy, multiplicity, fluidity and metaphor' (Dening, *The Bounty* 109). The ensemble approach highlights the performance mode of history. Neumann uses it again in 'Haunted Lands' (2000).

On the first page of 'Haunted Lands' is a photograph of a wall (see Figure 2). The photograph is a vertical rectangle, approximately one quarter of the size of the whole page; it sits on the page's left hand side. In the middle of the pictured wall there is a slit – 'for rifles', the photograph's label explains (Neumann, 'Haunted Lands' 65). To the right of the photograph is a similarly-sized column of Neumann's text. In this column he muses on the desire for the past to have agency, to 'haunt' the present as if it were a ghost. He writes: 'I am interested in how and why pasts that for a long time were hidden and buried come to reverberate in the collective historical consciousness of perpetrators and their descendents' (ibid).

The juxtaposition of text and photograph provokes the reader to consider the two things in light of one another. Their parallel placement highlights the materiality of the past and its actuality: the slit in the wall has been there for years, and its presence in the present attests to the existence of the past. Yet it also brings attention to the discursive nature of histories. The present is experienced directly and immediately, but the past can only ever be accessed discursively with histories. This does not exclude 'a relationship between lived human experience (a past) and its representation' (Neumann, 'Remembering Victims' 13). It does, however, point to a paradox that Neumann articulates later: the past is inconceivable without histories, but the materiality of the past exists 'regardless of its histories' (Neumann, 'Haunted Lands' 78). The past is never silent or dead; whether or not it is noticed is itself historical.

In this essay, Neumann juxtaposes public histories of the Nazi past in Salzgitter (a town in Germany) with public histories of the settler past in Geraldton (a town in Australia). This can be read within Stephen Muecke's outline of 'experimental history' as that which is

> juxtaposing conflicting accounts and testing them against facts...but also, in a human discipline like history, against the end products of historical work – the readers and audiences constituted as part of historical formations – for history will only be history if it is read and made sense of. ('Experimental History?' 2).

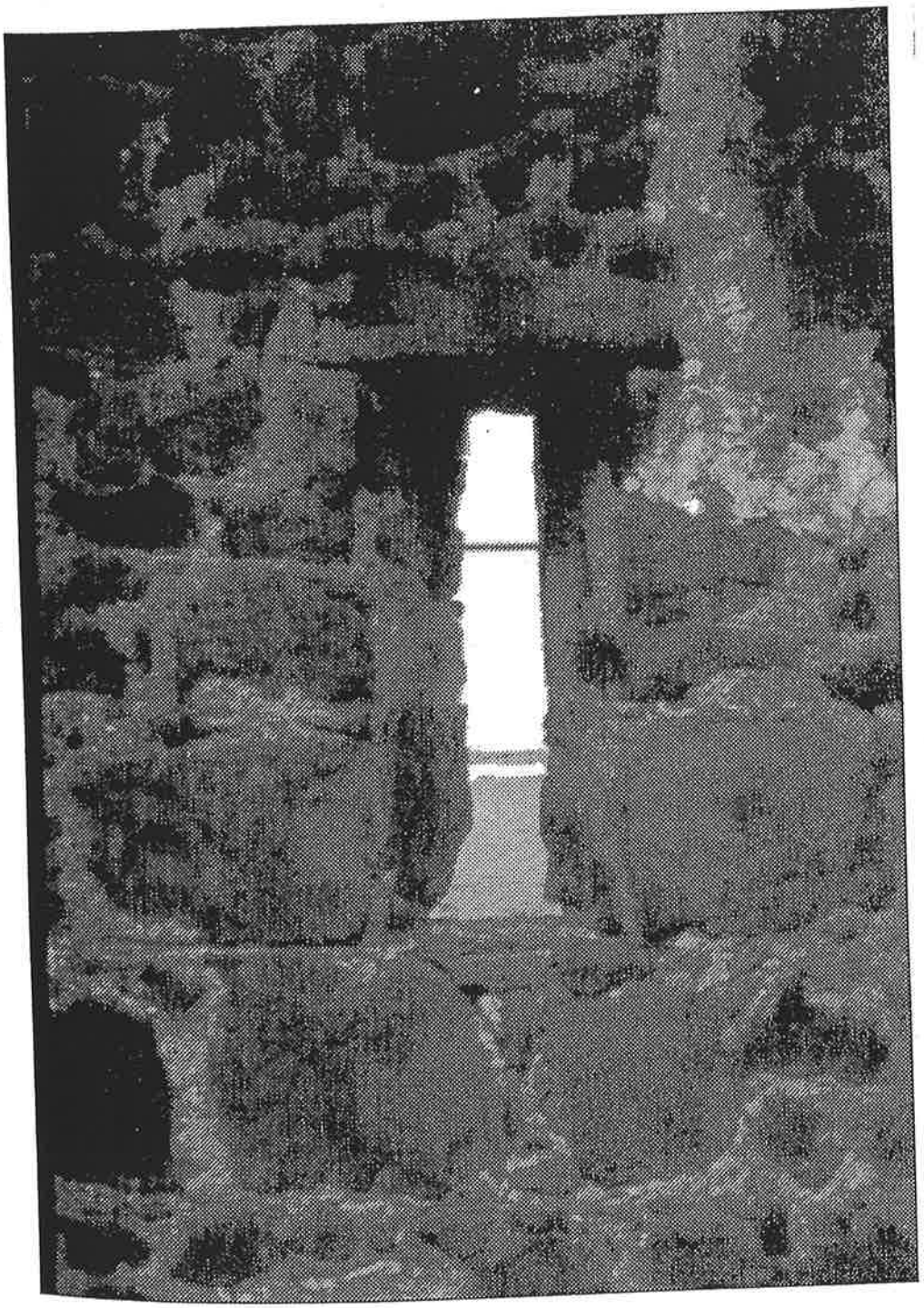

Fig. 1. A slit in the wall for rifles (Sandsprings, 1998).

Figure 2

'There is little that connects the two places', Neumann clarifies; the two histories have been chosen 'more or less randomly' ('Haunted Lands' 75). Their pasts are incommensurable, but their 'ghost stories' – what they publicly remember of the past – are placed alongside each other because, he argues, they 'can be compared even if their subject matters, the pasts they refer to, cannot' ('Haunted Lands' 66). This is a work of 'comparative history-*telling*' (my emphasis; ibid).

Their occasions of public remembering involve histories of and by perpetrators and their descendents. In Salzgitter and Geraldton, the public histories are not told because they are 'compelled to do so by survivors' (in Salzgitter there are no Jewish survivors); they are instigated by perpetrators and their descendents (Neumann, 'Haunted Lands' 74). Neumann writes that it is '[a]s if settlers in Geraldton and non-Jewish Germans in Salzgitter became acutely aware of an absence, of a silence, that disrupted their attempts to imagine a comprehensive local history' (ibid).

Comparing their public histories also reveals that in both cases the 'public memories of past crimes were generic': not locally specific, but 'often unrelated to local pasts' (Neumann, 'Haunted Lands' 74). What is it in the situation of the present that informs this remembering? What is happening when 'ghosts of the past...animate a present that is, strictly speaking, not of that past' (ibid)?

The questions Neumann asks, like those asked by revisionist historians of colonial Australia, move out from the model of history as a strictly verifiable account of the past. In 'Haunted Lands', the pasts that are remembered are generic rather than accurate. In Geraldton, for instance, settler descendants 'like many of the well-meaning non-Aboriginal Australians, seemed intent on identifying a local massacre' ('Haunted Lands' 74). But they have real – and local – effects: those motivated to publicly remember 'were haunted by ghosts and that these ghosts are *real*, could hardly be disputed' (original emphasis; Neumann, 'Haunted Lands' 74). Debating the factuality of the past is not the most productive historical approach here; in contrast to the position taken by Windschuttle, Neumann writes that '[t]he moral dilemma created by Australian settler colonialism cannot be resolved by establishing now whether or not, or how many, Aborigines were killed' ('Remembering Victims' 15). Instead, Neumann's questions call for a history of the

present: a history of a different past than the one overtly invoked (the present-ist history). The veracity of the public history that circulates is not the issue; the particular force the narrative of the massacre of Aboriginals has for so many (white) people is. The past does not act independently on the present; in itself, it is no way animated. Yet in the present, it animates the living. Consequently, public histories can be read as metonyms for the present. 'Ghosts' do not simply make 'their presence felt in the present...provoking the circulation of new histories' (Neumann, 'Haunted Lands' 65). What is remembered of the past is tied to 'the desires and fears of those imagining such ghosts' (Neumann, 'Haunted Lands' 66).

As texts 'begin and move out, heading for uncertain destinations', they are not always, as William Howarth would argue, 'carrying readers' or offering a 'safe passage to ideas, arguments, stories' (241). Stressing that those in the present are not passively reading histories, but active participants in shaping historical interpretations for the present, can act as an invitation to 'enable them to draw connections' (Neumann, 'Cropped Images' 41). The role of the writer of history can be 'that of a facilitator rather than a mere provider of knowledge' (ibid).

Neither Dening nor Neumann abandon the historicist model, but they do recognise its boundaries. Dening stresses the importance of minority histories in understandings of imperial pasts: to learn about pasts involving different cultures, we need to learn how both cultures interpreted and stored information about events, he argues. The past, even as the present adapts it to its own uses, always retains its difference, and has its own influence on the present. Maintaining the need for evidence, Dening expands what constitutes traces of the past that inform historical understanding, and focuses on the past as experienced as present: as full of possibilities, not fixed in a single outcome. Neumann questions historicism's ability to admit to subaltern pasts and non-rational ways of being, and seeks modes of representation that are not complicit with colonialism's. He tries to construct histories that challenge the passive, objective role of the reader – and writer – in the historicist model, and concentrates on the connections between the present and the histories that circulate in it as a way of understanding the force of particular histories. These approaches open up the ways in which we can both learn about the past, and understand our present. The work of Stephen Muecke, which I will turn to now, places side by side historicist work and what

exceeds it, and thereby foregrounds historicism as merely one possible model for conceptualising cross-cultural histories.

3 PARALLEL STORIES

3.1 Ethics and the Space of Representation: Stephen Muecke

Greg Dening's work foregrounds the difference of the past and the present, and the self and the other, in order to theorise ways of knowing that are relevant to – but not restricted to – the present. Central to his approach is the attempt to learn how others saw their experience. Klaus Neumann considers histories as metonyms of the (local) present, reflecting on the experience of the past in public remembering. The work of cultural critic Stephen Muecke, a Professor of Cultural Studies, moves out from their recognition that histories shape the present. Muecke expresses a desire to write decolonising histories for the present, and he attempts to do this by constructing texts that work in parallel.

Prevalent throughout Muecke's work is an aim to enact decolonising practices: to 'attribute a value to the strangenesses of others, and to provide occasions for giving this value a force and a usefulness' (*No Road* 182). This is in opposition to historicism's method of neutralising differences between ways of being in the world by asserting that 'it is possible in principle to exhibit' all events in terms of causes and consequences, 'and thus to understand the whole historical process as a closed unity' (Bultmann qtd. in Chakrabarty, 'Minority Histories, Subaltern Pasts' 21). Instead, Muecke focuses on what is enabled through maintaining difference.

Avoiding the emphasis on 'The Problem of Speaking for Others', Muecke's aim turns towards the possibilities of working with others (Alcoff). Concentrating anxiously on respecting the singularity of the other can lead to a stress on difference, Muecke argues, preserving '*distance* in relation to Aboriginal lives' and making 'them *apart* in time or space' (original emphasis; *No Road* 102). Keeping something separate from the self is based on a 'fundamental human decision' about what one is not connected to, and, 'by this same logic, other highly significant things [that] *are* connected with me' (Muecke, 'Devastation' 127). Being connected does not imply similarity; for Muecke it suggests proximity – as with parallel lines, which extend out into space and do not meet:

> But space is curved, there are strange attractions, so the lines curve in parallel, sometimes almost meeting, sometimes shooting off. Cultures trying to coexist in the same country, the same space, can also move like this.
> (Muecke, *No Road* 16-17)

Working with culturally different people has its risks, for '[w]e all move towards the other in...desire' – and desire does not necessarily respect difference (Muecke, *Textual Spaces* 199). However, Muecke holds that as it is a characteristic of the everyday, '[d]esire in relation to the Other is perfectly okay' – as long as this desire is questioned (ibid). Researchers and writers need to ask, for instance, how desire 'might work for or against your...work, or for or against the work of the Other' (ibid).

Using parallelism to model cultural difference revisions the model of translation. The enlightenment-based concepts of reason and irrationality propose a hierarchically-structured understanding of difference: that which is different from Western ideas is considered minor, an object of study and interpretable by Europeans. This act of interpretation consolidates the authority of the West as superior to its more primitive others. The idea of translation developed out from this possibility of interpretation, and replaced it with the establishment of postcoloniality as an influential critical theory. Translation models admitted to the limits and insufficiencies of giving a sense of one culture to another, and highlighted the changes to meaning that inevitably occur when shifting between two different systems of signification. Attention here shifted from questions of the 'original' or 'authentic' other, to more reflexive questions: what is different about 'my' culture? Why can this understanding not be translated?

Yet, with its lineage, whether the translation model has moved out from the 'need' to translate others is ambiguous. Is it possible, for instance, to 'translate' another without implicitly foregrounding the translator – and his or her own cultural assumptions – in the work produced? Or is it possible to stage this overtly, rather than to replicate it implicitly? Moreover, translation presumes cultures are different enough, and cultural boundaries stable enough, to translate between – yet cultures are never 'back to back' (Jones, 'Thaumatropes' 112). The model of parallelism sidelines these concerns. Distinct, marked texts placed in parallel create a space between, where the work of translation previously took place (see Figure 3). Alongside each other, however, this textual construction is not exegetic: it does not explain the other. The reader can pull out similarities and differences, and whilst one text can comment on another, both perspectives are presented such that neither appears more – or less – valid. Each is 'another "object text" for commentary, thereby starting to dissolve the rigid binary' between object and subject (Hodge and McHoul 207).

said to meself —
just about sundown —

So I (tap) went (tap) to —
so I went to the shower room had a bath put me pinjamas on an' everything I was laying down watching book in the, bed you know —
I was on me own —

So one lady came around —
eer she wanted to take me round, show me the town, you know (laugh) —
"Hullo! What are you doin'?" said —
"Ah, well I just gettin' ready to go to bed," I said (laughter) —
(breathy voice) "Whaat?"
"Just ready to go to bed" —
"Go to bed?" he said[4] —
"Yeah, oh what the time now then?" —
"Aah, it'd be about eight o'clock," he said (laughter) —
"Eight o'clock, what, in the morning?" I said —
"Yes" —
"OOH!" (laughter) —
I went in the shower room took all me pinjamas out an' put me trousers (laugh), hat (laugh), an' everything, coat —

more Aboriginal: pindan, pinjarra, and so on.

'Going to the City' is a dangerous activity, which must be negotiated with laughter: so much is at stake that the laughter asserts the community's cohesion against its threats. All those philosophical structures that one would have to 'buy into' in order to live there, embodied in every consumer exchange or work practice. The lure and inevitability of it all, and yet maybe the stories of the bush have resisted the stories of the city from time to time — Paddy's laughter about his one trip to Perth has broken through the metropolitan certainties about progress and centrality.

Sacred/Public

In the absence of specialised artists in the traditional culture, and the absence of mass or commodified forms of culture, it is clearly difficult to effect a separation

[4]This variety of Aboriginal English does not distinguish gender in the pronouns.

Figure 3

Taking the form of the book as an instance of cultural reproduction, Muecke takes the negotiation of cultural differences in representation seriously. Klaus Neumann, in 'A Postcolonial Writing of Aboriginal History', writes that: 'it is still possible to let an other voice speak, and that it is often necessary in order to decentre our own (white) histories' (286). Neumann's opening example – a list of names and dates of Aboriginal deaths in custody – brings attention to how a commonly used mode of historical representation negates subjectivities by objectifying them, and erases any sense of cultural difference by listing people as names and dates.

The changes in an oral narrative when it is transcribed is another example both Neumann and Muecke draw upon to indicate the significance of representing difference. The performative aspect of the spoken word is often lost in transcription when words alone are focused on, and this loss changes its meaning. This has important ramifications for orally-based cultures. As Muecke notes, '[k]nowledge or truth is not just available through the Western form of inscription, which is alphabetical writing' (*Textual Spaces* 40).

Muecke wants to register these differences within the format of the book, without thereby absorbing the particularity of difference within Western practices of literary production. This is demonstrated in *Reading the Country* (1984), the book Muecke produces with Krim Benterrak and Paddy Roe. Benterrak is a painter from Morocco, and Roe is a storyteller, a Nyigina man from Roebuck Plains in Western Australia (Benterrak). In *Reading the Country*, Muecke transcribes Roe's oral narratives. As he does so, Muecke attempts to bring attention to their representation in the book, and to maintain a sense of the distinctiveness of a verbal narrative in a written text:

> But today too many cloud you know -
> if this is all clear - -
> but this is not the place -
> this is where I born -
> (in Benterrak 58)

Muecke explains elsewhere that '[t]he layout of words on the page is intended to draw attention to the physical nature of textual production. Each line corresponds to a "breath group" and the dashes at the end of each line indicate the length of the pause' (*Textual Spaces* 41-42). Rather than interpreting or translating Roe's narrative for the reader, he wants to 'write in such a way

that they [the distinctions of Paddy Roe's speech] would remain prominent in all the force of their opinion' (Muecke in Benterrak 231).

Muecke also attempts to model a practice of historical critique that can address difference in the very 'production (and distribution) of texts' through the use of juxtaposition (*Textual Spaces* 41). In his work with Benterrak and Roe, three authors and several distinct media are represented within the single space of the book, brought together in their relations to a particular part of the country. *Reading the Country* includes distinct modes of representation (paintings, transcriptions of songs and stories, theoretical writing) by distinct people (Benterrak, Roe and Muecke). These different forms are juxtaposed with one another, with the intention of creating the 'constant displacement' of a homogenous sense of meaning (Muecke in Benterrak 14).

Muecke is quick to caution that the book is not unified by an overarching perspective. In his self-conscious narrative, Muecke articulates a desire to 'delineate our differences rather than stress our common purpose' so that he does not appear as if 'a spokesperson for that Aboriginal opinion, or its interpreter' (in Benterrak 230; 231). This is not simply because he does not want to speak for another; it is also because he believes that 'there is no absolutely common purpose, just as there is no common feature, like our humanity, which could adequately unite us for any common purpose' (in Benterrak 230). The shared space of the book has a tendency to neutralise differences, to make for polished or '"smooth" communication', by suggesting that each of the voices form part of a whole (Muecke in Benterrak 13). However, the work represented is of significantly different social and cultural contexts. The book attempts to represent these distinctions by using different mediums and placing various modes of telling side by side, rather than making information abstract and erasing concrete differences (such as tone of voice, pauses and repetition).

The juxtapositions force the reader to move from one register to 'another place, another position' and another way of being (Muecke in Benterrak 14). They draw attention to the modes of representation and the ways in which the modes themselves suggest different knowledges. The reader is provoked to consider the relations between understandings of places and the forms that communicating such understandings take, questioning notions of reading and seeing and how they relate to meaning. Muecke describes the text that is created in this way as 'a poetry of fragmentation, contradiction, unanswered questions, specificity, fluidity and change', connected

by a specific place (in Benterrak 11). Rather than an interpretation, it is designed to suggest a '*practice* and a *knowledge* potentially present in relation to any event' (original emphasis; Muecke in Benterrak 217).

As well as foregrounding differences, *Reading the Country* suggests what differences can do when they are respected. Keeping the parts distinct and acknowledging different contributions without merging them together is proposed as an example for understanding place, for seeing 'the "already-there" in quite a different way' (Muecke in Benterrak 13). The fragments of texts are suggestive of the plurality of ways of knowing, and the heterogeneity of the present. Within this there are also 'lines of mutual appropriation' drawn between the narratives: although distinct they are not separate, but overlap at times (Muecke, *Textual Spaces* 185). Meaning is experienced as plural and changing: 'the relationship between the subject who is looking and the object being regarded is constantly shifting...[recognising] its limits, knowing that its object, always smarter than any subject, remains partially impenetrable' (Muecke in Benterrak 230). Because of the plurality of ways of knowing, knowledge is also partial. 'We are all "foreigners"', Muecke acknowledges, 'partially ignorant of the purposes and effects of the other's work' (in Benterrak 15). The question of whether recognition of the other will be founded on similarity or difference is not resolved, but charged by the text.

This use of parallel textual voices also appears in Muecke's own book, *Textual Spaces* (1992). Muecke initially places a textual fragment from Daisy Bates' *The Passing of the Aborigines* in a parallel column to his own. Bates, a self-taught anthropologist, wrote a study of indigenous Australians that was first published in 1938. The passage quoted describes her vision of Aboriginals as sylvan people in a timeless past; it is placed to the right of Muecke's own text, which is on 'Racist, Romantic and Anthropological discourses' on Aboriginals (*Textual Spaces* 30). Placing them side by side, rather than quoting Bates within his work, the difference between the two texts' approaches is rendered on the page. Muecke does not explicitly comment on the passage he includes; it is for the reader to consider the two in relation to each other.

In the use of parallel columns that follows this instance, Muecke includes as the left column a passage from T. G. H. Strehlow (who was of the same era as Bates). Muecke's own narrative is now placed on the right side of the page, where Bates' was, suggesting that his work is of the same lineage. Strehlow's passage describes what 'a northern Aranda man, Makarinja' has told

him about his experience of a maturation ceremony involving the removal of his thumb nails (Muecke, *Textual Spaces* 36). The space between the two texts – Muecke's and Strehlow's – immediately indicates that they are distinct. Coming after the use of the parallel technique with Bates' narrative, Strehlow's passage may be read more critically by an alert reader, allowing Muecke to move out from identifying 'suspect' narratives and focus instead on 'the conditions under which discourses can be produced, and how these structure our ways of knowing' (Muecke, *Textual Spaces* 37). Again, it is for the reader to interpret the juxtaposition of the two texts.

A story translated from Gunwinggu (a traditional indigenous language) and transcribed by the anthropologists Ronald and Catherine Berndt (published in 1951) is another passage Muecke places in parallel to his own commentary (*Textual Spaces* 43). The Berndts draw upon this story as 'data' and the story's narrator as an 'informant' (ibid). Muecke – continuing to work with parallel columns – contrasts this transcription with his own of a story told to him by Roe. Muecke's transcription contains lines and dashes in an attempt to indicate the performative aspect of the story and 'the resistance of the concrete particular to abstraction' (Taussig 2). The reader, in the space between that the parallel columns create, can compare his method with the Berndts' transcription.

From this point in *Textual Spaces* onwards, whenever Muecke uses parallel columns he is transcribing an Aboriginal's oral narrative or quoting an Aboriginal writer (ie. Figure 3). Rather than speaking for Aboriginals, he tries to insert their voices into the text in ways that give some sense of their own agency – as he hopes his own transcriptions do. Having established through the use of the parallel technique that his own practice moves out from, though is inevitably linked to, colonialist transcriptions, he calls the blank space between the columns of his own text and that of Aboriginals' a 'dialogical space' (*Textual Spaces* 101). This 'working in parallel' creates what Heather Kerr describes as 'a space across which an ethically impelled conversation might take place' ('Shakespeare – Postcoloniality – Adelaide, 1999' 107). Refusing to adopt an authoritative role, Muecke constructs a text in which the reader is 'dis-oriented in regard to any stable or normative "horizon"' (Kerr, 'Sympathetic Topographies' 117). This indicates the plurality of knowledges; there is no historicist unity. With Muecke's stress on marking the text with characteristics of the verbal, this disorientation extends further: the dominance of the written word is challenged, and the space of representation as abstraction is itself unsettled.

This avoids implying that Muecke's own narrative is ethically and ideologically 'pure'. He points out that there appears to be 'a rule for the writing/telling of history in cross-cultural encounters' – that being to 'select details which are outside of, or extend, the general knowledge of your projected reader or listener' – and suggests that his narrative may be operating in this pedagogic mode (*Textual Spaces* 69). Aboriginal narratives are not exempt from this 'rule' either, but as much as listening to an Aboriginal oral narrative that does this 'plays along, maybe extends, a line of cultural difference', it also places the listener in proximity to the narrator: the listener is implicated 'as a new person following a retelling of a "true" story, where the narrator retraces once more the words of the original participants' (Muecke, *Textual Spaces* 69; 71). In listening, one attends to the other, becoming 'a participant who must respond actively during the telling of the story', as is indicated in Muecke's transcription of Roe's story, when Roe asks him questions and he replies (Muecke, *Textual Spaces* 71). Listening to the Aboriginal narrative, one is 'linked, personally and in a "line" of custodianship...back to the actual event' (ibid). This does not conform to the requirements of disciplinary history to establish events of the past. As Muecke's use of the term 'custodianship' indicates, rather than the historicist prioritisation of abstract reason, this places value on human relationships. Here, stories about the past establish a sense of lineage from the past to the present in terms of relationships between people. In contrast, the reader of the colonial narrative (i.e. of Bates, Strehlow, and the Brendts) is a passive recipient. The transcriptions of Strehlow and the Berndts are less attentive to the performance of the teller, and they proceed according to the principle that the other is minor, and interpretable. Their work maintains distance between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, and the past and the present.

Muecke's work exhibits a confidence that the issues of working with and representing cultural differences can be addressed with an appropriate approach. Yet despite its clear ethical imperatives, the textual practice of parallelism also raises questions similar to that of the translation model: are cultures ever 'antithetical'? Or are they 'always, and necessarily, tessellated and hybridized' (Jones, 'Thaumatropes' 112)? If they do infuse one another, can difference be adequately negotiated in cultural criticism? This is an issue in Muecke's work with Adam Shoemaker on David Unaipon.

3.2 Mimicking His Story: Literary Histories

Muecke's model of working with marked texts in parallel, leaving an ethically charged space between them, evolves through thinking about the writing of indigenous history, and writing histories for the present. Muecke's project with Shoemaker – editing and introducing the work of David Unaipon, and writing his biography – also employs such working in parallel. Unaipon was born in a '"native wurley"' in South Australia in 1872, and educated according to British and Christian educational ideals at a mission school (Hosking, 'David Unaipon' 86). He was an inventor, a scientist, a writer, an Aboriginal, a Christian. He travelled widely throughout Australia, often acting as a (self-appointed) spokesperson for Aboriginal people to colonial authorities. His story is one that is alive with questions of cultural differences.

For the biography, Muecke proposes extending the model of the parallel to mimicry, following 'Aboriginal philosophers' who 'urge us to follow, to know someone by following literally in the footsteps of the figure, [whereby] knowing the character becomes a capacity to mimic his or her gait' ('Between the Church' 16). Writing this way

> would be performative and...it would add something ineffable to its subject, partake of the revelatory. In theoretical terms, I am talking about not simply representing the subject *as object*, but mimetically reproducing an excess. (Original emphasis; 'Between the Church' 15).

Mimicked, Unaipon is present in the text – but not '*as himself*, as it were' (original emphasis; Muecke, 'Between the Church 11). Whilst it is not the original, the copy can have the same *force* as the original: through the sympathetic imagination – or what Michael Taussig calls 'sympathetic magic' – the copy can achieve 'the character and power of the original, [or] the representation the power of the represented' (Taussig xviii). In contrast to 'realist epistemology in which the text is absent as a category making up the event', the mimic is present, as well as what he or she mimics (Muecke, 'Body, Inscription, Epistemology' 51). Nor is the mimic presumed to be identical with what is mimicked, just as the parrot is not the same as what it parrots. Reading Muecke's transcription of Roe's stories in *Reading the Country*, the reader can gain a sense of another way of relating to the country. Similarly, by trying to mimic Unaipon (or his performances), Muecke and Shoemaker might be able to achieve a sense of his presence or 'life' – without implying that their representation of Unaipon is 'himself'. It is a self-conscious practice that comes close to the other, but avoids charges of appropriation by not claiming to be the other. Through mimicry the force and impression of the other may be achieved.

Susan Hosking suggests that:

> Unaipon challenges our imaginations and encourages us to consider our own constructions and representations of Aboriginality. However, the extent to which these intellectual exercises can bring us any closer to the life and mind of David Unaipon is open to speculation. ('Breaking the Silence' 12)

However, Muecke and Shoemaker's use of mimicry does carry the possibility of getting 'closer' to Unaipon, because '*copy blurs with contact*' (my emphasis; Taussig 43). Imitation offers a form of contact with the original through sympathetic magic: the imagination is 'lifted through representational media, such as marks on a page', towards what it represents (Taussig 16). What is imagined from the mimicry does not capture what is mimicked, but it can carry its force – and in this way the presence of the mimicked can be experienced. Muecke's attempt to textually represent the pauses and repetitions of Roe's stories is an example of this possibility. Reading his transcription, one imagines the breaks, echoes and rambles specific to Roe's way of telling. It is the copy's particular power: it makes no claims on being the original, but the experience of the copy can resemble the experience of the original's presence. As Taussig comments, 'the model, if it works, gains through its sensuous fidelity something of the power and personality of that of which it is a model' (16). This is claiming a different relation to the past than that of historicist work, in which knowledge of the past is premised on distance from the particularities of lived experience. Mimicry values the power of representation because it offers the possibility of returning to experience.

The power of the original that the copy imitates is the power to affect. The contagiousness of affects themselves makes for a form of mimicry. 'An extreme close up may solicit' what Anna Gibbs refers to as a 'kind of involuntary mimicry': it may 'produce in us the affective response' ('Contagious Feelings' 3). In proximity to someone stricken with grief, for example, I might feel a similar sense of acute distress. Such 'sympathetic or mimetic knowledge may be the earliest form of knowledge of both self and other' (Gibbs, 'Disaffected' 338). What Muecke is proposing when he writes of mimicking Unaipon, then, is to artificially enact an everyday occurrence, making it appear strange by drawing attention to his performance of it *as history*.

Choosing mimicry as a technique for writing Unaipon's biography is also informed by Unaipon himself, who as an Aboriginal mimicked 'whitefella styles and skills, exceeding them in his

abilities', and was required by Europeans to 'perform aboriginality' (Muecke, 'Between the Stage' 16). Mimicking Unaipon's mimicking gait highlights the complexity of working with appearances: what reception did Unaipon's colonial mimicry receive in indigenous communities? And what of his indigenous mimicry within settler circles – and his colonial mimicry here too? This imitation is not singular, leading to the 'framing of an individual whose every gesture is doubled in meaning: "I", becomes "we"; "he" becomes they"...every gesture verges on excess' ('Between the Church' 15). Conveying a sense of this excess, Muecke argues, will convey something of the performativity of Unaipon's life: 'writing would be performative and...would add something ineffable to its subject, partake of the revelatory' (ibid).

Muecke points to Taussig to acknowledge that affective history 'provides a welcome opportunity to live subjunctively as neither subject nor object of history, but as both at one and the same time' (Taussig 255). Drawing upon affect 'explicitly or implicitly demands a wider variety of response than is the norm in academic research', and Muecke admits that 'my mimeticism collapses scholarly distance' (Probyn, 'Dis/connect' 1; 'Between the Church' 17). In their biography he and Shoemaker are 'interested in the power of appearances': in the theatre of history, which means learning 'the different representational, performative and epistemological strategies of Aboriginal versus Western culture' (Muecke, 'Between the Church' 17; 18). Greg Dening writes of learning to see what others saw in terms of a historicist end: the past can then be analysed more thoroughly, but still in terms of cause and consequence. Muecke and Shoemaker, however, are claiming something different: that by learning how others lived in a participatory experience, the presence of the past might be experienced. This is the radical potential of their approach – and its challenge: writing this way can 'create and change Australia's history' (ibid). Historicist accounts of Australia's past have excluded the value and force of difference. The approach of mimicry maintains difference between cultures, but also offers contact with the different other: we can experience the presence of the past other.

The issues of authenticity, mimicry and ethics are given particular focus in relation to the publication of a new edition of Unaipon's *Legendary Tales of the Australian Aborigines* (2001) edited and introduced by Muecke and Shoemaker. This is the first time these tales have appeared in print under Unaipon's own name, though they were collected by him as he travelled to various parts of Australia visiting a variety of indigenous communities and recording their stories. Can these tales be considered indigenous? How should their appearance be read?

In their introduction, Muecke and Shoemaker construct a historicist account which recovers the events which enabled Unaipon's collection of tales to be edited by, and published in the name of, a white anthropologist (W. Ramsay Smith, in 1930). They state their aim as editors as being twofold: to restore the *Tales* to the version closest to Unaipon's drafts, and to 'restore it as intellectual property to the original owners, the Ngarrindjeri community of South Australia, and to Unaipon's descendents' (xii). These are 'political' and 'creative' ambitions: 'Both edge back into the past to demonstrate that it is always relevant to the present and future aspirations of the Ngarrindjeri' (ibid). This is realised in their desire for a 'true repatriation': 'if this is to be a true repatriation, it must involve literally bringing the stories back to the people and country of their creation, to make the circle whole', 'weaving the text back home to the community' (xii; iciii). They overtly operate according to historicist method, whereby '[a]ll decisions and all deeds have their causes and consequences; and...it is possible in principle to exhibit these and their connection and thus to understand the whole historical process as a...closed unity' (Bultmann qtd. in Chakrabarty, 'Minority Histories, Subaltern Pasts' 21).

Muecke and Shoemaker find the tales' homes with Unaipon, and Unaipon's home with the Ngarrindjeri. 'For us, as editors,' they write, 'David Unaipon is at the centre of this circle, but like the mats that have made the Ngarrindjeri women famous for their craft, his story is woven in with those of others' (xii). Although Unaipon was educated from both Aboriginal and European traditions, and went on to engage with both in his work,[4] Muecke and Shoemaker argue that it is Unaipon's indigeneity that is at the centre of his writing, suggesting that other characteristics – such as his European-style classical education – are to be considered only in the context of this: 'it is vital to note that David Unaipon always focused upon these areas *within* the context of his indigeneity' (original emphasis; xv). His sermons and scientific work 'may have worn the external vestments of European culture, but their inspiration and the matrix for their application was undoubtedly an Indigenous one' (ibid). Suggesting Unaipon's work be considered from within the framework of his indigeneity, they consequently place the *Tales* within an indigenous context of custodianship.

[4] See Muecke and Shoemaker xv.

This prefigures the 'whole historical process as a...closed unity', in which all events are explicable through cause and consequence (Bultmann qtd. in Chakrabarty, 'Minority Histories, Subaltern Pasts' 21). In Muecke and Shoemaker's introduction, Unaipon's lived experience is presented as readable as a continuous, homogenous present. It does not offer the possibility that in different cultures there are different ways of being in the world, and that such different modes are incompatible with historicism. Chakrabarty suggests cultural differences contribute to a 'heterotemporality' in the 'history of the modern subject', and such heterogeneity is suggested in Unaipon's writing (Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe* 239).

Ambiguity is a feature of Unaipon's Preface to his tales: '*As a full-blooded member of my race I think I may claim to be the first – but I hope, not the last – to produce an enduring record of our customs, beliefs, and imaginings*' (their emphasis; qtd. in Muecke and Shoemaker xi).[5] Using European racial classification for identifying himself as Aboriginal, rather than in terms of kinship, he objectifies his lived experience. Hosking notes that this 'kind of cultural shift...is common in his personal narratives' ('David Unaipon' 89). Unaipon describes, for instance, 'how "the natives" ("they") were particularly fond of some of the Bible stories...they "bore some resemblance to items in *their* own tribal lore"' (Hosking's emphasis; Unaipon qtd. in Hosking, 'David Unaipon' 89). His experience is viewed anthropologically as an object of study in order that it be made historicisable.

Born within an Aboriginal community, Unaipon – to paraphrase Chakrabarty – had experienced a 'preanalytic relation to the practice under observation' (*Provincializing Europe* 241). *Prior* to learning 'to be an observer of it', he experienced events from within an indigenous perspective (Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe* 241-242). Consequently, there is more than one view here: his preanalytic experience and that which is historicisable. They are not unifiable; there is a heterogeneity to his experience. 'He is of "them", and apart; distanced from the "primitive" beliefs and practices that, he claims...have "prevented the increase of my race"' (Hosking, 'About Time' 62). His use of 'they' indicates that the way of being in the world he knows through lived experience has been 'written over by the voice of the anthropologist' (ibid). This analytic position does not allow him to 'recognize himself' in what he is analysing – and its assumption that reason is the *only* way to 'know' prevents him from perceiving his 'own present

[5] Muecke and Shoemaker begin their introduction with this quotation, which also appears with Unaipon's image on the Australian fifty dollar note.

as discontinuous with itself' (Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe* 239). The 'historical or anthropological consciousness' that is 'seen as the work of a rational outlook' causes Unaipon not only to objectify his embodied experience, but to deny it by positioning it as of 'a historical or ethnographic time and space separate from' the one he occupies as analyst (ibid).

Given such heterogeneity, Chakrabarty argues in *Provincializing Europe* that we need to 'reconceptualize the present...to think beyond historicism' (249). To take cultural differences seriously implies that the present is 'irreducible not-one', and means no longer interpreting the past *only* through the framework of reason (ibid). Accepting that there are other ways of being 'refer[s] us to the plurality that inheres in the "now," the lack of totality, the constant fragmentariness, that constitutes one's present' (Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe* 243). There are shapes – or experiences – that do not combine to make a circle, and that do not make for a wholly historicisable present.

Under Western notions of authorship and copyright law, Unaipon's descendents are the legal holders of the intellectual and moral rights to the work (Muecke and Shoemaker xxxix). Returning the rights to them occurs within two systems: Australian/English law, and indigenous custodianship, where things are 'produced *to be handed over*, circulated rather than accumulated' (original emphasis; Muecke and Shoemaker xx). This latter understanding, in conjunction with an indigenous appreciation of relations of trade (that when something is given, 'something else should come back along that trade route' [Muecke and Shoemaker xx]) informs Muecke and Shoemaker's work of literary repatriation, 'weaving the text back home to the community...where the stories were told and traded in the first place' (iciii). They ask Unaipon's descendents to check the manuscript 'for anything that is inconsistent according to their knowledge', and they return the intellectual copyright to the Ngarrindjeri community (Muecke and Shoemaker iciii).

This risks obscuring the particular communities that traded with Unaipon, for it ignores the 'place-specific relevance' of the tales – attending to which is another of Muecke and Shoemaker's aims: 'Such works intensify their meanings if they are seen to be rooted in a series of places' (iciii). Unaipon travelled widely to collect the tales, and travelled with an interpreter (Muecke and Shoemaker xxxiv); recognising his custodianship in terms of his indigeneity assumes that he collected and edited the stories with reference to appropriate levels of circulation

according to the particular indigenous communities. Are all the stories intended for unrestricted public attention, or are some intended to have a restricted circulation within particular indigenous communities? The influence of Unaipon's European-style education – of, for instance, anthropological and philosophical perspectives – is evident within his work. Is it possible that such interests influenced the stories he chose to record, and the details he chose to include? 'To whom they [the tales] actually belong, and the extent to which they are traditional or "authentic", are exceptionally complex questions', Hosking notes ('About Time' 62). 'Should Unaipon have revealed these secrets?' Hosking asks. 'Should I be reading about them?' ('About Time' 63). Some of the stories work on 'dangerous ground' (ibid).

Yet if the representation can carry the force of its original, these are pressing questions for work that aims to be a 'decolonising gesture' (Muecke and Shoemaker iciii). These issues are heightened when the power of the representation is recalled. To '*give an example, to instantiate, to be concrete*' – as the stories Unaipon collected do, being offered as examples of the tales that indigenous communities told – these 'are all examples of the magic of mimesis wherein the replication, the copy, acquires the power of the represented' (original emphasis; Taussig 16). If 'in reading such examples we are [with the sympathetic imagination] thereby lifted out of ourselves into those images', is it appropriate that all of the stories published under Unaipon's name are allowed to circulate freely through the global literary marketplace (ibid)? That they do already, through numerous editions under Ramsay-Smith's name, could increase the significance of attempting to check with the particular communities involved, and altering the text if required. This would be an important act for an edition that aims to turn 'away from the imperialism and universalism of writing that is supposed to transcend place, aspire to the universal, and conquer time by becoming of permanent historical significance' (Muecke and Shoemaker iciii). Hosking's reference to 'some ill-feeling' about 'the way Unaipon collected stories from his people' suggests the need for caution here ('Breaking the Silence' 14).

Such ambivalence unsettles the achievement of repatriation. From which context should the *Tales* be considered? Hosking points out that '[t]wo worlds, at least, are represented in Unaipon's work, and yet he belongs comfortably in neither' ('About Time' 62). Just as the *Tales* can be read as representing aspects of indigeneity, they can also be read for a mimicking of colonial ideologies. Both presences are caught up in Unaipon's work, and life.

The desire for repatriation is motivated by an ethical imperative grounded in a present politics; it is a desire to produce a work of decolonisation. This is to write histories for the present, to try and construct a space in which there are alternatives to replicating colonial pasts. Within the indigenous understandings of ownership and trade that Muecke and Shoemaker describe, Unaipon is custodian of the tales he collected. Getting his descendents to check the manuscript and handing the intellectual copyright to the Ngarrindjeri community suggests Unaipon's submission of stories to a publisher be thought of within this understanding of circulation and giving/receiving. This recognises and values a different cultural logic. But the tension raised by the ambiguity of Unaipon's experience is inescapable: '[o]nce the mimetic has sprung into being, a terrifically ambiguous power is established; there is born the power to represent the world, yet that same power is a power to falsify, mask, and pose' (Taussig 42-43). Unaipon collected the stories for payment by the publishers. The issue of what he exchanged with the communities is not raised. Questions of appropriation and ownership prompted by the history of the publication of the *Tales* are not completely resolved by the return of the book's rights to Unaipon's community and descendents.

Whilst Unaipon 'convert[s]' indigenous objects and behaviours into a form that can be assimilated within the logic of reason by making them anachronistic 'relics of other times', Muecke and Shoemaker's use of the term 'repatriation' suggests that they seek to undo this conversion in appearance (Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe* 243). Hosking asks whether 'such stories [can] really be "repatriated"? Don't they exist somewhere between one country and another, like David Unaipon himself?' ('About Time' 62). Yet rather than arising from the space 'between', perhaps the charge in Unaipon's work and life arises from *discontinuity*: perhaps both countries are present, and irreconcilable: 'we have to stay with both, and with the gap between them that signals an irreducible plurality in our own experience of historicity' (Chakrabarty, 'Minority Histories, Subaltern Pasts' 23). The present is not-one. There is a sense of *dis*comfort because discontinuous modes exist at one.

Muecke and Shoemaker's image of the smooth circle elides the feeling of discomfort from the ambivalences and impossibilities of reconciling the actual. Hosking describes Unaipon as an 'ambivalent figure': 'The black Scotsman in suit and tie, with fob-watch and chain, rolling his r's and travelling second class (not third) by train' ('About Time' 62). In the present, Unaipon's life

and work give presence to heterogeneous pasts. Attempts to locate him and his work in a single origin are repeatedly unsettled.

This uncertainty is performed in Hosking's essay on Unaipon and his writing, 'David Unaipon – His Story' (1995). Hosking writes from the discipline of literary studies. She begins: 'It is difficult to tell David Unaipon's story…different stories emerge depending on how…information is assembled and, of course, who assembles it' (85). She introduces Unaipon in relation to the first[6] publication of writing by Aboriginal people (Walter George Arthur, Peter Bruny and David Bruny). Like them, Unaipon was the 'product of a Christian mission' and his writings were 'controlled' by 'white mentors and editors' (Hosking, 'David Unaipon' 85-86). Yet whereas the earlier work suggested 'Aboriginal protest and expression of Aboriginal experience', Unaipon, 'writing in the twentieth century and drawing upon' his European-style classical education, 'was in a more advantageous position to explore the space between Aboriginal and British colonial cultures' (Hosking, 'David Unaipon' 86). This locates Unaipon's work in a lineage of the publication of Aboriginal writing. It also marks where his work moves out from this mould: Aboriginal protest and the expression of Aboriginal experience might feature in his writing, but they do not define it. His work becomes harder to categorise because of it, as does his life, 'for David Unaipon's life is as much a text for interpretation as is his writing – more so, perhaps' (Hosking, 'David Unaipon' 86).

Muecke and Shoemaker situate Unaipon in a different literary lineage, one that is not so ambiguous. They focus not on publication, but perceptions of Aboriginality: 'it is worth remembering', they write,

> that at the time when David Unaipon was first writing, the notion of an Indigenous person being an author was literally unheard of. (According to the standard accounts, we would have to wait until 1964 and 1965, when Kath Walker and Colin Johnson first published their books.) (xvi)

They argue that Unaipon is both a custodian and an author, and that there are no contradictions in occupying both positions. But for Hosking this is much less certain. She explores Unaipon and his writing as 'rooted' in both Aboriginal and Western cultures, and finds this a great cause of

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[6] In 1837.

tension. In her reading this friction is unresolvable, which is precisely what she finds compelling: the 'mysteries and contradictions that defy simple explanation' are both 'fascinating and problematic' (Hosking, 'David Unaipon' 86).

She opens her essay with a biographical sketch of Unaipon, and closes with a section called 'His Stories' – a close reading of some of Unaipon's stories. She reads his work as 'enigmatic', describing it as a 'puzzle' and likening it to the 'paradox' of his own life ('David Unaipon' 100). Between these two sections on Unaipon and his work is a short piece called 'My Story'. This is prefaced with a quotation from Muecke's *Textual Spaces*, which suggests that one can 'legitimately take an interest in things to do with Aboriginal culture if I tell my own story, don't pretend to tell theirs' and if one bears in mind 'how easily that story can be told by you while the Other continues to be unable to speak' (qtd. in Hosking, 'David Unaipon' 92). This functions to explain the inclusion of 'My Story', and to articulate her desire to work towards a modest, ethical practice.

The structure of separate stories that Hosking uses in 'David Unaipon' is a model for her work with Clem O'Loughlin, an Aboriginal man. In '"It's Not a Story. It's History"' (2000), Hosking explains that they have been 'working together to produce a book which will represent the life of Clem O'Loughlin, told in his own voice...When the book is finished, I will think of it as Clem's book. I do not expect to have my name on it' (85). Their work together will produce O'Loughlin's story, but in working together another story is produced – 'My story' (ibid). This story Hosking puts her name to: 'What I claim...is the right to tell what I have learned from working with Clem' (ibid). His story, and her story, are published separately; in the journal in which '"It's Not a Story"' appears, it is followed by 'Early Days on Point Pearce' by Clem O'Loughlin. Whilst this admits to the proximity in which they have worked, it also maintains an ethical respect for their differences by attempting to avoid interpretation or telling another's story. Telling her own story is a technique that reminds her – and the reader – of the distinctions between her story and his, highlighting how easily she can slip into telling his story.

In the 'My Story' section of 'David Unaipon', Hosking describes a recollection from her childhood involving two Aboriginal girls who were in her class at school in 1954, Alice and Noreen. These girls lived in Colbrook Home, with many other Aboriginal children; at the time Hosking thought they were all orphans. Alice and Noreen were in school for a year – and then

they 'disappeared' (Hosking, 'David Unaipon' 93). Hosking misses one of the girls 'for a while, and then...forgot her', 'for many, many years' (ibid). Fourteen years later, a question from an Aboriginal woman in a pub provokes her to remember them. Now she 'knew a lot more', though by juxtaposing this claim against the observation that '[t]hat was in 1968, when Sally Morgan was seventeen and Jack Davis at fifty-one had yet to publish his first book of poetry and Mudrooroo was still Colin Johnson', she implies that what she knew was not from Aboriginal writers (ibid). She closes 'My Story' by describing what she had learnt: 'I knew then that the bricks we scavenged from the demolition of Colbrook Home to line the pit in my father's garage were shameful bricks. The pit is filled in now, and those bricks are buried. But they will always be there' (ibid).

Generic histories have real, local effects. Affective histories here implicate one ethically in a relation to the past. Lacking the confidence of Muecke and Shoemaker's therapeutic reparation of the circle, the image of the pit suggests an understanding of historicity in which there is no final stage of recovery, and parts do not add up. The present cannot bring justice to the past. Hosking did not wonder about Alice or Doreen, or their home. Years later she can read Aboriginal writers and work at listening to Unaipon, but this will not mend the past. Despite present intentions of recuperation, the pit built of shameful bricks continues to exist, suggesting the limits of representation.

Yet despite its (inevitable) failure, the ethical imperative remains a force, as is illustrated in Hosking's work on Unaipon. Having failed to wonder about Alice and Noreen's stories, she works here to listen to Unaipon's. Elsewhere, she writes that because they 'didn't tell their stories of Colebrook Home, and because I didn't ask...I have been compelled to read autobiographies by Colebrook kids' ('Homeless At Home' 65). The past's irreconcilability is a generative force in the present, which cannot make up for the past, but can add to the present. When Mary Louise Pratt comments that the 'effort to decolonize knowledge must be, among other things, an exercise in humility', perhaps Hosking's lack of resolution is what she means (2). The buried pit is unseen, but its imagined presence indicates the 'desires and fears' of those in the present (Neumann, 'Haunted Lands' 66). The imagined haunting informs understanding and action, but is yet unable to be settled. Discomforting claims of repatriation, the past cannot be altered; as it is remembered, it continues to point to the situation of our present.

Muecke works at recognising difference and productive ways of working with it. In his and Shoemaker's introduction to Unaipon's *Tales*, however, a historicist approach is prioritised, resulting in a focus on unity rather than difference. Through Unaipon, Hosking finds limits to historicism, and she stresses the heterogeneity in his work and life. Consequently, she turns to her own story, which reveals the role affective histories have in her present. In the next section I will explore the work of Peter Read, who also turns from indigenous histories to his own story. Read is concerned by the effects of histories on the present.

4 HISTORY, LOSS AND AUTOBIOGRAPHY

In the disciplinary understanding of history, a (rational) 'citizen-subject' contributes 'to a public debate about what happened in the past' (Chakrabarty, 'Reconciliation and its Historiography' 10). 'Big' narratives about the past are introduced and debated to achieve a general level of consensus. As historian Peter Read describes it, once established, 'smaller truths' or 'local variations' that differ from the larger narrative begin to be told ('Clio or Janus?' 54). The smaller truths do not greatly alter the big narrative: they do not 'undermine that established and central truth' (ibid).

In their introduction to David Unaipon's *Legendary Tales of the Australian Aborigines*, Stephen Muecke and Adam Shoemaker identify Unaipon and his work within the context of his indigeneity. Susan Hosking points out that it is more ambiguous: Unaipon lived and worked in two worlds, colonial and indigenous. However, Muecke and Shoemaker's work could be understood as establishing Unaipon as an indigenous author as a 'big' historical truth – that, once established, can then be debated. Hosking works and publishes in the field of literary studies, and her disciplinary background may also inform her different approach.

With archival research and a strong foundation in oral history, Read has been specifically concerned with establishing as a big historical truth the separation of Aboriginals from their families by the state, and the destructive consequences on Aboriginal lives. This has been done through the historicist method: lived experience is historicised, interpreted and presented in terms of cause and consequence. Since the early 1990s his work has turned to explore the effects of the establishment of this narrative on non-Aboriginal identity. Read argues that the postcolonial

impulse to value others has obscured – if not negated – the value of 'non-othered' people. He aims to draw out the value of the latter through his work exploring non-Aboriginal Australians' attachment to place. In this project he has expanded from the historical to include the autobiographical, incorporating his own experience in his historical work. It is not subsumed within history, however: his experiences also provoke his history work. What is the role and significance of difference here? And what are the possibilities and limitations that come from 'differing investments in possibly incompatible disciplinary models' (Kerr, 'Fictocriticism' 95)?

Read's work in the field of Aboriginal History can be comfortably situated within the big/small truths model of history – as introducing the removal of Aboriginals from their families, and the subsequent effects on Aboriginals' lives, as a 'big' historical narrative.[7] As Bain Attwood notes, Read's work has 'played a crucial role in defining and naming, and, thereby, creating a historical event – "the removal of children"' ('Learning About the Truth' 189). Beginning in the 1970s, this work has contributed to and occurred within changes in Australian historical understanding over two decades (see ibid). Read notes, for example, '[w]hen I wrote the pamphlet The Stolen Generations in 1981, child separation was scarcely talked about…Eighteen years later, thousands of children throughout Australia [who were separated from their families] have spoken out' (*A Rape of the Soul* vii-viii). This historical work is continuing; one of Read's current projects involves the interviews of three generations of Aboriginal people affected by separation, highlighting changes over the years in '[t]he relationship between the search for Aboriginality and the search for understanding of family members' (Read, 'One Hundred Years' 3).[8]

'[A]bout 1995', however, Read felt that he could stop working on the 'truth' of the experiences of separation because it was established enough to begin to consider 'the qualifications, the regional variations, the "smaller truths"' (Read, 'Clio or Janus?' 56). Also at this time, he began to publish work that questioned the consequences of Aboriginal History. Aboriginal History

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[7] See Peter Read (ed) *Down There With Me On The Cowra Mission: an oral history of Erambie Aboriginal Reserve, Cowra, New South Wales* (Sydney: Pergamon Press, 1984) or 'Introduction', in *The Lost Children: Thirteen Australians taken from their Aboriginal families tell of the struggle to find their natural parents*, eds C. Edwards and P. Read (Sydney: Doubleday, 1989): ix-xvii. An alternative example is Peter Read's *A Rape of the Soul So Profound: The Return of the Stolen Generations* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1999), which collects work in this historical mode from 1976-1998.

[8] For issues of historical understanding surrounding this book see Read, 'Clio or Janus?' (58-9).

introduced a different understanding of Australia's past from one based upon 'a peaceful act of discovery and settlement, whereby a progressive people and their venerable institutions were successfully transplanted and the land was transformed' (Attwood and Foster 11). From Aboriginal History came a narrative of 'invasion, a process of conquest that dispossessed the rightful owners of the land' and severely damaged Aboriginals' ways of life and their communities (ibid). It challenged (what were) dominant perceptions of national identity, and in doing so 'threatened to deprive many Australians of a familiar and comforting map of the past' (Attwood and Foster 12). Ann Curthoys identifies this in hindsight as a debate between interpreting settler Australians as 'victims' or 'oppressors': recognising indigenous narratives as part of a national history felt threatening to settler-descendents, provoking a 'fear of a symbolic loss, of the legitimacy and permanency of the non-Aboriginal Australian's sense of home' (15). Having spent twenty years working with stories of the destruction of and damage to Aboriginal communities, Read began to question the implications of this for non-Aboriginal identity.

In essays and books such as *Returning to Nothing: the meaning of lost places* (1996), *Belonging: Australians, Place and Aboriginal Ownership* (2000) and *Haunted Earth* (2003), Read writes himself into the narrative, unsettling 'the unmarked voice' of academic history (Kerr, 'Fictocriticism' 93). For the first time he draws strongly on his autobiographical experiences in his writing; he begins to consider himself as a historical subject, realising that 'I should be working on what touches me most closely' (qtd. in Warden 118). His experience motivates the direction of his work, informing the historical. It works both ways, however: the historical also informs the autobiographical. While history and autobiography 'work in the same way *as narrative*', as Read uses them they are not reconciled or assimilated (original emphasis; Steedman 48). The relation between the two is constantly shifting in his work.

In the Preface to *Returning to Nothing*, Read places a beginning of the book's project with experiences he had as a teenager. Finding out about the now-demolished homes of his ancestors, he visited the locations where they used to be and found that the sites 'began to haunt me, though in a much less personal way than it did those to whom the house was a living memory' (Read, *Returning to Nothing* ix). He took a photograph of a site, describing his younger self as a 'breathless' historian (ibid). In his recollection he is enthralled by his ancestors' stories, and feels that the loss of the family home continued to haunt his relatives. This autobiographical experience motivates his visits to the places where the homes once were. These references to how

he and others felt and what he did draw upon the authority of lived experience to direct historical work that explores the effects lost places have had on others. Whilst Gillian Whitlock classifies Read's invocation of the self as memoir, his use of his experience to authenticate and position a story as history is more suggestive of autobiography. How experience is called upon distinguishes memoir from autobiography; in memoir, the focus is outwards: 'external factors' or events are 'presented as dictating the narrative course' (Steedman 44). These events 'may be translated into inner experience, but that inner experience – lived and felt experience – is not its focus, as it is in autobiography' (Steedman 43-44).

The recollection of his personal experience serves to model his practice – decades later – in *Returning to Nothing*. *Returning to Nothing* draws upon this invocation and use of lived experience. It is motivated by Read's own past (as shown by the presence of his recollection in the book) and it repeatedly comes back to the evidence of lived experience – to what the past *felt* like – to constitute a historical truth. *Returning to Nothing* explores how Australians feel about 'lost' places, places both actual and metaphorical, that were once known and have since become 'unrecognisable, changed or destroyed' (vii). Until now, these feelings about loss have not been represented together publicly; such a project is justified, he argues, because these emotions have both personal and cultural effects. Recognising past loss as informing the present reconceptualises understandings of what it means to be Australian.

Unlike Klaus Neumann and Stephen Muecke, who draw upon juxtaposition and parallel texts to register cultural differences and provoke the reader into actively participating in interpretation, Read's work is constructed to encourage the reader to sympathetically identify with others – specifically, with others' experiences of loss. Based on empathy, he identifies this work as prior to theoretical analysis: the 'emotions expressed to me were raw, and so is the book…I have not attempted to set such recollections into the current context of memory or place theory' (*Returning to Nothing* x). Although questions are raised from the stories he records, there are no explicit answers in his text; his responses are implicit. Read constructs his role – and his reader's – in the text to be that of a listener, working to let people tell their own stories. Theory is not invalid, but he wants to establish the importance of people's feelings as a big truth first. 'If this book demonstrates the complexity and depth of feelings for lost places in Australia, its mission will be accomplished' (ibid).

Read has subsequently made it clear that this is specifically the feelings of 'non-Aboriginal Australians' ('Whose Citizens?' 174). He suggests that with the development of Aboriginal History, non-Aboriginal attachments to place have been negated: '*at present they [non-Aboriginals' feelings] are not represented at all*' (original emphasis; *Returning to Nothing* 200). By attending to the feelings of loss non-Aboriginals experience when they are displaced, he attempts to forge another historical understanding: that the non-indigenous do not 'not-belong' in Australia.[9]

Belonging challenges the 'myth that non-indigenous Australians did not love the landscape they found and made' by investigating how the non-indigenous claim to belong and how they negotiate issues of cultural difference (Read, *Returning to Nothing* 5). It opens with the question: 'How can we non-Indigenous Australians justify our continuous presence and our love for this country while the Indigenous people remain dispossessed and their history unacknowledged?' (Read, *Belonging* 1). Again he makes it apparent that these questions are motivated by his own situation: 'I ask myself,' he writes, '[d]o I have the right to belong in this soul-country?', '[w]ould such a pre-emptive claim of belonging – if that is what a Native Title claim is – reduce or disqualify my own sense?' (*Belonging* 9). His feelings are also present in the text: after quoting from a poem that describes the brutal treatment of an Aboriginal girl by sealers, he pauses before continuing. When he does go on, it is not towards analysis but to move immediately onto another point and another poem, suggesting that he is so moved he cannot continue thinking with this piece. Read's pause is filled with affect; he sympathetically imagines and recognises the feelings of another, and is deeply moved. (Gelder comments that Read 'especially likes emotionally fraught stories, ones that might even make his readers weep.' ['The Imaginary' 1]).

Belonging is overtly concerned with the ramifications the establishment of Aboriginal History has had on national identity. Not about to dismiss the significance of Aboriginal History, he maintains that we need to know the past in order to be aware of how it informs the present, but we also need to consider its effects: '[w]e must understand what happened before we argue through our responsibility. And yet I have to ask myself what my knowledge of Aboriginal

[9] More recently this has been articulated as a specific concern with 're-belonging for the non-indigenous' (Read, 'Meditation on Dispossession' 8).

history actually has brought to my own sense of belonging' (*Belonging* 19). This autobiographical unease guides the direction of the book.

In *Belonging*, Read articulates how he is affected by learning about Australia's past. It upsets him: 'Despair at wickedness which cannot be undone is almost unbearable', he comments (*Belonging* 41). At times it crushes him: '[a]fter sixty thousand years, surely almost every square metre of habitable Australia has been drenched with the blood of birth as well as death'; 'How can we belong in places of our own intense pleasure but others' intense pain?' (*Belonging* 216). How to make sense of the many different experiences that have occurred at a particular place over time? What value do they have, and what impact do they have on the present? Turning to the past offers no answer to his questions of belonging and the politics infusing it: 'I seek a solemn union with my country and my land but not through Aboriginality; I understand our history but it brings me no relief' (*Belonging* 21).

One possible way of moving out from this distress is away from history, towards autobiography – as modelled in his essay 'Fantasy Upon One Note' (published in a themed collection on writing histories). Here Read reflects on the writing of 'barbaric' histories from an autobiographical perspective. Croatia's history is invoked here in order to stage questions of the limits of the analytic model of history. Asking how to understand – and thereby write about – 'destroyed places' in Croatia, Read's personal presence in the text is evident from the start: he admits to being 'overwhelmed by its history', and focuses his essay on the difficulty of articulating his 'emotional keystone of the trip' ('Fantasy Upon One Note' 40). As he reflects on his experience, he realises that he remains affected by the experience of visiting the sites of devastation, and that he does not have the critical distance from it that is required to analyse and understand it.

Unable to offer insight, his writing enacts trauma. Asking how to understand traumatic experience, in his prose he returns to the initial trip and re-enacts it, unable to comprehend an answer: 'Into what parameters would I sort my emotions as I stood in the ruined museum…How could I mentally accommodate the excavations carried out in the stinking local rubbish tip to find and identify the human bones', he asks (ibid). Incapable of answering these questions, he changes register and asks a rhetorical question of the discipline: is it possible for historians to write about actions that they do not understand? Without a response, the responsibility for making things comprehensible is moved from historians, on to language itself: can words represent the

inexplicable? Moreover, can putting an experience into words have a therapeutic effect for the self: 'Can the very act of writing shape the emotional response?..."Help me, in saying it, to understand it"' (Read, quoting Rilke, 'Fantasy Upon One Note' 41).

The tension between lived experience and historicism is prominent. Having established his emotional response to an unsettling experience, Read cannot objectify it in order to historicise it. Instead he moves to outline Henry Purcell's composition 'Upon One Note', so affected by the trauma of witnessing that he is unable to remove himself from the experience in order to analyse it. The concern of the essay is with the ramifications of this point: if past experiences affects, and these affects remain in the present, preventing analytic historicist reflection, how can we write histories?

Instead of adopting an analytical mode towards experience, Read turns to aesthetic representation as a mechanism that can provide an artificial structure to his experience, and thereby offer some understanding of it. It is with Purcell's music that this is realised. Read explains that in this music he finds 'an artistic structure...[that] could frame my powerful, undigested emotions into a kind of comprehension. I could not come to terms with what I had confronted until, as it were, I could format them' ('Fantasy Upon One Note' 43). The music demonstrates to him 'how to shape, direct and order the experiences as a first stage of bringing myself to the point where I could write about them...[Music] would enable me to be my own therapist' (ibid).

Purcell's music enables him to construct his-stories, narratives that are operating not as part of a public debate about the past, but as 'a *confirmation* of...[a] self' (original emphasis; Steedman 49). This is where the essay's value lies. In terms of disciplinary history, this piece is limited – and Read admits that 'I don't think anyone much liked the piece, though I still can't read it without emotion' ('Fantasy Upon One Note' 44). The historian's questions remain unanswered. Anxieties about the effects of histories ripple throughout Read's work. Because the histories of Australia's past that are told in the present shape understandings of national identity, they include the possibility of both affirming community, and producing distress, shame and alienation. Does the teaching of discomforting histories – or even, perhaps, Aboriginal History – need to be rethought in light of its potential effects? Read contends that 'educators should reflect that Australia is now the physical – and emotional – home of many other peoples besides the Indigenous peoples – *whatever happened in the past*' (original emphasis; 'Reconciliation,

Trauma' 34). This is an argument for telling histories for the present – or 'presentist histories' – and it can be read in his concept of a 'shared belonging' (Neumann, 'Haunted Lands' 78).

Ken Gelder points out that the concern with belonging arises in Read's work as concurrent with dispossession: 'the non-Aboriginal or settler transformation of land into country, of a house into a home, is enabled *only through the experience of dispossession*' (original emphasis; 'The Imaginary' 4). Loss is articulated in a process that results in a claim to belong. Consequently, the publication of *Returning to Nothing* – accounts of lost places – is followed by *Belonging* (ibid).

The experiences of dispossessions have a significant force for Read: they 'touch people irrespective of their gender, race, class, nationality and political allegiances' (Warden 118). Dispossession is seen to undercut differences between identities, and Read suggests that – given both Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals have had the experience of dispossession – perhaps a 'shared belonging' in Australia is possible (*Belonging* 123). Given that it is so broadly inclusive, Read is aware of the risk of banality, and stresses respect for the intensity of peoples' experiences.

'Shared belonging' allows that there are differences between non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal identities. Read declares that he himself is 'not envious, nor do I wish to incorporate myself spiritually into Aboriginality. I want to feel I belong here while respecting Aboriginality, neither appropriating it nor being absorbed by it' (*Belonging* 15). Differences are recognised, but neither is less valued. For Read, this involves – ideally – the recognition of non-Aboriginal attachment to place in the context of meaningful relationships with Aboriginals: 'they [non-Aboriginals] negotiate with real, self-confident Aboriginal people, and what they exchange is passion and knowledges and history and a love of the land', without assuming that past experiences will be erased because of the present sense of community (ibid).

Dispossession is not only the experience of losing place. In *Belonging* Read maintains that, with the development of Aboriginal History and the recognition of Aboriginal sovereignty, has come the questioning of the validity of non-Aboriginal belonging in Australia. Read's own sense of Australian identity has been unsettled. He feels 'overwhelmed by the sadness of our history. If anything my sense of moral belonging has been weakened' by learning about it (Read, *Belonging* 19). He is, in a way, dispossessed, having lost the certainty of his national identity.

The model of cultural negotiation suggested here assumes 'the Aboriginal' as 'the other'. It does not interrogate Aboriginality, although it approaches the 'non-Aboriginal' 'self' as constructed. Read is primarily concerned with the status of the (white) self: the status of the (black) other is assumed. He argues that 'non-Aboriginals' have devalued themselves against the authority ascribed to Aboriginals, and that non-Aboriginals need to 'reassess the self-denigration that portrays us [non-Aboriginals] as morally or spiritually deficient' (*Belonging* 3). The self must be re-valued and re-established, in order to form an equitable relationship with the other in a 'shared and requited future' (Read, *Belonging* 55). (Again, it is only through loss that identity can be established.) This is more than a 'belonging-in-parallel', he writes (*Belonging* 123). What Read is proposing here is that Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people can both claim to be 'indigenous'. Despite wishing in Australia there was 'a word like "Pakeha" for Australians who call this country home but who are not Aboriginal', Read's understanding of non-Aboriginal belonging is not different from that of an Aboriginal belonging (*Belonging* 20).

During the writing of *Belonging*, Read published a small commentary on the Wik judgement that elaborates his understanding of indigeneity ('Belonging, Sharing and the Wik Judgement'). Referring to Heather Goodall's work and its descriptions of 'other connections' Aboriginal people have to land 'than traditional association', Read writes that, 'coincidentally', he has observed these other forms of connections among non-Aboriginal Australians ('Belonging, Sharing' 1). He holds that these mechanisms are the same as those of Aboriginals, and describes the feelings of attachment to Australia that non-indigenous people have formed as developing 'analogously' to Aboriginals' (ibid). Read further suggests that non-Aboriginals' sense of belonging 'can become semi-mystical' (ibid).

This is the thesis explored in his latest project in the series on non-Aboriginals and place – *Haunted Earth* – which is concerned with 'inspirited place'. Read defines inspirited places as sites where there is the 'presence of a spirit' (*Haunted Earth* 34). This presence is not necessarily experienced; the possibility of the existence of inspirited places is not dependent on sensory perception or conscious belief. In this way this book steps out from his previous work, which is steeped in the authority of experience. When Read fails to feel any particular spiritual presences in an Anglican cemetery, for instance, he concludes that they might exist, but in a reality he does not perceive because of his culturally particular past: 'A different childhood ambience would

have made a different Peter' (*Haunted Earth* 22). History here informs the autobiographical: he could have been otherwise. But Read is also aware of historicism's limits: it is tied to a particular way of being in the world, and cannot give the same validity to other modes. That it cannot recognise other ways of being does not mean, however, that the present is therefore homogenous.

Read talks to those who have experienced spirit's presences in order to explore the issues it raises. They indicate that non-Aboriginal experiences of inspirited places are predominantly tied to an Aboriginal presence. The owner of a holiday rental business at Berowra wakes one night to the ghostly presence of an Aboriginal man. At nearby Avalon, after Aboriginal skeletal remains are found in a cave, a local resident wakes to find a dark figure in her room who puts his hands out towards her. A farmer near Braidwood in New South Wales sees a group of Aboriginal people coming out of the bush, though there is no one there. Just before the death of her adopted Aboriginal daughter, a mother is visited by her presence.

Whilst he speaks to an immigrant from San Salvador who has a similar experience when her son dies, in *Haunted Earth* settler-descended Australians' sense of inspirited place appears to be linked to the apprehension of Aboriginal presences from the past. Belonging – or being indigenous – must involve negotiating an Aboriginal past. When Read discusses the silo-based sound sculptures of Ros Bandt, he again pulls out this connection. In the surrounding area of one of the unused, outmoded silos Bandt works with, the Tjapwurrung people had mostly 'disappeared' at the end of the nineteenth century. Read writes: 'Hold that Aboriginal culture in which, with wisdom, we all might have shared. Add the 80 years of soldier settler, grain and silo culture in which we might have shared also. Listen now for the aftersound' (*Haunted Earth* 109). The past has some type of presence in place, whether or not this is classed as spiritual. In our present, he suggests, this inescapably involves an Aboriginal past. An apprehension of this – at a particular point on the crosswires of time and space – makes non-Aboriginals indigenous. From this point on an 'indivisible continuum', which is never fixed or still but always shifting, lines stretch outwards in various directions (Read, *Haunted Earth* 252). Stressed is that particular 'line of sight, our *own* relationship, that we are experiencing at this moment' (Read, *Haunted Earth* 235). It is at once '[e]verybody's shared time, but our actual moment…our line of sight, our specific vision, our local place' (ibid). Cultural differences do not prevent belonging; '[t]he longevity of shared space is perhaps more important still' (Read, *Haunted Earth* 206).

The distinction that Read acknowledges between non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal belonging is that of time: from a view that he attributes to Aboriginals, he quotes: '"We Aboriginal people don't believe we have a monopoly on spirituality. But we believe that we've practised it a little longer. You can only have that if you're connected to the land and you come from the position of belief in what it represents"' (Read, 'Belonging, Sharing' 2).

Those 'untroubled' by places associated with the destruction of Aboriginal lives and culture have less claim to belong. David, Read's old school friend, believes that place has no memory: it is people who bring meaning to it. Consequently, physical remnants of past Aboriginal presence have little significance to him. David left Australia at the start of the 1970s, before the growth in public awareness of Aboriginal History. Read hears him out, but concludes that 'those unhaunted by the ghosts of the past have missed something profound' (*Haunted Earth* 59).

In his final section – 'Towards Midnight' – Read is in Burra, where the Burra Charter was initially constructed. This charter gives 'guidance for the conservation and management of place of cultural significance' (Australian Heritage Commission qtd. in Read, *Haunted Earth* 240). He argues here that cultural and spiritual sites are different, and that the charter subsumes this difference within the broad banner of 'culture'. To illustrate his argument, he refers to the Charter's listing of an Aboriginal dreaming site; this is an inspirited site, though it is listed for its cultural significance.

Sydney's old Callan Park Mental Hospital, which several people believe it is haunted, is not listed; Read argues that it should be officially recognised as a significant site beyond the Burra Charter, because inspirited. Such promotion for the recognition of diversity in people's attachments to place obscures the differences in identities, collapsing distinctions between genealogies of inspirited places as articulated with communal (i.e. Aboriginal) and individual agency (i.e. Western). Thus conceptualised, an understanding of Australian history informed by Aboriginal History in which non-indigenous settlement is interpreted as an 'invasion' that 'dispossessed the rightful owners of the land' is revised; validity is given to non-indigenous knowledge of place (Attwood and Foster 11).

This is also illustrated through his own experience. In *Belonging*, he writes of meeting and becoming friends with Dennis Foley, an Aboriginal man: it 'jolted my thinking, and this book, to

a new dimension' (21). Foley grew up in the area where Read feels he is most close to belonging, a place of 'my deep memory and experience' (*Belonging* 7). Read listens to Foley's stories of place and dispossession, and subsequently, after having been formally introduced by Foley to his country, Read is enabled to write: 'I think now that I'm almost ready to belong' (*Belonging* 223).

While this helps Read, it also draws out the restrictions of autobiography when used within history. Unlike history, the autobiographical has to 'end in the figure of the writer', for it is premised on confirmation of the singular subject (Steedman 47). Consequently, as Haydie Gooder points out, *Belonging* offers 'no way forward for Australians who have no "shadow brother" (as he refers to Dennis) nor for Aboriginal people who do not want to play this sanctioning role' (358). Agency also remains with the individual subject; autobiography 'is a confirmation of *that* self' (my emphasis; Steedman 49). Ken Gelder draws attention to the ramifications of this point by way of Read's use of the term 'non-Aboriginal'. Gelder reads it as a negative term, predicated on a state of non-being, and comments that Read's work in *Belonging* is to 'take away the negative connotation' of the category 'non-Aboriginal' – 'to remove the "non-" from "non-Aboriginal" and do away with those differences – but on one side only. Aboriginal people remain Aboriginal, but settlers become indigenous' ('The Imaginary' 1). Made explicit in the haunting presences of Aboriginals to non-Aboriginals, Aboriginal identity is assumed in order to enable a position of authenticity for others – to facilitate, that is, their becoming indigenous.

This at once attributes a legitimising authority to Aboriginality, and operates on the fragility of Aboriginal identity. Whilst non-Aboriginal identity is valid enough to be questioned, and potentially refined, the assumption of Aboriginality implies indigenous identity is too weak to be critiqued. In 'Reconciliation, Trauma and the Native Born' (2002), Aboriginal histories are presented by Read as having a fragile position in national discourses of identity, and are too weak to be debated without threatening to destabilise Aboriginal identity. Read specifically omits histories that show Aboriginal people to be anything other than devastated by settlers and their policies, and non-Aboriginal people other than guilty of harmful and violent acts of racism. He writes that a story – 'if one existed – in which Aboriginal people escaped from the pastoralists would demean those who died…A story – if one existed – of Aboriginals killing Whites in the area would compound violence with violence' ('Reconciliation, Trauma' 33). Aboriginal identity here is not established enough for local variations to be introduced.

Dipesh Chakrabarty draws out this point, elaborating that it is not clear what it might 'mean to live in an Australia where we could self-consciously enter the process of "becoming Aboriginal"'; there are currently no understandings of '[w]hat is desirable and what might [be] undesirable in the process' ('Reconciliation and Its Historiography' 13). He argues that non-indigenous people cannot begin thinking about 'becoming' indigenous Australians until there is the ethical recognition of, and confident belief in, Aboriginal people as citizen-subjects – when 'the writing of Aboriginal history by Aboriginal intellectuals achieves so much sovereignty in Australian public life that it is possible for Aboriginal intellectuals to dispute their own pasts in public' (ibid). In such a situation they could then 'guide us in thinking about what one may not want to inherit from the legacies of Aboriginal presence in this land' (ibid).

A 'shared history' will consequently not be a real possibility until Aboriginality is established enough to be publicly debated by Aboriginals – 'without feeling that by doing so they were once again simply falling prey to white prejudices' (Chakrabarty, 'Reconciliation and Its Historiography' 14). In such circumstances, varied identities will not 'dissolve into each other', and it will be possible to argue about the past 'without causing anxieties about the unity of the nation' (ibid).

This not presently the case in Australia, arguing the past causes Read considerable anxiety. In *Belonging*, for example, Read mentions a concern with 'some possibly over-negative history curriculums circulating in our schools' (*Belonging* 208). What can follow singular stories of exclusion, massacre and racism? What is the appropriate role of the historian?

> Where do our responsibilities to 'speak the truth exactly as it is' head our responsibilities to a morally responsible society? Should one write the truth, or not?...that does not help us if we ask – which truth, or which truths, do we tell? How can we tell the little truths if the big truth is so under attack that its future in the mainstream narrative is imperilled? (Read, *Belonging* 59)

Having found that his assurance in 1995 that Aboriginal History was established enough to withstand questioning was mistaken with the history wars debate, he is concerned with again stressing the 'big truth' of the stolen generations (see *Belonging*). This is why he choses not to represent histories of Aboriginals as other than damaged. The fact that there are always more stories to learn about the past is no strength at this stage: giving a 'pastoralist's or official's view

of this history to me would do no more than belittle the agonising Indigenous experience' (Read, 'Reconciliation, Trauma' 33-34). Read does not dispute that there were colonial figures who acted humanely towards Aboriginal people, but argues that such stories 'should not be allowed to distract us from the fact' that many children were removed by the state and that that caused so much '[d]evastation' (ibid). He is still working to establish such an interpretation as a historical narrative, in order that other stories can then be recognised without then altering this truth.

As a consequence, Read concludes that his 'experience of listening, reading and thinking about Aboriginal history for the whole of my professional life reinforces the view that the life of most Aborigines living with Whites has varied between unpleasant to unbearable' – though this does not mean that 'there is no "other side" to present' ('Reconciliation, Trauma' 33). This risks perpetuating the devaluation of settler-descendants in the face of valuing Aboriginals. It also risks misrepresenting the past, and in the telling of these particular histories, being complicit with continuing to define Aboriginals as defeated and without agency. As Hosking asks from literary studies, if we do not ask about these 'other sides', will we be 'perpetuating colonial practices? Confining lives to boxes, cells, cattletrucks? Refusing the freedom to move? To move on? Giving only pity?' ('Homeless at Home' 73). In cultural studies, Muecke offers another way of approaching the past when he reminds that 'there are always survivors who return and who retain powers and resources which the victors remain ignorant of, like traditions and cultures...power begins to build up again until it is a power of action rather than resistance' ('Devastation' 24).

However, Read's discipline is history. He again returns to the question: having created an 'atmosphere' that is 'dejected and depressed', what should come next? ('Reconciliation, Trauma' 33). In 2002, he answers confidently that:

> Our clear task as historians is to advance historical knowledge and understanding, including that in areas where not much currently exits...Sometimes the historians' responsibility takes the form of helping to establish the 'large truths', sometimes it is to muddy the waters of certainty or complacency. At present, it seems, historians of the stolen generations are required to do both. I think...I'll continue to stand Janus-like at the doorway, looking both forward and back, trying to keep my eyes on our ultimate responsibility. So long as we know what it is.
> (Read, 'Clio or Janus?' 60)

This is a turn away from a presentist history, back to the historicist model, which offers a history of the present. Because history is never complete, it offers in itself an alternative response to its

potentially negative effects: it is 'precisely because of its openendedness…[that] history might rescue the subject from the smothering intimacy of the pain encapsulated and validated by the life-story' (Ang 180-181). Read's work with the stolen generations continues in this manner: establishing the 'large truth' of the separation of Aboriginal families, refining it (when politically possible) and thereby contributing through Aboriginal History to a 'new Australian history' (Attwood and Foster 11).

Yet alongside this mode is a more revisionary approach, in which he attempts to rewrite this new Australian history. Informed by the autobiographical, he holds that 'it is becoming clearer that non-belonging [for the non-indigenous] is the other side of the post-colonial coin' ('Whose Citizens?' 175). In light of this, he works in the *Belonging* series to reconceptualise Australian history to ensure a sense of belonging for non-indigenous Australians that is 'legitimate and unproblematic' (Read, 'Whose Citizens?' 174). This is achieved by contending that non-Aboriginal people can be considered 'indigenous' through their relationships to place and Aboriginals. Both the contribution to Aboriginal History, and this reconsideration of the interpretation of this field within a national history, exist in Read's oeuvre.

5 ANTHROPOLOGY'S CRISIS

Visiting a site devastated by war, Peter Read is powerfully affected and struggles to comprehend the experience of it. He turns to representation as a way of giving it some shape and meaning. He explains: 'I could not come to terms with what I had confronted until, as it were, I could format [the feelings I had]' ('Fantasy Upon One Note' 43). In his book *At Home in the World* (1995), the anthropologist Michael Jackson has a similar focus. He is interested in knowledge that comes through experience, rather than through analytical reasoning. '[A]ware that concepts never cover the fullness of human experience,' Jackson – like Read – 'sees the task of description as more compelling than that of explanation' (Jackson, *At Home in the World* 5).

Like history, anthropology is a specifically situated knowledge: it always works in relation to a localised site or context. Its methodologies are open to review in a similar way to history's. Anthropology objectifies ways of being in the world that are other to those of a Western/European lineage. In doing so it makes them minor, and presupposes that there is a rational unity to human lives: that they can be interpreted and explained through rational argument.

The shift toward taking difference as having broad epistemological implications began in what James Clifford refers to as the 'postcolonial crisis of ethnographic authority', which became apparent in American ethnographies from the 1970s and 1980s (*The Predicament of Culture* 8). With the increasing awareness from the 1950s (particularly in France) that the 'very possibility of the anthropological journey has been linked to the historical occasion of Western European expansion', came a loss of belief in the 'transparency of representation and immediacy of experience', and an increasing awareness of their limits (Scott, 'Locating the Anthropological Subject' 78; Clifford, 'Introduction' 2). Critiques of anthropology as a colonialist discourse brought attention to the politics of representation itself: 'what appears as "real" in history, the social sciences…even in common sense, is always analyzable as a restrictive and expressive set of social codes and conventions', Clifford argued, though this critique remained within the realm of reason ('Introduction' 10). Ethnographies were considered contestable, subjective and always political; science was 'in, not above, historical and linguistic processes'; and 'academic and

literary genres interpenetrate[d]' (Clifford, 'Introduction' 2). Anthropology as a science was substituted with an understanding of anthropology as a 'hermeneutics of knowledge' (Scott, 'Locating the Anthropological Subject' 78). Its anthropologist as an objective observer able to analyse the theoretical underpinnings of different (often pre-modern and inferior, or romantically superior) cultures, was replaced with a participant ethnographer whose observations were partial and subjective, and who was worked by, as much as he or she worked on, other cultures. Writing ethnographically began to be approached as historically and culturally constructed, as seen with the appearance of the autobiographical in ethnographies from the 1970s. Attention shifted from questions of the other, to a more reflexive questioning of the self, and of representation. Highlighting the partiality of the anthropologist raised methodological questions for anthropological knowledge. How could different cultures be known and presented in ethnographies if they involved other ways of knowing that we could not envisage or represent? The 'crisis' had also brought about other questions: 'If we insert the ethnographer's self as positioned subject into the text', Okely observes, 'we are obliged to confront the moral and political responsibility of our actions' (24).

At Home in the World raises these issues within the discipline of anthropology. In it, Jackson explores the notion of 'home' through his own experiences, particularly when living with and studying the Walpiri people of the Northern Territory in Australia (1). Rather than simply looking outwards and learning about others, the anthropologist here learns about others to find out about himself and his own culture. The benefit of anthropology's crossing of boundaries 'in order to transmute local into global knowledge', Jackson writes, is that possibilities are 'opened up for understanding oneself in otherness': 'The changes wrought in the ethnographer living in another culture are as significant as the changes he or she observes in those with whom he or she lives' (*At Home in the World* 4; 92). This is reinforced when Jackson reads Coral Edward and Peter Read's *The Lost Children*: 'I began to realize how much was missing in the lives of white Australians too – the immense gap there is in our understanding of Aboriginals as people' (*At Home in the World* 14).

In reaction to abstraction's move away from the actuality of place towards its theorisation as space, he constructs a 'radically empirical study' that focuses on experience as it informs understanding (Desjarlais 450). Learning here does not occur simply as mental reflection, but within the context of individual participatory experience. Knowledge 'is a product less of your

methodology than your mastery of basic social skills', and '*can only be acquired gradually through trial and error*' (original emphasis; Jackson, *At Home in the World* 21). Jackson's text mimics this approach of knowing through lived experience: it does not begin with his conclusion, but forces the reader to 'work slowly through the author's conversations...and his attempts to eat, sleep, talk, learn and think' (Desjarlais 450). It is in amongst these activities that knowledge is learnt.

Before leaving for central Australia, Jackson is anxious about 'its remoteness, openness, and otherness' – yet when he arrives he remembers that it is in arid places where he feels 'most at home' (*At Home in the World* 15; 16). Places that emphasise embodied experience, that are 'pared back', are more meaningful to him than urban environments. He writes of leaving other people's ethnographies and the library in Alice Springs 'on the birthday of Shakespeare and Shirley Temple' when he sets off to begin his fieldwork in isolated indigenous communities (*At Home in the World* 18). Shedding the distractions of Western culture, he leaves town to camp in a place that is not just different, but 'empty' (*At Home in the World* 26). Here, 'there is nothing to do but sit and listen to the silence. Life is stripped of everything superfluous' (ibid). This perception of place is not generalised; Jackson writes: 'It goes without saying that Walpiri perceive the country quite differently' (*At Home in the World* 28). The inclusion of his own response to the environment stages the difference between him and the Walpiri people; it avoids implying that they are equivalent simply because he feels at home there, in their ancestral lands.

Jackson is not presuming to interpret others, but learning about them and reflecting on his own culture. Yet what happens to anthropology in such a self-reflexive approach? As Behar asks, how 'do you write subjectivity into ethnography in such a way that you can continue to call what you are doing ethnography?' (6-7). Moving from 'a narrative to a conceptual mode' is one way of turning from autobiography back towards anthropology, as Jackson's text demonstrates (Childress 251). At the beginning of *At Home in the World*, Jackson emphasises that 'personal experience is always foreshadowed and fated by imperatives that belong to our shared history and common humanity' (1). Humanism is a conceptual framework, and it underpins his ethnography – so it already operates within a rational mode. When he travels in the Tanami desert,[10] for instance, he finds his dreams return him to his past. To him, '[t]hese things which had marked me

[10] In the Northern Territory.

and made me who I am' are similar to 'the ancestral journeys of the Dreaming': both have shaped the past and continue 'to leave their imprint on the living' (*At Home in the World* 51). Not focusing on the differences between the individual and communal identities evoked, this raises for Jackson what they share: 'I wondered if any person is ever free to begin anew' (ibid). This question – 'how do people transform givenness into choice so that the world into which they are thrown becomes a world they can call their own' – is an 'existential project' that Jackson believes is 'a universal human imperative' (*At Home in the World* 123). He sees universalism as central to anthropology, which is not, for him, fundamentally about difference: it 'begins with unity' (*At Home in the World* 117).

Distinctions exist between cultures, but these are not like the fundamental differences that exist between human beings and what Jackson calls 'nature'. Human consciousness cannot 'enter the world of nature'; it cannot understand 'the essence of the world beyond us' (Jackson, *At Home in the World* 116). In contrast, there are universal qualities that connect humans: 'evolutionary history', for instance, and sociality; '[f]rom this is born the possibility of our humanity' (Jackson, *At Home in the World* 117). 'In shared bodily needs, in patterns of attachment and loss, in the imperatives of reciprocity in the *habitus* of the planet, we are involved in a common heritage' (Jackson, *At Home in the World* 118).

Yet Robert Desjarlais asks whether the ramifications of the difference Jackson points to between human beings and nature need to be considered further. He argues that Jackson's approach recalls the 'metaphysics of realism, existentialism, and romanticism', whereas the Walpiri 'apparently make sense of the landscapes and Dreaming myths not through the measure of any phenomenal realism but through a complex semiotic of transcendent forms that "come into being" at times' (450). He continues:

> [S]ince the Walpiri might not 'experience' in the same way that Jackson does or find the 'immediacies of lived experience' to be all that significant, the value and validity of experience as a rubric for anthropological research must be questioned more. (ibid)

As with historicism, in Jackson's anthropology is the assumption of a closed unity: that through social experience we learn about identity, our own, through others'; identities do not form in isolation. Because humans learn who they are through the experience of being with others, the idea that anthropologists can *think* themselves 'into the mind or experience of another is absurd',

Jackson argues (*At Home in the World* 118-9). Anthropology is founded on this common ground, for if different cultures shared nothing, learning about how different others experience the world would be impossible.

This has been identified by Ruth Behar as a move 'toward viewing identification, rather than difference, as the key defining image of...[anthropology's] theory and practice' (165). In *Reading the Country*, Stephen Muecke critiques this universalism by focusing on its usefulness. He writes: 'there is no common feature, like our humanity, which could adequately unite us for any common purpose' (in Benterrak 230). Unlike Jackson, Muecke holds that it is cultural difference, over universally shared traits, that is productive of knowledges. This remains within the model of anthropology as based on difference. Diane Losche, an anthropologist who now works in the discipline of art history, explores this concern with the use of difference by focusing on the poetics of loss.

5.1 Anthropology, Loss and Autobiography: Diane Losche

Like Peter Read's historical work, Diane Losche's anthropological art history essays are staged in the relief of loss. Both find in cultural difference and the experience of loss an occasion for autobiographical inquiry. Losche's work explores culturally different aesthetics, seeking the possibility of redemption through representation. Jackson finds that 'one must resist thinking that words can capture the nature of what is', but Losche is interested in what words, and representation more generally, *can* do (*At Home in the World* 125). She draws upon her own experiences to explore and find alternatives to the analytic separation in historicism and anthropology of the (white) observing subject and its observed object.

In 'Skin, Organs, Bone: Narrative, Image and the Body' (1999), Losche describes visits to a museum and a zoo in Australia she makes with Nera Jambruku and Narikowi Konbapa, of Papua New Guinea. The description of these experiences provokes further, more personal, recollections. Like Read, Losche finds others' loss an occasion for sympathetic connection, and registers her feelings in the text. She differs from Read, however, by reflexively commenting on the way her

text is made to work, although she is not then beset with Susan Hosking's hermeneutical doubt; Losche remains hopeful for the possibilities of representation.

From the outset of her essay, Losche gives prominence to the aims of her construction of the text. At the beginning of 'Skin, Organs, Bone' she writes that she will be drawing on autobiographical narratives to 'breakdown' the abstract, anaesthetised knowledges of traditional anthropology, and construct an empathetic, aesthetic way of knowing ('Skin, Organs, Bone' 135). She situates this in the 'need' in 'difficult times' for people who construct images to 'comment on and transform our world'; she is interested in finding the 'material means by which we can turn broken lines into articulate shapes and forms – lines that suggest connection and continuity' ('Skin, Organs, Bone' 136). These are redemptive desires: to give 'voice to lamentation, and simultaneously point out that there may be a more hopeful future – a different, if imaginary landscape' (ibid). The 'transformation of suffering into an image of transcendence' leaves her 'transfixed' ('Skin, Organs, Bone' 135).

As in Read's work, the possibility of a hopeful future here hinges on the acknowledgement of loss. Her work is written as a response to loss; 'we are nowhere but in the present', and there are so many stories of loss in the present (Behar 176). Losche focuses on the generative features of loss: 'for all that goes under, what is it that rises up?' (Jones, 'Without Stars' 141). Loss generates a 'doubled capacity', providing the artist with the potential to 'lament' and to 'construct, creating compelling forms out of chaos, obscurity and absence' (Losche, 'Skin, Organs, Bone' 136). Through representation, following loss, is the possibility of redemption. This fits Clifford's observation that 'modern ethnographic histories are perhaps condemned to oscillate between two metanarratives...one of loss, the other of invention...both narratives are relevant' (*The Predicament of Culture* 17). The positive actions of construction and affirmation are also part of the threat of negation: 'individuals and communities [seek to] reconstitute life *in the face* of disruption, grief and chaos' (my emphasis; Losche, 'Skin, Organs, Bone' 136). To illustrate this, Losche describes two incidents at the museum and the zoo. 'Picture this', she instructs ('Skin, Organs, Bone' 136). This allegorical call sets the scene, and gives some indication of her aims for her own work: Losche's representations are imagistic, and she is trying to create productive art forms out of the chaos of her own experience.

The incidents she paints are ethnographic descriptions. The first one begins: 'March 1982, the Australian Museum, Sydney, Australia. One American woman, anthropologist by trade, and two men, artists Nera Jambruku and Narikowi Konbapa, both from Papua New Guinea' (ibid). The 'picture' is thus placed historically, geographically, and culturally. Also placed are the three participants, by nationality, gender and profession. That the two artists different from the anthropologist is suggested in the description that continues: '[t]he two men, who come from a part of New Guinea and a language group most often referred to as Abelam, have come to work at the museum, to help reconstruct a *korombo*' (a spirit house) for a 'new gallery about their culture. I am the anthropologist and I am working as a curator on the gallery' (Losche, 'Skin, Organs, Bone' 136-7).

Losche goes on to admit that she knows the men from having spent time researching in their village, indicating an anthropological frame of reference, as does her placement of them in terms of a language group. The men's work is peripheral, described as assistance, whilst Losche – in the capacity of curator – is operating as a professional.

'Twice during their stay', she remarks, 'Nera and Narikowi had experiences which have remained with me for years', carefully demarcating their experience from her own to avoid the presumption of painting their own picture ('Skin, Organs, Bone' 137). She goes on to explain what she can of their experience. 'To return to my picture': Nera, Narikowi and Losche are walking through the museum when they see a case with a large egg inside it, and a drawing of a large bird (Losche, 'Skin, Organs, Bone' 137). A moa, an extinct bird from New Zealand, it resembles a cassowary, and Losche explains that this is a bird which to Nera and Narikowi is like Saigetagwa, a being they believe created aspects of their culture. The men are 'upset, almost grief-stricken', and when Losche translates information about the moa and its extinction to them they nod 'in what appeared to be sad satisfaction' (ibid). They tell her that Saigetagwa 'had somehow flown to Australia and died here...leaving her bones and the egg, both important sources for the transmission of life, power and creative force, in the ground of Australia – of which the material in the museum was the evidence' (Losche, 'Skin, Organs, Bone' 138).

In her essay, Losche follows this with a description of a similar incident that occurs when the three go to Taronga Park Zoo. While she initially finds the experience a 'comedy of manners' ('the odd trio gabbling in a motley and incomprehensible language'), this flippancy is abandoned

when they see a colourful South American macaw ('Skin, Organs, Bone' 138). The sight of the bird causes a moment of 'illumination' and 'anguish': the 'two men stopped, both near to tears' (ibid). They tell her that:

> 'These are the birds of our forests, which have been stolen and locked up here.' The men had an answer to the well-known depopulation of parrots in the Sepik region, an event which had occurred entirely in their lifetime and is of enormous significance since birds are the totems of Abelam clans and important in myriad ways. (ibid)

In both the museum and zoo descriptions, the men are receptors of piercing, mystical and dramatic insights. They had, 'out of the blue, received' information at the museum, and at the zoo 'a lightning bolt of tragic wisdom [is] delivered to the two men' (Losche, 'Skin, Organs, Bone' 137; 138). The latter, a 'tragic and illuminative moment of misrecognition and knowledge', is interpreted with melancholy overtones as loss, and as modern: 'the moment falls away into shattered fragments' (Losche, 'Skin, Organs, Bone' 138). Losche finds it all emphasises her as a subject of modernity, and she interprets Nera and Narikowi from this position too: 'I suspect that Walter Benjamin's Angel of History stopped for the three of us in our Baudelarian *flâneur*-like excursions' ('Skin, Organs, Bone' 140).

This invocation of Benjamin's angel positions their gaze at the past; there is no present for these three. When she writes that, following the death of the moment into 'shattered fragments, the men [go] back to their place, the American anthropologist to continue her life in Sydney', the men are made to disperse narratively, without place in or connection to 'now' ('Skin, Organs, Bone' 138). Behar observes that anthropologists inevitably 'leave behind our own trail of longings, desires and unfulfilled expectations…About that vulnerability we are still barely able to speak' (25).

Losche has described her memories of the zoo and museum in order to think through her current concern – subject relations in aesthetic and anthropological narratives. Heather Goodall reminds that '[m]emories are never transparent glimpses of the past but are always created in a narrative process that is shaped by questions and concerns of the narrator's present' (20-21). Nera and Narikowi remind Losche of something else; Losche continues by invoking another experience she has 'observed'. It is a recollection of a short story by Gustave Flaubert ('A Simple Heart'), in which a woman's love of a stuffed parrot transforms 'the chaotic detritus of the world into a

fabric of illuminative redemption' ('Skin, Organs, Bone' 139). What interests Losche here – and in her experiences with Nera and Narikowi – is 'the play of difference, the play of misrecognitions and mistakes' that affectively generate meaning (Losche, 'Skin, Organs, Bone' 140).

Understood one way, '[o]ur illuminations are…errors of form' – thus the men misrecognise the birds: it is not an accurate identification ('Skin, Organs, Bone' 140). This is an *anaesthetic* approach, one that objectifies others in order to analyse them. Losche suggests the anaesthetic approach is insufficient because it fails to account for the affective significance of the event to the people involved; abstract and impersonal, it misses the event's meaning: it fails to address the men's experience of loss. Losche does not want to read according to an argument of rationality: she wants to 'breakdown' this style of approach and instead think about a more empathetic way of knowing. This is to attend to the feelings of lived experience, and consequently to the different people and situations involved. Although the meaning drawn from incidents and images may be mistaken, it is no less 'powerful or productive' to those who experience it: the experience retains its force (ibid).

Losche's point here is that aesthetics operate 'based on *real* subjectivities in real space and time', and any explanation of the workings of images must engage with the experience of their affectivity (original emphasis; Losche, 'Skin, Organs, Bone' 139). Recalling Greg Dening's method of learning to see how another culture sees events, Losche argues that interpretation needs to take into account culturally specific knowledge and ways of knowing. '[B]efore leaping in and categorizing something as art or magic we [anthropologists] need to explore the field of relations that these practices are embedded in' (Losche, 'The Importance of Birds' 225-6). This is what Jackson's humanism does not do, when he opposes humans to nature and emphasises lived experience as humans' shared characteristic. Nera and Narikowi's misrecognitions are meaningful when the signs that prompt them are explored with reference to the significance of birds to their culture, the impoverished state of their homeland and the disappearance of parrots in their region.

This unsettles the universalising tendency of analytic thinking that disciplinary anthropology draws upon. Whilst both Jackson and Losche focus on lived experience and avoid subordinating it to reason, Losche is more particular: she wants to expand academic work by maintaining the

force of affect in knowledge. The feelings produced might be from mistaken recognition or assumptions, but they are important.

This raises further questions. Can we ever truly, correctly know as the Enlightenment model of reason proposed? Are we always making these mistakes, unaware? Can we know others, and can we know the past?

As her invocation of Flaubert's story indicates, Nera and Narikowi's misrecognitions have an extended significance for Losche: they are recalled for other reasons in the narrator's present. 'What of my own demeanour in the face of the grief of Nera and Narikowi?' she asks; 'I too was made unhappy' ('Skin, Organs, Bone' 139). The men's mistaken interpretation stimulates her memory, in what may be a similarly inappropriate connection. Just as they incorrectly identify the birds at the museum and zoo, and are moved, perhaps she too is incorrectly identifying the experiences the trio had, generating a misguided – but felt – significance. It may be that what is important in knowing is not abstract, factual accuracy, but how particular interpretations make us feel and act in the present moment. When 'we speak across languages and cultural zones', we bring 'a new world, a new culture into being', one that is 'impure and hybrid' from its inception: 'there are profound implications for anthropological research and writing, of a full recognition of the way that anthropological knowledges comes about' (Losche, 'The Impossible Aesthetic' 310). As Losche finds, 'the men's grief and their mistaken narratives have remained significant and have incited my own creativity, now inscribed on this page': there is some productive result ('Skin, Organs, Bone' 140). 'Why have I included my own disinterred memory for you?' she asks, answering that it is so that she can 'provide an entry point to a narrative that can counter the anaesthetics of knowledge which currently forms 'aesthetics'' (Losche, 'Skin, Organs, Bone' 139).

This risks being read as utilising the experience of cultural differences for reflective autobiography, and the risk of turning research activities into performances of the self is not developed here.

She writes, in a tone of lament, of several occasions of subjective loss: her unhappy family reunion each Christmas, the suicide of a friend and the death of another friend with AIDS. These affective histories implicate her in grief and guilt: the family get-together reveals her family's

'tragic folly', bitterness, falseness and desperation ('Skin, Organs, Bone' 141). The suicide of a friend makes her realise of 'how easily it could happen' to her; this death 'haunts': 'she left this life with no loving words to send her on her way, an exit so quiet it was almost unnoticed' ('Skin, Organs, Bone' 145). The death of another friend (and of so many others) with AIDS points to the limits of consolation in memorialising the dead: it is 'the source of mistaken confidence and folly' to believe 'you keep a person alive by thinking of them', she now knows, but this does not mean it is abandoned; 'It seems in all this,' she writes, 'and against all inclination, I have become undertaker to restless spirits of the dead' ('Skin, Organs, Bone' 146). Losche finds in her own loss that doubled capacity: as an artist she can lament and construct. Grief foregrounds the existence of the subject in the present ('I am here; I am alive; you are not'). In Losche's work, this 'intensification of the experience of personal identity' opens out towards possibilities of aesthetic redemption, whether or not they are realisable (Bann 99).

This is a call for writing affectively, whether it be writing anthropology, memoir or history. But it is also a question: what does this enable? And what happens to our conception of knowledge when we use affect?

Her essay ends with a recollection of a trip to Northern Ireland, where her grandmother was born, and – neatly – where 'an artist friend was installing an exhibition' ('Skin, Organs, Bones' 147). 'I walked on the bones of my dead ancestors', she writes; 'I heard their soft crunching under my feet, but could I decipher their murmurings?' ('Skin, Organs, Bone' 148). If we know the past or others accurately, is it possible to live differently, to be free of the past, for instance? Losche realises that 'this belief or hint of hope…[is] *hubris*'; we are nowhere but the present (original emphasis; 'Skin, Organs, Bone' 147). Working with affect cannot realise a new future. And yet, '[w]e all walk with the souls of the dead, not knowing for certain where we are bound' (Losche 'Skin, Organs, Bone' 148). What are the implications for affective work on cultural difference? In its focus on the desires of the self, does it obscure the ethical imperative to realise the singularity of the other?

6 ETHICS, DIFFERENCE AND ELEGIES: GAIL JONES

Gesture appears as a way to make available certain occulted perceptions and relationships, to render…a world of significant shadows.
(Brooks 77)

Peter Read, Michael Jackson and Diane Losche all include their own experience as part of their work. Read's work is centred on loss: the experience of loss establishes identity, and history. Once this is recognised as generally true, he argues, then we can begin to consider other, divergent accounts of experience. Jackson appears to work the opposite way: from specific experiences to the more general. Yet he assumes several 'larger truths' in order to do so, using humanism, rather than difference, as a conceptual framework. Losche introduces her own experience to her work in an attempt to construct texts which are not anaesthetic. She suggests that knowledges – including humanism – may be based on a misrecognitions, and further that anthropological knowledge itself may be inevitably mistaken. Yet, she argues, these misrecognitions may still be productive of cross-cultural similarity of experience, and turns to her own experience to illustrate how this may be so.

However, each of these models turns the self into the subject of, as well as a participant in, research. It obscures the ethical imperative to recognise the singularity of the other, and the force of difference. This section will focus on the ethics of the desire to include the self in work on cultural difference, and explore what the scholar's reflexivity about his/her own position can – and cannot – do.

Gail Jones works from the field of literary studies. Her essays display preoccupations which overlap with the concerns of these writers: with cultural difference, loss, affect and the role of the subjective in criticism. She draws upon anthropology, literary theory and cultural studies to raise questions of colonial histories and models. Aware that colonialism and its aftermaths are 'dangerously reproducible if…writers…are not "turned on" to themselves as well as to "the others"', she performs self-conscious reassessments of the disciplinary practices of research and writing (Muecke, 'The Archaeology of Feeling' 2). In particular, Jones considers the imperatives

and dilemmas of elegy and mourning as responses to the past that involve both intellect and emotion. Sara Ahmed advocates this as a critically informed practice, a 'moving beyond' disciplinary protocols to reflect on the subjects they create, while still working within their modes ('Phantasies of Becoming' 51). Whilst Diane Losche is also concerned with addressing disciplinary inheritances, unremarked on in her work is the ethical imperative, the question of which Jones repeatedly raises.

In this chapter I will explore the models for theory – in particular the use of the trace – that Jones proposes as alternatives to imperialist paradigms. I will also address the difficulties she acknowledges when trying to practice these alternatives and avoid being complicit with the objectification and negation of the other. The predominant question remains: is it ultimately possible to realise the singularity of the other, and give this difference a force?

6.1 Realising the Value of the Other

With their focus on loss, both Read's and Losche's work displays a tendency towards melodrama. Ken Gelder goes as far as to comment that Read's work displays an interest in 'emotionally fraught stories, ones that might even make his readers weep' ('The Imaginary' 1). Losche's work – with its description of the distress of Abelam men, the anxiety this causes herself, her own distress at her family reunions and the deaths of friends – has a similar tendency, though she turns it towards a consideration of the poetics of loss. The melodramatic also appears in Jones' work, but it is invoked as a critical, ethically motivated and strategic mode of theorising. In 'Skulls, Fontanelles and the Spaces Between' (1995), Jones specifically proposes that the melodramatic – rather than being a problem in – can be usefully employed in critical analysis.

'Skulls, Fontanelles and the Spaces Between' is a consideration of subjectivity and the notion of value within colonialism and its aftermaths. Jones situates her deliberation in the figure of the skull. The essay begins with the recollection of a visit she made as a child to a private colonial museum. Given a 'native's' skull to hold, she experiences a feeling of gravity inspired by its anonymity – or the dispossession of subjectivity that its place in the museum signifies. Tom Griffiths comments that '[b]ones are powerful symbols and offer rich metaphors' (406). The skull is the exemplary instance of such signification, commonly called upon to provoke reflection on

mortality, the dead and humanity. Indeed, so often is it invoked as a 'powerful symbol' for musing, Jones points out, that 'the consideration of skulls summons any number of cinematic hallucinations, images-done-to-death, parodic phantasms' ('Skulls, Fontanelles' 174).

The skull moves Jones because she experiences it as a trace of a human life. A trace carries what Ross Gibson describes as 'the "excess" of signification': it 'directs the viewer not into a rarified realm beyond meaning, but out to *more* meaning elsewhere' (188). It is often connected to the past: the trace as a remnant, indicating a former presence. As Carla Freccero recognises, for as long as the trace remains, this presence is never eliminated: 'what was excluded re-infiltrates the place of its origin' (357). The skull, as an unnamed object in the museum, excludes the subjectivity which permeates it as a *head*. However, this value – the skull as connected with human mortality – is suggested in the affect it provokes in Jones. Her response indicates that the skull is more than mere bone, and is an 'emblem of the possibilities of meaning engendered in the absence of the word' (Brooks 62).

The notion of the trace is a refutation of the 'linguistic turn', which Joan Scott articulates as the belief that: '[s]ubjects are constituted discursively' and experience is a linguistic event (it does not happen outside established meanings [Scott 793]). According to this view, experience cannot occur before, or outside of, language. Discursive fields enable experience; thus if something cannot be articulated in language, it does not exist. Different or new experiences are still possible, though, because they are not 'confined to a fixed order of meaning': as there are different discursive fields, experience can both confirm and unsettle what is known (Scott 793). Language from this perspective is 'a subject's history. Language is the site of history's enactment. Historical explanation cannot, therefore, separate the two' (ibid).

The trace's resonance brings attention, however, to the shadows of language's subjects: to that which lies beyond its limits; the feeling of lived experience, for instance. Can history and anthropology accommodate ways of being that cannot be articulated, or that are outside their conceptual boundaries? Such questions are raised by Jones' invocation of the skull.

As 'media of cultural memory', to use Aleida Assmann's phrase, traces offer '[d]ifferent routes to the past' than that of the written (Assmann 131; 129). Material vestiges of the past are readable as preserving an age's 'involuntary memories': the traces reveal the past, however – or whether –

it is acknowledged (Assmann 131). The slits in the wall of an old stone shearing shed that Klaus Neumann mentions in 'Haunted Lands' are an example of this (Figure 2), and the skull that Jones holds in the private museum is a similar remnant. As Jones invokes it, it is also indicative of the colonial attempts to eradicate subjectivity from Aboriginals by treating them as objects, and as property. Deborah Bird Rose suggests that '[r]eductionism is a social process that...[is] the production of banality' ('Aboriginal Life and Death' 148). The human skulls Jones sees are lined up with animal skulls, and when she asks the names of the former her museum guide is surprised at her question. '"Who gives a stuff anyways?"' (Jones, 'Skulls, Fontanelles' 170). For the skull to become a banal object, any value it has because of its connection with human existence must be 'annulled'. The process through which this is done is one of abstraction:

> In its prosecution of the logic of usurpation colonialism establishes an energetically metonymic discourse, an imaginary regime which, taken property rights as its standard, sees the native contiguous with the land and therefore contiguously object. (Original emphasis; Jones, 'Skulls, Fontanelles' 173)

This logic eliminates the affective force of the skull, making it merely banal. Treating the object as also subject refuses this consequence. The figure of the skull becomes a trace of a human life. It now carries resonance, opening it up to more complex meaning. As Chris Healy puts it, 'ruins are never simply gone or in the past; ruins are enduring traces' of the past in the present (1). From this perspective, the skull in the museum is indicative of a human, as well as of a present attempt to keep the past at bay, and the other in the past: to refuse Aboriginals any presence.

In traces, presence and absence are inextricably 'encoded': they are a 'revelation' of contact (with the past, with another), and a 'recognition of loss: there is no way of coding and restoring the reality' – or the presence and present-ness – 'of human lives' (Assmann 133). In 'Without Stars', following the death of a dear friend, Jones writes of organising her personal effects. In her house, amongst her possessions, Jones discovers that her friend is 'densely, indeed almost materially memorable, and that the simplest objects contained or summoned her' ('Without Stars 142). Yet these traces cannot restore her to life. These two states – presence and absence – exist alongside each other, paratactically. Healy acknowledges that the 'stories and residues of...[imperial] practices cannot be cleaned up without destroying the traces of violence, pain and sadness, reciprocity, misunderstanding and communication that were part of their making' (95). Not aiming to 'clean up' the present, Jones suggests that scholarship seek out and work with the remnants of colonial pasts and what they contradictorily encode.

As imperialist discourses, history and anthropology 'deformed' culturally different subjects by negating their value (Rose, 'A Distant Constellation' 2). Looking at how they treated native skulls, Jones' project is akin to that which Rose articulates: to 'draw on contemporary moral sensibilities to enable us to understand connections between past and present, and thus to understand more clearly the quality of damage in the moral terrains of our lives today' ('Aboriginal Life and Death' 181). This is to follow the consequences of asking, 'what sort of meanings are in the bones, and who has a right to them?' (Griffiths 406).

Jones questions the rationality with which imperialism operated (and was accorded in history) by focusing on its practice. Looking at the collection, exhibition, trade and scientific evaluation of indigenous peoples' skulls as signs of a 'relic race', she turns to the people who undertook such work (Griffiths 408). She represents them as stars in a melodrama – 'mock Hamlets with their Yoricks' – thereby refusing to cede them credibility: 'Hollywoodishly, they recall generic scientists-in-white-coats, weighing in dim and B-graded light clammy fragments of humans on archaic scales' (Jones, 'Skulls, Fontanelles' 174). Imperialism is represented through its actors, unsettling the historicist practice of abstraction; represented as two-dimensional, their authority is shaken, as is the significance of their knowledge. Melodrama for Jones offers a way of representing imperialism without reinscribing its logic and accepting its validity. Yet does drawing upon the melodramatic cede critical credibility?

For Jones, such a question provokes reflection on theory's limits:

> *(Yet our theorising suppresses the resources of melodrama. Why, I wonder? It is after all a mode which recognises and theatricalises aspects of horror, and its currencies are uncanny return – which may be read as misrecognised resistance – and the monstrous and cruel appetites of white mythologies. It has a quality of exaggeration that, pertaining above all to the symbolic, well equips it as a heuristic device to discuss the projection mechanisms of the imperial.)*
> (original emphasis; 'Skulls, Fontanelles' 174)

'Melodrama contests theory almost irresistibly', Jones notes, yet as a mode that engages with 'the drama of morality' – striving to 'find, to articulate, to demonstrate...the existence of a moral universe' – melodrama is an approach that is ethically responsive to imperialism's abstraction (ibid; Brooks 20). What if theory were to be put alongside melodrama, as Jones asks, or even to be made to work *with* the melodramatic rather than *against* it? Jones' proposal here is to take

seriously the melodramatic mode because it stages 'the very process of reaching a fundamental drama of the moral life and finding the terms to express it' (Brooks 12). Refusing imperialism's disavowal of the humane affectivity of others, this invocation of melodrama does not simplify or reduce narratives of experience, but works with an *excess* of meaning. It brings in to play that which exceeds imperialist history, in an 'attempt to deal with a breadth of knowledge and a system of information which have become uncontainable' according to the rules of the analytic (Gibson 189).

As Peter Brooks describes it in his study, melodrama attempts to access meaning that is in excess of language: '[w]ords', Brooks writes, 'appear to be not wholly adequate to the representation of meanings, and the melodramatic message must be formulated through other registers of the sign' (56). Mimicry is also suggestive of excess. Stephen Muecke suggests that using mimicry to write of the past 'would add something ineffable to its subject, partake of the revelatory' ('Between the Church' 15). In both mimicry and melodrama, language is only one possible way of knowing and it cannot encapsulate all of the modes of being in the world. Consequently, mimicry and melodrama draw upon other registers of the sign – as is suggested in Jones' use of the gesture and the figural. These traces are deployed to 'complement and supplement…the word' by bringing a sense of affectivity into discussions of imperialism and its aftermaths (Brooks 73). It is 'an aesthetics of mortality that is feeling, inter-subjective and blurred by the movement of real experience' (Jones, 'Without Stars' 143).

This is evident when Jones describes the scientists who weigh skulls in order to make racial comparisons: they are 'filling carefully, oh so carefully, those hollows where minds had once rested' ('Skulls, Fontanelles' 174). Or when she pauses to note, in a collection of preserved heads, one, 'hauntingly', of 'a little girl of perhaps four or five years old with coral earrings and necklace still decoratively attached' (ibid).

The use of melodramatic technique here recalls the sympathetic imagination: it 'creates, makes present, an emotion and a moral dilemma' (Brooks 76). It also evokes the gothic, a genre which exaggerates the familiar and the strange, and draws upon strong emotion. But rather than a feeling of horror, it is the 'fullness, the pregnancy' of these gestures and figures that is significant: 'meaning-full though unspeakable' (Brooks 73). Jones shows a reverence for the particularity of the material human body. The skulls and heads are valued as traces of the human.

By implication, this also expresses the dreadfulness of the *negation* of the human, as represented in imperialist practices. Skulls and preserved heads are not just objects; they gesture towards human lives.

In a parenthetical comment, Jones makes it clear that these remarks are also questioning the lack of a variety of literary modes in theoretical writing, and more broadly the absence of affect:

> *(We tend to discount not only melodrama but the broad resources of the rhapsodic. In high-theorising we aim for tonal equanimity, for a tone hieratic, magisterial, and remotely impersonal. So academic prose is marked, for the most part, by a repressive absence of the lyrical. By wide-awake realisms. By studious passionlessness. By loss of affirmation.)*
> (original emphasis; 'Skulls, Fontanelles' 175)

In contrast to the treatment of the anonymous skull which exemplifies abstraction, Jones writes of the 'touching simplicity' of the 'promissory of the skull' ('Skulls, Fontanelles' 175). Visiting a maternity ward, she is moved by the fact that each head 'will englobe, will contain memory, intelligence, the infinities of imagining' (ibid). (This feeling, to paraphrase Jones, Hollywoodishly recalls an overjoyed couple – new parents, gazing in rapture and pinkish, golden light at the beautiful baby wrapped in a snug blanket.) This romantic promise is intensified for her in the 'compelling' fontanelle of the new-born baby (ibid). Whereas 'salvage' ethnography values an object because its significance is vanishing, the value for Jones is in the skull's potential (Clifford, 'On Ethnographic Allegory' 112). She describes the fontanelle as the place 'in which meanings cluster: preciousness, *potentia*, the obligation to cherish' ('Skulls, Fontanelles' 176). Jones refuses the distance of objectification and maintains an engagement with what the material object is a trace of: the particularity of another. Theorising rhapsodically is affirmative, holding as worthy that which moves her and which promises life.

Paratactically positioned with the romantic sense of rhapsodic possibility that the fontanelle provokes is, as Jones stages it, the elegiac. Both are generative of excess, making 'everything allegorical', but whereas potential opens outwards towards the future, loss returns to the past: it 'intensifies the trace, the emblem, the merest taste or figure or scrap of any memory' (Jones, 'Without Stars' 143). Having suggested the melodramatic and the rhapsodic as modes of theorising, Jones turns finally to this:

> *(Where, in our theorising, is the space of the elegiac? Where is the space within which the* mourning grounds *beneath the* Government houses *might be clearly*

> *discerned and properly honoured? The spaces of political bravery. Of risk. Of loss. Post-colonial studies is a melancholy field, concerned as it is with the elucidation of barbarity. Perhaps, therefore, it needs access to a language (a tone, a poetics) to express the ethical imperatives of mourning.)*
> (original emphasis; 'Skulls, Fontanelles' 178)

Melancholy has been understood since Freud as a refusal to recognise and begin to accept loss (which is the process of mourning). It signifies a desire to remain with what is now past or ideal, rather than accepting it as finite and no longer possible. (Again paraphrasing Jones, it Hollywoodishly recalls an aging woman in widow's weeds, sitting in a dimly-lit parlour surrounded by photographs of a young and long-dead husband.) Jones suggests that colonial pasts and their aftermaths are implicated in the melancholic: in colonialism's rationale and colonialists' practices, others are negated and to be different is to be without 'humanness' ('Skulls, Fontanelles' 173). As exchangeable objects they cannot, then, be acknowledged as operating in an affective regime ('who gives a stuff anyways?'). Colonialism in this way remains stuck in the denial of the effects of this negation.

But the value of others is never completely eliminated. They are irrecoverable, yet it survives as a trace, haunting the present, as evidenced in the critic's imperative to mourn. In trying to make colonialism's workings clear, post-colonial studies is entangled in melancholia, being stuck within colonialism's actions. Yet post-colonialism's imperative is founded on the appreciation of others' value, and consequently perceive the loss that colonial practices have brought about. Mourning, even if inevitably a failure, is distinguished from melancholy because it recognises the other and therefore registers its loss: whereas melancholy is stuck in a refusal of loss's effects in the present, '[m]ourning is what happens when a grounding object is lost…(to you)' (Berlant 51).

An elegiac tone is often overtly cultivated in post-colonial studies. E. Valentine Daniel suggests that it is drawn upon by Western postcolonial anthropologists as an act of atonement – 'atonement for our conceits and the conceit of the West wherein our disciplinary interests originated' (2). This is then a political invocation of elegy. As Margaret Maynard points out, the use of melancholy is historicisable, and political. In 'Projections of Melancholy', she outlines the connections between colonialism and romanticised, sorrowful depictions of Aboriginal people by white settlers in Australia in the late 1800s. She argues that the dominant views of settler society shaped these representations. In the late 1800s (and 'as early as the 1850s'), there was a general

belief in Australia that 'the Aborigines of the Australian mainland were dying out' due to the 'forces of Darwinian selection'; Aboriginal portraits became 'a melancholy focal point' for the contemporary ideas of race (Maynard 92; 102). The assumption that Aborigines were 'fading away' directly contributed to visual representations that demonstrated 'a nostalgic and melancholy regret for a race that appeared to be on the verge of extinction' (Maynard 92). At this time it was getting harder for 'the average white Australian to see Aborigines in a traditional environment' (ibid). As well as the spread of settlers cultivating, and inhabiting, the land, Aboriginals were also 'being systematically excluded' from society, exemplified in the reserves that they were frequently restricted to in order that they be 'protected' (ibid). These representations, which promoted Aboriginals as doomed, outside of time, place and history, denied the active and complicit systems and behaviours of the settlers which were resulting in the harm to and death of Aboriginals in the present. Drawing upon the feeling of melancholy refused any direct sense of responsibility.

As melancholy is by Maynard, mourning can be read as a political impulse in a particular present. With mourning is that which goes under – the 'capsized consciousness, the collapsible face…the sense of verge', but there is also, in grief, that which rises up: '[t]he mnemonic, for instance' ('Without Stars' 140; 141). Part of the postcolonial project works this way, to be 'responsive to the task of remembering and recalling the colonial past' (Gandhi 8). However, Leela Gandhi points out that its prefix 'post' suggests breaking from the past – and that, '[a]lmost invariably, this sort of triumphant utopianism shapes its vision of the future out of the silences and ellipses of historical amnesia' (7). As in colonial projections of melancholy, which refused to admit to the presence of the recent past in the situation of the present, Gandhi writes that postcolonialism's 'convalescence is unnecessarily prolonged on account of its refusal to remember and recognise its continuity with the pernicious malaise of colonisation' (ibid).

Stressing mourning over melancholy is an attempt to avoid this. Mourning stems from the recognition of the past and its presence in the present: in mourning, everything reverberates with remembering, whilst in melancholy the past and present remain separate. Mourning acknowledges the value of the other, and recognises and responds to its loss. Jones' placement of the elegiac alongside the promissory also refuses to prioritise mourning as the only appropriate mode for the present. Negation and affirmation are placed together paratactically. Loss is also

affirmative, 'an experience of irreducible groundedness: [for] I am here, I am living, he is dead, I am mourning' (Berlant 51).

In outlining the melodramatic horror, the rhapsodic and the elegiac, Jones is responding to past situations and mores with a present-day, romantic moral sensibility that rejects imperialism's negation of others through abstraction. Refusing imperialism's authority, the melodramatic encompasses the simultaneity of the familiar and the strange. Within the rhapsodic mode, people are considered each a marvel, as traces which gesture towards presence and absence. The recognition of loss instigates mourning, apparent in the elegiac tone. Mourning in the postcolonial context is presented as an ethical imperative, being grounded in the recognition of the other's cherished singularity, which Jones has set up in the epiphanic appreciation of the other.

Yet somehow the place of death and the ramifications of cultural difference in all of this have been obscured. The fontanelle promises and the skull regrets, but what occurs in between – the death of life – is not quite addressed. This is partly because death itself, as Jones notes, is not representable. It 'initiates parataxis: it does not allow the connections we habitually insist on'; death 'spooks representation' (Jones, 'Without Stars' 144). Yet, she suggests (following Lyotard), 'one might at least *figure* the co-existence of different orders of being', in an attempt to understand loss ('Skulls, Fontanelles' 178). Similarly, the value of the other might be acknowledged in mourning, but difference itself is not representable – as within historicism, which cannot present understandings of the past that are outside the logic of cause and consequence. Despite this unrepresentability, there remains a need to signal the heterogeneity of the present.

Jones elaborates on Lyotard's suggestion to use anamorphosis. Anamorphosis is a process that projects forms 'outside themselves and distorts them so that when viewed from a certain point they return to normal' (Baltrusaitis1). Established as a technique in painting, 'as a technical curiosity', it is also something more: 'an enigma, a wonder, a marvel' (ibid). A famous example (which Jones cites) is Hans Holbein's *The Ambassadors* (1533), 'in which a distorted skull lies, tilted, anamorphic and indubitably spectral, claming the centre and the foreground of an otherwise rather orthodox and pompous double portrait' (Jones, 'Skulls' 178). What appears as a

'natural' order from a certain perspective is upset by this change to an alternative viewpoint, something overtly 'artificial'. Anamorphosis provides 'a continual reminder of the astonishing and artificial elements in perspective' with its system by which 'figurative forms and mental speculations are made and unmade' (Baltrusaitis 2).

Jones uses the figures of the fontanelle and skull anamorphically to draw out the value of others, and its negation in colonialism. She goes further to argue that theory, too, needs to expand 'to the curved thinking of the anamorphic': to refuse the logic of certain practices and explore them from another perspective, according to which they appear distorted and are worked in an unexpected way ('Skulls, Fontanelles' 179). Rather than exhibiting (giving value as objective spectacle) or destroying (reducing to the status of a reproducible object), 'there is a need to supplement rationalist and mimeticist explication, to veer and seek out the new surfaces of difficult subjects. To veer, perhaps wildly, into realms of melodrama, rhapsody, the intolerable elegiac' (ibid). The figure as invoked here indicates meanings, 'emotions and moral states' that are in excess of imperialism's rationale which is 'rendered in clear visible signs' (Brooks 62). It is *resonant*: '[g]esture appears as a way to make available certain occulted perceptions and relationships, to render...a world of significant shadows' (Brooks 77). This is an attempt at combining critical thinking with affect via the figural, in order to respond ethically to imperial pasts.

> How is it, other than in the sheer pathos and profundity of the figural, that we might chart the distance between those brute materialisations of political struggle...and the historical dematerialisations by which the skulls of the vanquished become empty vessels. (Jones, 'Skulls, Fontanelles' 179).

The figural indicates the 'space' that marks language's – and theory's – 'inadequacies to convey a full freight of emotional meaning. In the silence of this gap, the language of presence and immediacy...is born anew' (Brooks 67). It indicates that which exceeds words, by making 'present without directly naming...by pointing toward it': '[m]ute gesture is an expressionistic means – precisely the means of melodrama – to render meanings which are ineffable, but nonetheless operative within the sphere of human ethical relationships' (Brooks 72). Using the figural to gesture towards the other is one way that anthropology and history can suggest the value and force of difference.

6.2 Realising One's Own Desire

Jones uses the anamorphic to make and unmake anthropological knowledge in the essay 'Thaumatropes' (1998). As historicism abstracts experience, anthropology objectifies the other. Trying to assert the value and subjectivity of the other, there is a need for ethnographies to be constructed that work in alternative ways.

Jones begins 'Thaumatropes' in an ethnographic mode, describing, in third person, her experience as a 'single white woman' amongst the Bardi tribe (an Aboriginal community) ('Thaumatropes' 98). They are all outdoors on a windy night, watching a John Wayne film projected onto a wall. At the end of the film, the hero – unconventionally – dies, and the community goes into several days of mourning. Confronted by their response, the white woman, 'at first secluded in a hieratic rationality', feels increasingly insecure – and 'finally no more or less than this wind: it identifies her sense of insubstantiality' (Jones, 'Thaumatropes' 99). Allegorically, the ethnographic 'tableaux' initially appears familiar: a single westerner in Aboriginal community experiences the outdoors with 'restless' dogs and a crowd 'unreposed' (Jones, 'Thaumatropes' 98-99). Yet, at the description's end, 'a convention is flouted': not only does Wayne, 'cowboy immortal, the cowboy most known for his quality of radical persistence,' die, but when the community goes into mourning the ethnographer – a figure known for persistent cultural confidence – feels insecure, lonely and insubstantial in her knowledge (Jones, 'Thaumatropes' 98-99).

Wind is used as a trope for each of the seven sections in 'Thaumatropes'. Each has a title, all (bar one) constructing puns involving wind (the initial section, for instance, is called 'Windscreens'). Puns are a conventional characteristic of ethnography, serving to 'position the ethnographer between his [sic] world of primary orientation, his readers' world, and the world of those others, the people he has studied' (Crapanzano 61). This creates a 'hierarchical relationship', privileging those in the know (the ethnographer and the readers) and distancing them from those who do not know (those others) (ibid). The insecurity the narrator feels in 'Windscreens' does not upset such cultural certainty: it bespeaks confidence to open as an 'anthropologist-hero…cast stereotypically as a *naïf*, an awkward simpleton, not at all sure of his identity' (Crapanzano 61). As Vincent Crapanzano notes, this is 'by now, in its own right, a genre or subgenre of ethnography' (ibid).

Yet in the sections following, Jones troubles such assured disciplinary authority, reflecting critically on how she has represented and interpreted her experience, in what is 'as much an anthropological as a writerly concern' (Jones, 'Thaumatropes' 100).

Jones initially reads her description as 'self-gratifyingly mythic, dubiously complicit with...(postmodernism's) "appetite for primitive provenances"' (Jones, quoting Eric Michaels, 'Thaumatropes' 99). Accordingly, she asks herself the 'appropriate' question: '[f]rom where do I speak?' ('Thaumatropes' 99). Yet unlike other critics, she has no appropriate answer. What the ethnographic experience throws up is not understanding, but continual uncertainty. While it is commonly accepted that 'the authority of the ethnographer is challenged in reflexive ethnographies',[11] Jones reads her construction more critically:

> I note in my own version its structural Eurocentrism, the fact that it zoom-lenses in on the pathetic woman, there, at the end, who with ignorant largesse nobly takes upon herself the burden of cultural anomaly. She is the normative in a story about loss of normatives. She is the 'sincerity crux', possibly too the beneficiary of an 'evocative homage to the Other [that is]...a self-fulfilling homage to the Self'.
> (Jones, quoting Crapanzano, 'Thaumatropes' 99)

The cultural uncertainty epitomised by her sense of insubstantiality (she feels 'no more or less than this wind') 'allegorizes the position non-indigenous scholars frequently enact in cross-cultural encounters' (Jones, 'Thaumatropes' 101). But rather than a straightforwardly modest gesture, she recognises it as a dubious and arrogant move, practicing again 'that original European self-centredness which characterised the supposed study of Otherness' (Dobrez 206). Naming it 'Clifford Geertz's wind', Jones invokes the anthropologist critical of 'cross-cultural' writers privileging Western epistemologies.[12]

Geertz is invoked because, despite his critical attitude, in his own ethnographic writing he unselfconsciously elevates his position (specifically, in his essay on Balinese cockfighting). He likens his presence to a gust of wind, and as Jones recognises, this suggests that he is an omniscient, universal – even natural – authority.[13] By identifying herself with the wind, Jones, too, removes herself from being a participant within the events described. Although initially

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[11] See Denzin and Lincoln 1.

[12] See Geertz's *Works and Lives*.

[13] See Geertz's *The Interpretation of Cultures*.

conjuring the wind to suggest the sensorium, she realises it suggests, paradoxically, 'her *incorporeality*': it raises her to a position of authority similar to Geertz's, asserting, 'a "perverse" romanticism' (original emphasis; Jones, quoting Stephen Tyler, 'Thaumatropes' 101). It suggests *both* authority *and* 'a kind of radical pyrrhonism, a flight into bewilderness', the 'enormous tangle of epistemological, moral, ideological, vocational, and personal doubts, each feeding upon the others' that is related to the 'simple difficulty in locating the woman in relation to her experience' (Jones, 'Thaumatropes' 101; Geertz, *Works and Lives* 90; Jones, 'Thaumatropes' 101). Faced with her own difference from the community's confident response in mourning Wayne, a response from which Western relationships to the cinema appear strange, she feels her self under threat, 'more and more insecure' ('Thaumatropes' 99). She interprets 'extravagant otherness as self-critique', a trope Geertz sums up as: 'we have met the Not-us and they are not-Us' (*Works and Lives* 113).

Reflecting on her own ethnographic description also raises for Jones broader epistemological questions of her own cultural assumptions. She recognises that she has not located her ethnographic account in any way: she has 'obliterated history' ('Thaumatropes' 104). Her description has depicted experience in 'an "ethnographic present" (which is always, in fact, a past)', an unspecified present that is 'not in the same ambiguous, moving, *historical* present that includes and situates the other, the ethnographer, and the reader' (original emphasis; Clifford, 'On Ethnographic Allegory' 111). This also, as she recognises, implies that 'the moment of incursion is...paradigmatic, as the point from which history starts and against which the dominated peoples are figured in atrophy' ('Thaumatropes' 104). It sets up the community as outside of history, until the arrival of the West. This implies that their existence was somehow provisional before contact with Westerners, which refuses to grant their past its own present. They are 'viewed and assessed from a future point' (Mehta 192). The Bardi tribe are presented in this way as an unfinished task, making the representation complicit in colonial logic: as they are provisional, it seems 'right, even obligatory, to seek to complete that which was incomplete...and to guide it to a higher plateau' (Mehta 191).

Considering the difficulty of interpreting the experiences of indigenous people viewing Western television and film, Jones pauses to add, '[i]sn't there, too, our incapacity as cultural critics to apprehend or even approximate the reception and cultural effects of the moment depicted?' ('Thaumatropes' 101). How can the present be comprehended, and represented, when cultural

differences are not always translatable, and it is not possible to completely articulate experience itself?

If '[t]here are no totalities of cultural contamination...[and] there are always resisting zones and "spaces"', then there are other histories to be told (Jones, 'Thaumatropes' 104). Nicholas Thomas expresses confidence in such a view when he writes that: '[w]e address colonial encounters and colonial exchange without presuming that the effects of these meetings were pervasive' ('Introduction' 5). As she attempts to historicise her ethnography, Jones recognises that '[d]espite the palimpsest of eighty years of forms of European namings, the local people [the Bardi tribe of Lombadina Mission] had retained significant aspects of their Law', the 'indigenous language, though attenuated, was still in use', and that 'ceremonial practices...existed adjacently and conterminously with Catholic rule' ('Thaumatropes' 105). This points to the 'incompleteness of colonialism as a civilizing and transformative endeavour' (Thomas, 'Introduction' 9). Further, Thomas argues, it is insufficient to take analysis only as far as recognising an indigenous response to a Western film. These 'expressions are not necessarily defined or circumscribed by colonial discourse and action, even when they speak from some engagement with it'; it is 'vital' that researchers 'acknowledge and engage with indigenous cultural expressions themselves' ('Introduction' 11).

Yet Jones confesses inadequacy: '[w]hite Australians can barely conceive of Aboriginal history: its longevity is remarkable but its content seems to us opaque. We are crass incompetents. We barely know where to start' ('Thaumatropes' 104). From such a position of ignorance, how can Jones historicise her account? Whilst Muecke advises non-indigenous students that it is appropriate to work with Aboriginal culture if they tell their own stories, not those of the other, Jones is less sure about the ethics of doing so (Muecke, *Textual Spaces* 204). There are stories that should be told, but can they be told by her? 'I do not know the Aboriginal history of this place, nor do I know its language' (ibid). Would it be her place to write an indigenous history anyway? 'I do not know the Bardi name for wind. And if I was taught the term, it would sound wrong upon my tongue' (ibid).

Jones does not suggest that with proximate relations with Aboriginal people she can better understand or articulate situations of cultural difference. Her account is limited and partial because of it, but this recognition does not provide relief. Unlike the sense of possibility in

'Skulls', trying different forms of writing here fails to address what she want to express, contributing only to 'a kind of textual-exhibitionist anxiety (*how to say it?*) that can only enact ellipses and forms of insufficiency' (original emphasis; Jones, 'Thaumatropes' 107). Jones comes back to 'a radical perspectival uncertainty', further suggesting that this may be linked to the very desire to work with experiences of cultural differences in something other than an imperialising mode: '[p]erhaps to relinquish imperial eyes is to lose contact lenses' (ibid).

Whether theoretical work can recover the feel of lived experience is also questioned. Not subordinating it before the analytic, nor eliminating its difference, how can the sensorium be valued within criticism?

There is a strong tradition in Western thought of separating the experience of the senses from, and devaluing it in favour of, the analytic. Uday Singh Mehta outlines its intellectual heritage, explaining that a philosophical mistrust of information from the senses stems from the realisation that the impressions can be proved wrong in hindsight (202). Consequently, authority comes to be associated with experiments that disprove experience. This makes the present always partial, 'understood only from the futural orientation and anticipation that...teleology and...experiments make possible' (Mehta 209). What is prioritised as a result is an ability to learn that is dependent on 'inward origins' or structures, rather than external impressions, which are always doubtful; belief is placed in the individual's consciousness, 'in which there appears to be no residue of nature or of the foreign to be mastered or even understood': it is as if a 'sealed internal freedom' (Mehta 206; 208). Anything that is foreign or external to the individual loses its difference, 'since it has lost its contextual density on account of an internal freedom that renders everything transparent – and that too before the encounter with it' (Mehta 209). Knowledge is learnt theoretically, and experience is both always knowable, and always already known.

Trying to assert the significance of embodied experience in critical theory is an argument for expanding such an understanding of what it is to know, to include lived experience as well as mental operations.

Yet Jones is not sure that this really is the argument she is making. She admits that the experiencing body she wishes to recover in theorising 'is really very young': it is her own as a child, at the pictures in Broome, 'enwrapped in the many-coloured arms of her friends' – all

'promiscuously intermixed' (Jones, 'Thaumatropes' 107; 108). How much of her work in 'Thaumatropes' is to create an anthropology that values cultural difference? Is it really about recapturing her childhood experience? How does this sit ethically?

Muecke writes that '[d]esire in relation to the Other is perfectly okay. You just have to ask yourself how that desire might work for or against your...work, or for or against the work of the Other' (*Textual Spaces* 199). Yet considering Jones' situation raises a different question: what if work on cultural difference is motivated by a desire for the self, and the other is being used as the occasion for writing?

Desire for a childhood self is a longing that James Clifford, following Raymond Williams, associates with romanticism:

> The self, cut loose from viable collective ties, is an identity in search of wholeness, having internalized loss and embarked on an endless search for authenticity. Wholeness by definition becomes a thing of the past (rural, primitive, *childlike*) accessible only as a fiction, grasped from a stance of incomplete involvement.
> (my emphasis; 'On Ethnographic Allegory' 114).

In her ethnographic description, the Bardi tribe are connected as a community and primitive. The experience of cultural difference makes Jones feel lonely and insubstantial. In contrast, when she recalls her experience of cultural difference as a child Jones depicts it as connected and embodied: '[w]e embraced, shifted seats, chattered, shared food...It was an area interracial, libidinal, deterritorialized...Rained on. Screen lit. Star bright. *Wind swept'* (original emphasis; 'Thaumatropes' 108). As Williams clarifies, '[v]alue is in the past, as a general retrospective condition' (qtd. in Clifford, 'On Ethnographic Allegory' 114). Jones' desire to recapture her childhood self may be informing – even projecting on to – her interpretation and representation of the indigenous community.

Moreover, as she realises, her attempt to bring the experiencing body into discourse displays not 'humility but self-enlargement' ('Thaumatropes' 109). Feeling her self to be as natural as the wind collapses the distinctions between the internal and external worlds; in the tradition of the romantic poets' 'immense analogy', 'the wind is not only a property of the landscape, but...is correlated with a complex subjective process' (Abrams 32; 26). Here is not 'loss but a wedding with the very forces of nature. The body as world-register. Geertz with a vengeance'; she is acting as '[a] Romantic in spite of...[her]self' (Jones, 'Thaumatropes' 109).

As the wind, she also distances herself from the community: she is not like them, and consequently can withdraw from any intersubjective responsibility being with them might have. Similarly, Jones admits that she has 'somehow failed to convey my apprehension of the specialness and integrity' of the community's reaction to the film ('Thaumatropes' 111). She has not managed to acknowledge the 'possible fullness' of their response: that it is not provisional, something which could be improved with Western education, but, as she experienced it, a meaningful and complete reaction (Mehta 192). She feels that she has not communicated their own response 'seriously and appreciate[d], however inaccessible...its own sort of force' (Geertz, *Local Knowledge* 61). Despite a desire to recognise value in the '*existing* society', not in a future or past, she articulates what Geertz describes as a 'humanistic worry about being insufficiently engaged' (original emphasis; *Works and Lives* 15).

Given that she critically indicates to the reader that her desires are suspect, perhaps her work can be classed as ethical – albeit partial. Anthropologist Renato Rosaldo argues positively that:

> Because researchers of necessity are both somewhat impartial and somewhat partisan, somewhat innocent and somewhat complicit, their readers should be as informed as possible about what the observer was in a position to know and not know. Has, for example, the writer of an ethnography on death suffered a serious personal loss? ('Imperialist Nostalgia' 107)

Writing an ethnography on an indigenous community's response to a Hollywood film, Jones admits a personal longing for a childhood experience of being outdoors at the pictures as a member of a culturally mixed community. Rather than invalidating academic practice, such admissions of desire and 'complicity will enable us', Rosaldo argues, 'not to detour around, but to move through, and hopefully beyond' sentimental investments and projections: '[t]his analytical movement more...the long convalescence than the miraculous cure' ('Imperialist Nostalgia' 120).

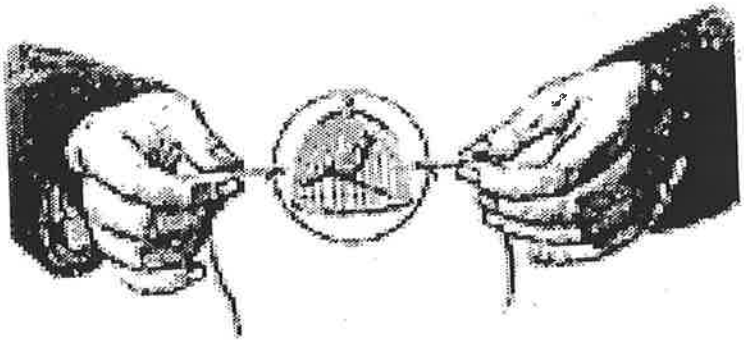
Yet Jones' inclusion of her suspect desires and realisation of the failure to value the other seems to indicate something more than a 'move through' complicities. Their presence suggests an ongoing tension between the pull towards recognising the subjectivity of the scholar, and the ethical imperative to realise the singularity of the other. She is drawn towards both, but they remain irreconcilable, as represented in her invocation of the thaumatrope.

The thaumatrope is an antiquated childhood toy, a disc on a string (see Figure 4). The disc has two different images on each face; as the discs are rotated, by breath or manual manipulation, the images replace one another in rapid succession and visually appear to combine (Manovich 297). Jones gives the example of 'a black Mammy figure' on one side, and on the other a white baby: 'when the disc spins around the woman appears to hold the baby' ('Thaumatropes' 112). As Jones blows on the toy, she recalls a childhood dream in which she, a white child, had an Aboriginal mother; the force of her breath makes it appear as if the two distinct figures actually reconvene into an image in a single frame. The image the thaumatrope creates is of utopian connection, a reconciliation in which difference is present, but is configured into a state of healing union.

Pausing before considering what Jones does in invoking the thaumatrope, I want to think about the image she gives as an example – that of the black mother holding the white baby. She writes of this figuring: '(This is an especially captivating image for me because it recapitulates a childhood dream in which I believed myself the daughter of an Aboriginal mother)' (ibid).

This image leans towards melodrama, where voice is given to 'deepest feelings' and characters 'assume primary psychic roles, father, mother, child, and express basic psychic conditions…[and] totally expressive gestures' (Brooks 4-5). As Mehta points out, kinship as a metaphor has been a key feature of 'the political and developmental project of liberalism' – and imperialism, governing the conception of education, 'which in turn is central and integral to the political agenda of liberty' (198). To be free as a full citizen 'requires…knowledge', which 'turns on having reason…therefore being free requires having reason' – and 'this reason…requires parental interdiction' (ibid). The parent is instructor, rather than – for instance – nurturer. According to this logic, until one has had a parental-style education, one is not free, but enslaved, and without citizenship.

Tzvetan Todorov suggests a less regimental alternative to this argument is a different type of pairing: '[m]an is not born because of a struggle but because of love. And the result of that birth is not the couple master/slave but more prosaically that of parent/child' (12). The 'compelling tenderness' of the image of the woman and baby turns 'attention away from the relation's fundamental inequality', towards a moving figuration of connection (Rosaldo, 'Imperialist



THAUMATROPE,
1825

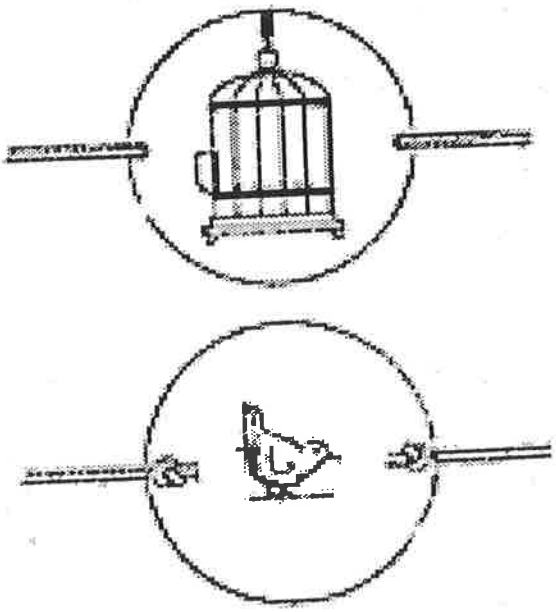


Figure 4

Nostalgia' 120). Through the loving relationship with the parent, the child can become a recognised subject. The thaumatrope's image represents Jones' desire for recognition of the status of her adult self as a full citizen-subject, in that it establishes a prior relationship with a mother figure. In particular, her ability to work with culturally different others is asserted: she has been 'born' by a black mother. Wishing to be the white child of the black mother, Jones also represents a desire for something different from the master-logic of liberalism and empiricism. The absence of the white father goes unremarked.

The image produced is full of presence in its moment. It is not provisional: when she blows it is present. Yet this presence is ambiguous, for the image present is an illusion. As much as it presents presence, it admits equally to absence: the two images are never combined, and the illusion in which they appear to be is thus 'full' of absence. Jones has argued that the logic of film can be read as founded on loss ('Thaumatropes' 106). This too applies to the thaumatrope: watching the flickering images 'engages us in a chiastic torsion of past and present, [and] confounds our sense of reference and referentiality' (ibid).

Reflecting on her work, Jones comments in an interview that:

> In considering memory what interests me is not just the way memory consolidates a sense of self, but the way it destabilises the self...incursions of the past...return anachronistically to disturb where one thinks one is at and what one thinks one is. (qtd. in Holland and Tandy 5).

Here she also cites Borges and his comment that ""to remember"" is 'the ghostly verb': remembering ghosts the real, it displaces, unsettles and makes ambiguous (ibid). The dominance of the present is challenged by remembering. Jones specifies that childhood is 'more lodged in the present tense than adult experience', and furthermore, 'to become adult is to become nostalgic, to be burdened with impulses of recovery' (ibid). It is the child who is fully present; the adult self – Jones remembering her childhood dream – is provisional, and seeking confirmation. All of this may inform her ethnographic description.

The image the thaumatrope produces recalls for Jones a childhood dream in which cultural difference is not an obstacle to community, yet '[t]ransgression cannot do away with the limit it is compelled to violate because...a border must reappear again later, as the necessary condition of identity' (Biddle 194). She is a single white woman now, which informs her desire for then, when

different people were promiscuously intermixed. Similarly, the image the thaumatrope produces relies on the two images being distinct: its transgression is only possible when borders exist. The black woman and the white baby are seen in proximity, but their identities remain structured upon their differences: '[t]ransgression thus ensures and retains the very difference it purports to resolve' (Biddle 194).

Unlike the romantic belief in 'the ameliorative agency of the poetic imagination', the thaumatrope's image does not unify (Gandhi 161). It ghosts, but it does not resolve. This tension is observable in other features of the thaumatrope's image. It reverses the paternalism of colonialism by figuring mother and child, and by positioning the black person in a powerful and educative position, whilst the white person is merely the baby. The white figure (the critic) is provisional, incomplete and lacking, and its black other is mature, can nurture and educate. Yet, reversing colonialism's structuring, it may not do anything different. This self as baby is an innocent, without agency and therefore responsibility. It is also a self that is without a past – just as the image itself is one that is ahistorical and placeless. The woman and baby appear as unified, and the present in which they combine is homogenous, eliminating any sense of temporal difference between cultures. The image also represents a romantic desire in which 'the other is the means of the author's alienation from his own sick culture': the other reveals the 'sickness' of the self, and is looked to as a therapeutic healer (Tyler 128). Calling upon the thaumatrope risks being read as an immodest gesture in which the other is considered (only) a supplement to the self. This is not the ethical realisation of the other's singularity, but is reminiscent of the charge Jones earlier laid at herself when she quoted from Crapanzano, describing her work as an 'evocative homage to the Other [that is]...a self-fulfilling homage to the Self' ('Thaumatropes' 99).

Jones realises that it is not the varied interpretations of the image that she wishes to describe – not who 'breathes the air of the nervous present' – but the desire itself for an impossible, romantic, dubious, alternative, a desire which exists in spite of her analytic hesitation (Geertz, *Works and Lives* 11):

> I wonder if one of the winds I wished to describe is really, at some level, the breath on the thaumatrope: the impelling exhalation, the fast-motioning embrace of that which wishes to reconvene, ideally and utopianly, the beautiful black woman with the small white baby. (Jones, 'Thaumatropes' 113)

For its images to appear to combine, the thaumatrope requires the viewer's participation. The breath out, the active working to achieve the proximate presencing of both difference (black and white) and relation (woman and baby), despite *knowing* of its impossibility: this admits a complex entanglement of ethics and subjective projection. Despite theoretical awareness that 'cultures are never back to back, never antithetical, but always, and necessarily, tessellated and hybridized', it suggests that in attempting to work with cultural difference (and in using – as Jones does – the term 'cross-cultural', which itself implies cultures are bounded) scholars are actively trying to construct a 'dialectic by which, in an act of consecutive easy encirclement, the self and the other will breezily combine, cultures discontinuous will appear continuous, the limitations of the image will be delimited and animated' (Jones, 'Thaumatropes' 112).

In experiences of cultural difference, however, boundaries are less clear. There 'has been no single dialogue, or no single experience or exchange, that can be told from one "side" or the other'; cultures may 'enter zones of interaction but' might not 'proceed along a path toward deeper mutual engagement, toward some kind of hybridity' (Thomas, *Possessions* 15; Thomas, 'Introduction' 13). And yet there is a persistent desire to make them easily combine in theory, a desire which, Jones suggests, motivates scholarship engaged with cultural difference. There is an ethical ambivalence inextricable from this work. Perhaps 'there is no definitive or final connotation or meaning that can possibly express aptly the dynamic of indigenous culture', or of the experience of cultural difference (Thomas, 'Introduction' 12). In 'Thaumatropes', Jones expresses doubt that cultural differences 'can be minimized by authorial self-inspection for "bias" or "subjectivity,"...[in order that] she and they can then be seen face to face' (Geertz, *Works and Lives* 145). Instead, these ambiguities stand, not inhibited by reasoning or the disclosure of partiality.

Whether or not she can explain what the Lombardina community experienced – and she admits that she cannot – Jones acknowledges that whilst there is 'profound banality in any attempt to describe others' reasons for grief...it must not dishonour or be confused with the exquisite, grave and finally humane banality of affect itself' ('Thaumatropes' 111). Diane Losche accepts that anthropological knowledge is inevitably based on misrecognition, and looks to what is learnt anyway. But Jones, aware of the unreliable desires of the academic, insists on the importance of the ethical realisation of the other. The 'preciousness' of others' differences must be valued, and

those 'resisting zones and "spaces"' – the unrepresentable difference of the other – must be acknowledged (Jones, 'Thaumatropes' 104).

But this assertion occurs alongside – and is prompted by – the recognition that the ability of the 'cross-cultural' scholar to acknowledge such spaces in her or his work is uncertain. If what motivates Jones' theorising is, ultimately, a romantic desire for easy proximity to 'the other', will it be possible for there to exist in her work any space where 'winds are not always blowing from the West' (Jones, 'Thaumatropes' 104)? '[C]ritical re-appraisal[s] of colonial history' may be popular, but there is a need to be cautious about these reconsiderations: the desires implicated in them are not above re-appraisal themselves – and reflexivity offers no guarantees of better practice (Thomas, 'Introduction' 1). There is no resolution to the question of how to give difference 'a force and a usefulness' in a way that is not complicit with colonialism (Muecke, *No Road* 182).

Jones here is writing at the limits of interpretation: experience teaches complexity, yet theorising too easily abstracts and suggests more simplicity and clarity than are realisable. Theorising is complicit with an 'anterior misrepresentation' – yet, although this is known, further attempts remain complicit with the 'dubious' desire for an easy cohesion (Jones, 'Thaumatropes' 113). Searching for something other than an imperialist model – for theory that values the senses and affect – she at the same time admits that a 'suspect' motivation influences her interpretation, that her desire – pre-existing the ethnographic experience – may be shaping her interpretation, despite her awareness that difference is not an 'internal freedom'. What Rose refers to as the 'possibility of an intersubjectivity which does not seek to dominate and is grounded in the recognition of shared time and space', is questioned: what if it can never be more than a possibility ('A Distant Constellation' 1)?

Jones suggests that it may be impossible for the researcher to achieve the realisation of difference in her or his representation and interpretation of 'cross-cultural' experience. She casts doubt on the ability of researchers to bring places into their theorising where 'colonised' people have agency and a force, particularly when working in disciplinary modes with a colonial lineage. Despite working reflexively and consciously acknowledging cultural differences, Jones identifies her own desire as a dubious wish to cohesively connect with 'the other'; in her scholarship, work on cultural difference leans more towards an 'echoic mourning, more fantasy than empathy'

(Geertz, *Works and Lives* 16). To work differently, analysis must be radically different, perhaps impossible to realise. The best that Jones can do is perform these anxieties and complicities in a 'zigzagging vector' of inquiry, a 'moth-in-light pathway' that can 'only enact ellipses and forms of insufficiency': a 'strange dynamic which involves distance and collision, connection and rejection, proximity and distance, in successive moments' (Jones, 'Thaumatropes' 107; Thomas, 'Introduction' 15). 'Of course', we know that difference is not fully realisable, so the thaumatrope, 'like our theorizing, is complicit anyhow in a form of anterior misrepresentation', yet Jones closes with that which for her addresses affect, the sensual, and theory: 'the breath on the thaumatrope...that which wishes to reconvene, ideally and utopianly, the beautiful black woman with the small white baby' (Jones, 'Thaumatropes' 112-113). Realising limits to scholarship does not provide answers, but ultimately highlights her desire, with its suspect inheritances and motivations.

6.3 Becoming Indian

Renato Rosaldo calls for 'analytical recollections' that are 'more a process of immersion and gradual dissolving' of imperialist ideologies than 'agonizing introspection, breast-beating, confession, and absolute redemption' ('Imperialist Nostalgia' 121). Scholars need to 'evoke' imperialism and 'thereby make it more and more fully present until it gradually crumbles under the weight of its own inconsistencies' (ibid). Whilst in 'Skulls, Fontanelles and the Spaces Between' Jones aspires to such crumbling, in 'Thaumatropes' she remains doubtful about its possibility: 'ruins are never simply gone or in the past; ruins are enduring traces' (Healy 1). Deborah Bird Rose argues that the 'negative spaces generated through defective practice must be grasped, inhabited, and opened to the world' ('A Distant Constellation' 8). She does not make any explicit claim for the outcome of such work: it is an ethical imperative. It is from this perspective that I will explore Jones' fictocritical story 'Veronica' (1992; *The House of Breathing*).

'Fictocriticism' is a term used to delineate a mode of writing that reflexively combines features of the critical essay and fiction: it contains its literary criticism within itself.[14] In 'Veronica', Jones

[14] See Nettelbeck.

explores defective practice, whilst also raising questions about what can be classed as flawed. Is claiming to become other, for instance, defective?

The narrator of 'Veronica' describes the experiences of Elizabeth, a Western tourist who is travelling in India. Initially Elizabeth sets herself apart from her surroundings: 'she defines herself singular and somewhat elect' (Jones, *The House of Breathing* 85). She separates herself from what is different to her – 'and perhaps an uncanny, repulsive and desirable kind of knowing' – by reading (Thomas Mann's novel *The Magic Mountain*) and viewing scenes through her camera lens (Kerr, 'Sympathetic Topographies' 113). Because the view from the window in her hotel room, for instance, has little to photograph, she finds it uninteresting. Smelling something like 'hot metal machinery', something, that is, 'of her own world', she responds with dismissal: '[s]he discounts this distraction and moves quickly away' (Jones, *The House of Breathing* 86). She does not apprehend the present situation, but only what she is able 'to fix' (Jones, *The House of Breathing* 89). Willing to perceive that which she can capture, she also wants an India that is worth capturing, that is appropriately foreign: she seeks 'souvenirs and...spectacles', an exotic otherness (Jones, *The House of Breathing* 86).

It is only later that she finds meaning in other ways of apprehending where she is. Smells become recognised, 'odours...later summon India more suddenly and immitigably than any of the photographs she pauses daily to capture' (Jones, *The House of Breathing* 86). 'Later' is after she is forcibly located in her present experience.

This change is traced through the appearance of dust within the tale. Elizabeth first notices it from the window of her hotel room: 'overall hangs suspended a fine white dust, one set moving in the air with each active intervention as though registering ethereally lives otherwise terrestrial, caught and solid' (Jones, *The House of Breathing* 87). The dust almost has the capacity of making the secular otherworldly; made to move by the 'terrestrial', it then traces out the actions of those earth-bound in a realm not constrained by what is solid. It hints at meaning in excess of the quantifiable. Elizabeth pauses for a moment to consider the dust, but 'suspects it pestilential', and decides to leave the hotel after a single night (ibid). After an unsatisfactory attempt at sightseeing, she returns to the room and reads to escape, transporting herself to the European Alps with their '*quiet, thin, empty air*' (original emphasis; Jones, *The House of Breathing* 88).

Noise from outside calls Elizabeth to the window and seeing some type of procession, she grabs her camera and heads out to the street. She sees a wedding party 'through the dust', which is 'now agitated, dense and sinuously spiralled' (ibid). As the procession proceeds, the dust – 'in contradistinction' to the rose petals flung and falling slowly – 'swirls upwards to the heavens in speedy dispersal' (Jones, *The House of Breathing* 89). Elizabeth is taking photographs when she notices electric lights being carried in the party. Hearing a new sound, she lowers her camera and sees a generator powering the lights. The generator comes at the end of the parade, supported by two beggars. 'The man closest to Elizabeth is filthy, emaciated and almost naked…Elizabeth feels rather offended at this terrible bad taste' (Jones, *The House of Breathing* 90). She and this man meet 'within the transit of a gaze'; she loses her perspective, and the properties of things are no longer what they seem (ibid). He stumbles, 'much more heavily than his frail and disappearing shape would ever seem to suggest'; as she reaches out instinctively, the generator falls and burns her arm (ibid). The 'pain is exact: Elizabeth has never before felt so definite and empirical' (ibid). She 'collapses into the dust', and as the procession passes on she herself becomes 'the new spectacle' (ibid). An Indian man holds her – 'like a lover' – and takes her to her room. In 'strange English' he tells her a doctor is coming, and '[a]ccepting the man at his word Elizabeth waits…expecting at any moment care and commiseration…medicinal somnolence. Nobody comes' (Jones, *The House of Breathing* 90; 91).

She realises that her camera has gone and 'weeps at its loss as the blind might for sight; she feels not robbed but rather darkened and incapacitated' (Jones, *The House of Breathing* 91). As in the ethnographic description in 'Thaumatropes' where, when the narrator begins to feel different from the Bardi community she is staying with, she begins to feel insubstantial, so in 'Veronica' a loss of cultural confidence is experienced as epistemological negation. All goes on without her; the light moves across the room and the activity in the street sends 'little clouds of grey dust to spiral and stir and settle down gradually, a shower of motes, in this tomb of a room' (ibid).

The man returns, and she repeatedly curses him. He rapes her, 'like an electrical machine…She feels the pounding of a second pain' (Jones, *The House of Breathing* 92). At this moment she escapes, remembering the route offered though reading: 'she remembers, as though the very page were still open before her: *From the rugged slopes came the sound of cow bells…floating unbroken through the quiet, thin, empty air*' (ibid). He leaves again. The '[l]ight and dust continue their floating migrations'; they are now journeying (ibid). She listens to the sounds

outside the room and imagines what is going on, and finally turns to the dust as a way of travelling, a transportation that locates her in the present, 'sending her mind up and about like a wisp of whirling dust, becoming explorative, becoming other, almost becoming, one might even say...Indian' (Jones *The House of Breathing* 93).

Her arm disgusts her; she views it as dead, as if detached from her. Now she imagines the material present from the sounds of outside that she hears, imagining it so well that seeing it would not increase its actuality. Forced into 'an uncanny, repulsive and desirable kind of knowing, a "supplementarity" that is violently thrust upon her', she becomes located, present: 'Elizabeth is changed' (Kerr, 'Sympathetic Topographies' 113; Jones, *The House of Breathing* 92). She perceives herself as altered materially: '[h]er skin has become caramel, her clothing a sari...Her body feels irreducibly local and exact; it correlates to its place, is attentive, identified' (Jones, *The House of Breathing* 92).

That this 'becoming' is suspect is asserted by a colleague of the narrator. He is 'unimpeachably sure' and 'says with authority' that 'Elizabeth is unoriginal, a cipher, a blank, a mere structure of narrative' (Jones, *The House of Breathing* 85; 92). Yet the narrator is not so confident. There is something to the story that resists such a reduction, that is more complex, and more demanding:

> I see her there lying upon the bed...substantial, abject...becoming explorative, becoming other, almost becoming, one might even say – with all the fraught politics of race in attendant complication – almost becoming Indian. (Jones, *The House of Breathing* 93).

The suspect desire is explicit here: the white woman turns brown. The piece ends now, at the point where it is most risky and unstable. Limits to knowing the experience of another culture are placed alongside a claim that lived experience overcomes these limits. Putting them in such forceful proximity suggests that work with cultural difference is always suspect and impure, and also that knowledge of others is possible, though doubt and impropriety cannot be separated from it. Perhaps Elizabeth has experienced a 'becoming other'. Or perhaps she is now merely like her hotel room, where 'while inside is all vacancy and a smear of past lives, outside, just through the window, is a present tense full of people and noisy activity' (Jones, *The House of Breathing* 87). Without clarity, this ending is *dusty*. The intricacy, density and duplicity of the real are not neatly resolved.

As with the image produced by the thaumatrope, Jones refuses to reconcile this ambiguity through reason; the impossibilities of difference and the becoming Indian are uneasily positioned together, confounding the boundaries of the rational. 'Veronica' remains unsettled and excessive, 'perverse': knowing 'that what it is doing is suspect', but continuing with it anyway (perhaps perversely romantic) (Kerr, 'Sympathetic Topographies' 113). The thaumatrope carries two different images back to back, in an anterior misrepresentation of cultural differences. Here too the options of thinking and understanding are bald. Jones explains:

> I tend to work paratactically, that is by placing ideas in unexplained juxtaposition, by attempting to force new conjunctions and set in place a kind of tension or torsion in the text. The windows are meant to suddenly flare open...to keep disturbing and reorientating the reader's perception. (qtd. in Holland and Tandy 4).

The rape and damage to Elizabeth's arm is placed alongside her becoming Indian. The pain of the injuries focuses her attention on the material present. Later, her arm disgusts her: it 'rests like a dead thing', as if not part of herself (Jones, *The House of Breathing* 92). As she listens to the sounds of the street coming through the window, imagining the real, she feels herself 'remould: a longer nose with a jewel...' until '[h]er body feels irreducible local and exact' (ibid). Paratactically, these events sit beside each other and signal something of the unrepresentable becoming.

6.4 Imagining the Other

These concerns with histories, negotiating difference and respecting the humane quality of affect are recurrent in Jones' writing. Affect is employed here within the aim of performing an ethical 'cultural writing' (Muecke, 'The Archaeology of Feeling' 2). Affect for Jones can be considered within what Muecke has described as a 'neo-humanism': the belief that the 'feeling, thinking body codes humanity via multiple modalities and technologies, rituals and practices', and an ethics that involves the recognition of the singularity of the other (Muecke, 'The Archaeology of Feeling' 5). From experience, Jones works towards an ethical intersubjectivity. But Jones' work is also reflexive: the desire to perform ethically is placed alongside the suggestion of its impossibility.

Considering how the absence of affect is constructed in systems of negation in colonial and imperial structures in 'Skulls, Fontanelles and the Spaces Between', she also desires to 'heal', to

work otherwise, with affect, the body and theory, as questioned in 'Thaumatropes' and challengingly represented in 'Veronica'. Recognition of the other is an ethical imperative, but in these latter works it is implicated with a suspect imagining of the other.

The thaumatrope's image, the skull's gravity and the fontanelle's promise are employed by Jones to figure affect in theorising. This is elaborated in her work using photographs as models, in the essay 'The Heart Beating Across the Room (On Possessing Someone Else's Photographs)' (1995). Here she thinks through the complexities of the ethical imperatives that her purchase and possession of someone else's photographs provokes; they provide the occasion for considering the relations between representation, materiality, affect and responsibility.

The photograph is approached as a trace of an embodied present; in it, 'a momentary action is arrested and stored, but, crucially, it is also primed to grow' (Gibson 112). The photograph captures and represents a material instant. As well, it is generative: it provokes thinking and feeling. Yet it also unsettles – or ghosts – the real it re-presents. The photograph is as much an image of presence as of loss: as an image of the body, it loses the body itself. It cannot capture the experience of embodied subjectivity, but can only gesture towards it; time and bodies move on. The skull in the museum grossly fails to capture life. In contrast, the promissory of the fontanelle gestures towards the potential of life. The photograph sits somewhere between these two, failing to capture life and also gesturing towards presence.

The photographs Jones possesses are of young women in a Dutch sanatorium from around 1911. When she discovers them in a market stall she at once is 'contracted' to the images, as if in a romance: 'seized with pure intimacy, like falling in love', she 'adored' the particularities of these images, these women who were '[l]onging to be cherished' ('The Heart Beating' 36). Yet later, at home, she cannot bear to look at the photographs: 'even the thought of their existence in my house filled me with a sense of guilt'; she feels as if her 'possession had altered and transvaluated them' (ibid). So meaningful within a familial context, this value has been translated into that of a commodity: the photographs are now objects within an economic exchange.

Yet this is not their only value: as a trace of people's experience, they also carry links to subjectivities, and to the past's present. This is what inspires Jones' discomfort: the trace of their experience moves her. Photographs offer the possibility of contact with others. Yet what does this

contact implicate her in: if she is contracted to them, what are her obligations? To paraphrase Elspeth Probyn, 'ignoring the chasm' that affect opens 'is not an ethical option', but experiencing 'affect offers no immediate guarantee' of the ethical ('Dis/connect' 4). In one of the Dutch photographs are two women, 'one a visitor and one a patient', and between them is an open book: 'the volume is ambiguous: it is their correspondence and their estrangement, their promissory and their loss' (Jones, 'The Heart Beating' 36). The ambiguity of the open book between the women echoes the position of writing itself: can it forge an ethical relation between the present and the past, or does it signify their fundamental separation?

Jones marvels romantically, or even rhapsodically, at the forms of 'human communion...accidental complicities...the solidarity of affection...[and] the gorgeously specific propinquities of love' that the photographs image ('The Heart Beating' 39). They provoke imagining 'unimaginable and dense interiorities' (Jones, 'The Heart Beating' 41). The Dutch photographs are 'compelling' because they engage the public domain with private aspects (the 'solemnity of illness', an awareness of death), and because 'they honour the beloved in stages of loss and transformation' ('The Heart Beating' 36; 37). The photographs resound with material presence. Attending to the body in illness, they express 'the simplified gravity of embodiment' (ibid).

This is contrasted with the technology of photography, by which what is lived as singular is reproducible, systematic and entirely public. She cites photographs from the 1800s of people in asylums as 'troubling', because they are so 'deliberately an appropriation and a subjugation', multiple and repetitious, 'unabashedly and systematically recorded' ('The Heart Beating' 40). There is no recognition of the value of the singularity of the subject in these systems of documentation, and no space for feeling. As a point of comparison to these photographs, Jones refers to Rembrandt van Rijn's painting *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr Nicholas Tulp* (1632), in which the hand and forearm of a body are being dissected in front of an audience. To Jones it depicts 'a horrible proximity of the inner and outer', a 'terrible inter-space between' ('The Heart Beating' 37). Here there is no private, and no person: even the body is 'oddly absented' in favour of the spectacle of the dissection, 'with an assumption of impunity ... sheer corporeality, sheer specularity' (ibid). The body has been stripped of its subjectivity and in its display made radically public: an 'instrument of other people's signification' (ibid). It is a negative of presence.

This painting is without compassion; it represents 'with impunity – the gruesome business of medical theatre', initiating 'the realist audacity that culminates in photographs of atrocity' (ibid). It suggests that 'certain kinds of bodily violation (on certain kinds of subject, for certain kinds of reasons) are permissible, proper and even edifying' (ibid). Like the skull in the colonial museum, the reduction of people to objects prompts ethical questions. 'What it is permissible to photograph' – or to represent or to collect – 'and who decides? And what is the use-value (or exchange value)...What too is the ethics of...possession' (Jones, 'The Heart Beating' 40)? In the museum, the objects and images are not treated as traces but as classifiable types and examples; they are presented without any sense of affect, appreciated in a way that is abstracted from the human. There is no wonder, excitement or shame, but a clinical and methodical documentation.

Upsetting this spectacle, Jones is affected by the trace these displays still retain. 'The trepidation one might feel in wrongful ownership may be a small residual fragment of an original intuition...of a need to vouchsafe the irreducibility of the...other' (Jones, 'The Heart Beating' 40). However, despite the trace's insistence, it is always partial: the photograph does not provide comprehensive or direct access to the 'real', but is 'oddly amnesiac' (Jones, 'The Heart Beating' 38). It suggests that whilst the past is always there, it is not completely knowable. In fact, in being moved by the traces of others, Jones is *imagining* the others. Roland Barthes writes that '[t]he photograph itself is in no way animated, but it animates me: this is what creates every adventure' (*Camera Lucida* 20). Yet he must imagine what the photograph re-presents for it to work. Despite what he implies, he must animate it, before it can animate him.

Indicative of a return to sentimentalism, but one that is self-consciously aware of its limitations, Jones is animating the photographs: she is complicit in projecting their singularity, rather than just recognising it. She must invent them: 'language – or imagination – must be consequential. In Blakean terms it's simply an assertion of the idea that to imagine another's experience in terms of its agonising materiality is the beginnings of a basis for ethical sympathy'; 'there is finally a link between imagination and political agency' (qtd. in Holland and Tandy 7). Drawing upon the imagination in order to establish an ethical realisation of the other's value is evident in her use of the skull and fontanelle. But the tension this raises is made explicit in her ethnography of the Bardi tribe. Ethically, she must realise the singularity of the other – its difference from herself. Yet to do so, she must imagine the other.

The adoption of the sympathetic imagination occurs alongside Jones' self-conscious recognition that '[r]eading images always entails reading one's own susceptibilities' ('The Heart Beating' 40). Wary of the dubious mysticism involved in this movement of identification, of finding the self in the other, she suggests that a way of working towards a recognition of the other's 'irreducibility' is to consider the primacy of social practices, of 'existing (and traceable) social relations': who keeps the trace, who permits it, who possesses the image, how it is traded and how it is valued ('The Heart Beating' 39). This occurs in 'Skulls', but here she still draws on the imaginative work of affect, which is in doubt. Consequently, what is performed as an ethical practice is cautious and partial, at once proposing a method and signifying that it is suspect.

In Jones' work, the ethical response, then, is offset by recognition of its limitations and impurities. As it is performed, these are unreconciled; it is partial, both naïve and knowing. The imaginative movement of identification inspired by the humanistic tradition is recognised as suspect – the experience of affect does not itself secure the ethical – but the imperatives that affect arouses cannot be ethically ignored. Rather than focusing on achieving an ethical response via affective writing, Jones' emphasis is on considering the enduring compulsion of the ethical itself, and the failure of its realisation in any single act. Reconstitution of subjectivity as required by the ethical depends on imaginative work that is itself problematic. Jones thus confesses to 'a degree of projection, a wishing-to-re-animate' in her reading ('my humanist rhetoric'): 'The Dutch women absorb the force of my remembering', she writes. 'They are detached and attached; they exist *for* me' (original emphasis; 'The Heart Beating' 37; 41).

7 THE SADNESS AND SHADOWS OF EXPERIENCE: WILLIAM YANG

I think that we never know the truth by being told it. We have to experience it in some way.
(Dening, *Performances* 101)

'Is it only an illusion', Alice Kessler-Harris asks, 'to imagine that as historians we can capture a culture that will reflect the heart-beat of' people in the past: 'not ours?' (22). In the previous section I explored how Gail Jones raises the question of knowing another culture, with particular reference to anthropology. Whilst it is ethically imperative to realise the difference and value of the other, this is inevitably compromised, for to realise the other one must imagine him or her. Consequently, the understanding of the other is entangled in the scholar's own projections and desires. In the above comment, Kessler-Harris raises the same issue in relation to the discipline of history: can the difference of the past be realised? What happens when we place the historical project – to learn and make public knowledge about the past – alongside the awareness of the role of the imagination in historical work? In this section I will suggest that there is an alternative to this dilemma: we cannot know the past's present. But we can, partially, experience it, and through this experience gain an understanding of the heart-beat of people in the past.

William Yang's slide shows are premised on the idea that our embodied experience of the past is the primary way in which we learn about the past. I invoke Yang here in the context of a turn in historiographical scholarship to non-professional history work. Dipesh Chakrabarty considers questions of history by turning to work outside of professional, academic historical practices. Museums, for instance, 'address certain formations of the public in modern democracies that academic disciplines do not address' (Chakrabarty, 'Museums in Late Democracies' 11). This move away from the authority of the academic historian is, John Gillis remarks, a general feature in Western societies: 'Today everyone is her or his own historian' (17). People actively document the past themselves, using photographs, video and digital film, for instance, and produce histories in a variety of forms, from photo albums to movies and websites. This is suggestive of a

'democratization of the past' (ibid). Adequate ways of negotiating the past are being productively explored by 'non-professionals'.

Beginning as a social photographer, William Yang has developed the slide show into a form of theatre. In front of an audience, he stands on stage to the side of one or two large screens, on to which are projected 'photographic document[s]' of 'the times in which I live' (Yang, *Sadness* i). From these photographs, Yang tells stories about his experiences. Working in conjunction with a musician, he quite literally stages history as entertainment.

Yang's stories and photographs are histories. In his shows *Sadness* (first performed in 1994) and *Shadows* (2002), Yang focuses on stories of 'minorities' within Australian culture: of gay people, for instance, and people with Aboriginal and Asian ancestries. His work's varied negotiations with the past, and with tensions between memory and history, can be read in the context – and tensions – of current identity politics. A clear aim of his projects is to participate in the production of a more democratic and inclusive history through the telling of minority histories. This contributes to the present, for attitudes about the past are of the present. However, these histories are not simply told according to the historicist method of cause and consequence. Yang includes in his shows a stress on embodied experience, which opens ways of understanding from being *only* through rationality, to other possible ways.

In this chapter I will explore the role of memory in *Sadness* and how it relates to debates about memory's role in history, before considering the embodied experience of the past that is depicted in Yang's performances and its implications for identity politics. Yang's work in *Shadows* shifts attention from identity to discomforting pasts, and I will look at the negotiation of histories through juxtaposition and material ways of conveying the pasts.

Throughout his work, Yang's own experience is used as the hinge to bring histories of different pasts alongside each other. In *Sadness*, for example, histories are told of Chinese people in Australia, stemming from his own family, and of the gay community in Sydney, which he is a part of. They are not comparable histories, but are brought together through their shared axis of his experience: 'I was the glue', he explains (Yang, *Sadness* i). Klaus Neumann's essay 'Haunted Lands' also juxtaposes two histories that are not obviously commensurable, but that resonate

through being placed alongside each other. However, Neumann stresses that the histories are chosen arbitrarily; '[t]here is little that connects the two places' ('Haunted Lands' 75). Yang's work has a different point: it highlights that difference is *in our* lived experience, not *of* someone else's. This is a perspective that Ruth Behar reads as a recent tendency in anthropology: 'We now stand on the same plane with our subjects' (28).

The objectification of experience typical of anthropology is disrupted in his shows. Yang is 'both the subject (i.e. narrator) and object of the synthesis of the two disparate worlds' (Lo, 'Dis/orientations' 67). He does not try to resolve these positions into a single, coherent one; nor does he experience anxiety about a failure to do so. Jacqueline Lo comments, '[t]here is no attempt to reconcile or neutralise the differences, antagonisms and ambivalence in the presentation of a gay Chinese-Australian identity' ('Dis/orientations' 67). Contrasts – and negotiations – are the point.

Nor does Yang resolve the contrasts of the stories he tells; he leaves the tensions between them. 'They seemed such different worlds', he admits of the Chinese and gay communities, 'it seemed they should be two different plays. But...they were both my stories, both these diverse stories existed because of me' (*Sadness* i). He *performs* the located nature of historical work: 'As the historian attempts to understand the past, he is at the same time, knowingly or not, seeking to understand his own cultural situation and himself' (Susman xiii).

Stephen Muecke draws upon parallelism to realise an ethical critical agenda: to represent and value the force of difference. Yang's aim in putting different stories side by side is more therapeutic: to acknowledge difference, to mourn what is past and lost, and from that to forge a sense of community in the present. Like Muecke, he refuses to let the difference of others be an excuse for maintaining distance from them. *Sadness*, the book of writing and photographs that is based on his theatre act of the same name, begins with a chapter titled 'Friends', followed by 'Family', and this separation is repeated throughout until the book's final section. Yang does not position his genetic family and the gay population as the same; they have different identities and politics. Yet he does not *dissociate* them: 'Family' and 'Friends' are placed not only alongside each other, but in proximity to each other, particularly through the common feeling of sadness. *Sadness*, Felicity Collins writes, 'proposes a subjectivity of attachment rather than autonomy' (52).

In placing incommensurable pasts alongside each other, Yang's work can be read as an allegory for historical practice. 'Exploring the meaning of contrast...[is a] way to view the historical process' (Kessler-Harris 21). Learning about the past in the present is a study of contrasts: history work brings prominence to where they are in proximity and where they move further apart. Difference is not overcome; there is a 'dialectic between connection and otherness that is at the center of all forms of historical and cultural representation' (Behar 20).

7.1 Photographs and Stories, History and Memory

Yang's history work cannot be considered outside from its performance. Yang makes actual Greg Dening's contention that '[h]istories are not just a message. Histories are the mode of the story's expression, the public occasion of its telling' (*Performances* 48-9). Yang's histories are dramatic, and are crafted to entertain and engage an audience. Their staging places the audience in an intimate relation to history: the slide show is typically an activity associated with friends and family; it is domestic, rather than public. Attending his shows, the audience is immediately placed on a familiar level with Yang. This is reinforced by his solo presence on stage, conversational speech and use of wry humour. The intimate setting highlights the ethic of Yang's history work: human relationships are what is of value, over analytic abstractions about the past. Histories are told by someone, to someone.

In his performances, Yang draws upon both oral stories and photographs as historical sources. The performances are created from the photographs: 'All my theatre pieces begin with photos', writes Yang at the start of *Sadness*; '[f]irst I take the slide images which I push around on my light box, and then the words come' (*Sadness* i). He reflects that the image 'gives you a kick start...I can assemble works with images and words...it's almost easier for me to do that than to actually do a piece just in words. I [would] almost never start' (qtd. in Cavenett 4). The images – photographs from his own experiences – function generatively by highlighting memories. Photographs incite memory, and memory acts as 'a narrative cue. To remember is to create instantly the trajectory of a story' (Brewster and Smith 200). The stories thus depart from, and also return to, the photographs. Anne Brewster and Hazel Smith suggest this format is structural: 'What remembered image does not trail a narrative in its wake?' (Brewster and Smith 200). But

as the presence of both forms in Yang's performances suggests, they are not reducible to the same.

The photographs and stories are presented as if in parallel, rather than being used to explain each other. Whilst Muecke places texts in parallel to allow other voices to speak in his work, rather than speaking for them, Yang uses the forms in parallel because neither form on its own sufficiently represents the times. Representing just a moment of the past from a partial perspective, the photograph is unsubtle, 'a bit mechanical, presenting things a bit too bluntly': it requires additional information to accurately give a sense of the past (Yang, 'Snapshots' 76). Ross Gibson comments that in the early years of its invention, photography was approached as 'rendering the physical world quantifiable': objects could be 'trapped, measured, counted, and classified' (119). Yet for Yang this is not enough: the photograph might be a 'true' story, but it is incomplete; for it to be meaningful it needs something more: 'I don't think you can tell a full story in an image', he comments, 'You just tend to come up with sort of clichés' (qtd. in Feneley 5).

A similar sense of deficiency is apparent when only a written or spoken narrative is provided: '[t]he writing is too pared down for reading; people want more. That's where the background images come into play' (Yang, 'Snapshots' 76; Yang qtd. in Waites 86). The photographs present a momentary image of the past, and the oral narratives guide and describe a journey into history. Yang puts them alongside each other: he shows the slides on big screens and stands to the side, talking. His speeches touch on the slides' subject matter, but are not restricted to it. He 'shuttle[s] between' the two, 'creating a distinct rhythm and logic characterised by suture, gaps and silences' (Lo, 'Dis/orientations' 67). The distinct rhythm of his performances, of his history-telling, exists in the tension between the photographs and the stories of the past.

Also in Yang's work is an awareness of the distinctions between photographs and memories as historical sources. This occurs specifically when memory is invoked 'as a historical phenomenon' (Burke 100). What is remembered of the past, and how it is remembered, are not objective accounts of what actually happened, but are themselves shaped by historical forces. When a photograph of his grandfather disappears, for instance, Yang draws the image as he remembers it, but when he shows his brother, his brother says '"It's nothing like the photo"':

that, to Yang, 'was beside the point' (Yang, 'Snapshots' 55). The point is that 'very few people could challenge its likeness': as an image drawn from his memory, the sketch alone has no authority as a document of the past for history (ibid). Individual memory is private, difficult to translate to others and to verify, being without a direct relation to the 'actual' past. In contrast, the photograph is a 'document' of the past, and, moreover, it can be publicly circulated and debated: it can 'count' in the 'professional discipline of history' in a way that memory cannot (Yang, *Sadness* I; Chakrabarty, 'Reconciliation and its Historiography' 10). For Yang, photographs provide a contrast to the vulnerabilities of memory. Memory informs accounts of the past, but is itself informed by historicisable conditions. Although the interpretation of photographs is always susceptible to imprints of culture, they do offer direct images of the past: even if momentary and with ambiguous import, they can be meaningfully debated. In Yang's anecdote about his grandfather's photograph, the individual memory alone is unsatisfactory, but if it appears with a photograph it becomes of value: history here 'is "the life of memory" (*vita memoriae*)' (Cicero qtd. in Burke 97).

The potential discrepancy between memory and history is also illustrated in Yang's story about 'coming out' and telling his mother that he is gay. He writes: 'My mother cried for three days but she still loved me. No, that's not quite true, a Japanese boy told me that, but the story's the same' ('Snapshots' 71). In his anecdote, subjective memory has a historical life, for recollections of experience can be shaped by social experience. Yang's account of coming out reveals it as not just an individual memory but one shaped by cultural forces. Kerwin Klein would argue for it as representative of a structural understanding of memory, 'commonly rendered as a growing awareness of the constructedness of subjectivity' (132). Social environments and discourses shape individual remembering: the subjective memory is no documentary but part of a process – 'conscious or unconscious' – of 'selection, interpretation and distortion [that] is socially conditioned' (Burke 98). Thus Yang writes that 'I've had the experience that the ex-patriot American writer Amy Tan describes; when she first set foot in China, she immediately became Chinese', but follows this statement by admitting: 'Although it didn't quite happen like that for me, I know what Amy's talking about' (*Sadness* 23). This admission suggests that memory is something that is made to work: '[i]dentities and memory are not things we think *about*, but things we think *with*' (original emphasis; Gillis 5). Here, memory is something made to work for cultural identity. Yet this description also highlights the tension missing in a structural understanding of memory: memories are informed by the social, but are not reducible to it: there

is a '*complex blending* between individual and collective memory provided by mass culture…[a] *slippage* between remembering a personal past, and remembering its representation in popular culture' (my emphasis; Hamilton 27). Memories and subjective and cultural narratives of identity overlap in a place of shadows.

The current definition of 'memory' is explains it as an individual property: it is '[t]he faculty by which things are remembered; the capacity for retaining, perpetuating, or reviving the thought of things past' (*OED*). This conjunction of memory with the self is one understanding of memory that is at work in Yang's performances. In Act One of *Sadness*, with two photographs of a canyon in the Blue Mountains, Yang writes and speaks of his friend Nicolaas' memorial ceremony: people gather in the darkness at a point above the canyon and, 'as he requested, we remembered him and watched the dawn' (9). Memory here is an individual capacity that can be consciously activated.

Also apparent in this instance, however, is another definition of memory: that of it as a 'commemoration', a 'memorial writing', an 'object or act serving as a memorial; a memento', and a 'memorial tomb…a monument' (*OED*). At Nicolaas' memorial, the group of individuals remembering constitutes a commemoration, or an act as a memorial, as well as enacting the definition of memory as private faculty.

Memory itself in Yang's work is made to function as a memorial: to the past generally, and to individual people specifically. (The photograph supports this function, or realises it, given its stronger connection to the actual.) Yet Klein points out that such understandings of memory are listed in the *Oxford English Dictionary* as obsolete (Klein 132). They are no longer considered current because of their implication with the sacred: they recall the conjunction of object and memory that 'found its early meanings in the union of material objects and divine presence', but was displaced 'by the rise of the modern self and the secularisation and privatisation of memory' (ibid). Terms such as '*mourning...fragment, identity, redemption, healing...cure, witnessing, testimony*' are not part of the 'vocabulary of a secular, critical practice', Klein argues, holding that their use aims to 're-enchant our relation with the world and pour presence back into the past' (original emphasis; 145).

To 'pour presence back into the past': this would be to expand from the rational and refuse the contraction of lived experience by prioritising the analytic. Klein does not want to do this; he closes his discussion down at this point (see Klein 145). Yang's work, however, is suggestive of this 'alternative' orientation: of a perspective on memory – and history – that is centred on embodied experience.

Visiting Cooktown where his grandparents once lived and where his father was raised, Yang notes: 'There are no Chinese left', though there is a 'Chinese section of the cemetery' (*Sadness* 40). These remains are evidence of the Chinese presence in this area in the past. Alongside a photograph of a Chinese shrine in the cemetery, Yang translates the characters inscribed on it which say: '"Regard…as if…present"' (ibid). This, he explains, refers to a Chinese belief that the dead live on in another world. Abruptly pausing his family history, Yang announces: 'Now I want to jump around a bit and show you some Chinese artefacts that I discovered in my travels around Australia' (*Sadness* 40).

7.2 Remembering and Experience

The saying 'regard as if present' can be read as a reminder of the past's presence in the present. Although gone, traces of what has been remain in material remnants and in memories. Yang's inclusion of the photograph of the shrine indicates the significance of the past's relics: they inform one's present understanding of the past. Against the absence of Chinese people in Cooktown in the present, the shrine makes the past a *presence* (a past that may have been forgotten in cultural memory). The value of remnants lies in the way that they materially present other times in the present: they press the past's existence in to our experience of the present – whether or not they are overtly recognised. 'The experience of history', writes Hans-Georg Gadamer, 'which we ourselves have, is…covered only to a small degree by that which we would name *historical consciousness*' (original emphasis; qtd. in Chakrabarty, 'Minority Histories, Subaltern Pasts' 28).

Yang's photographs of Chinese artefacts stress an embodied relation to the past. The focus in postcolonial studies on exploring the past through representations, as Kalpana Ram points out, is a '*disturbance*' to the primary, lived relation people have to the past (original emphasis; Ram 261).

Ram suggests (following Merleau Ponty) that the primary relation to the past is one 'that need not be *thought* in order to exist for us – it exists *in us*, in our embodied dispositions and orientations to the world acquired in primary socialisation' (original emphasis; Ram 262). The past is unselfconsciously negotiated every day in ways that are learnt implicitly. Moreover, as Silvan Tomkins asserts, 'there can be no "pure cognition", no cognition uncontaminated by the richness of sensate experience, including affective experience' (Gibbs, 'Disaffected' 340). We learn through social interaction a particular orientation towards the past, and this is not merely theoretical knowledge but an embodied disposition; embodied experience affects all thought, so these orientations construct ways of being in the world.

According to Ram, one of the reasons lived experience is often ignored is the 'linguistic turn' in the social sciences, according to which subjectivity is discursively constituted and experience itself is a linguistic event. This 'has led to a systematic underestimation of an access to the world that is not entirely based on representations' (Ram 268). Materiality, Thomas Holt stresses, 'decisively shape[s]...the conditions of possibility' (118). It can restrict, and enable, access to and understanding of the past. All experience is not constructed: material conditions are not completely reducible to discourse.

When the 'taken for granted' social environment is lost (Ram's example is through migration to a 'radically different' culture), 'the past is revealed to be something less autonomous and secure than the embodied acquisition of our previous experience' (Ram 262). It is *then* that the past is accessed through representation: when the more common way of relating to the past – through embodied experience – has been interrupted. Having access to the past through representations is a signal of the failure of 'that which was able to function as an *implicit* set of skills and orientations' (original emphasis; Ram 262). When 'cultural patterns are no longer available as a straightforward acquisition', the past must be '*thought, represented*' (ibid). Only then is it 'something that is thought [of] as "one's culture"': '[c]ultural transmission as a *conscious project* already bespeaks a breakdown' (ibid).

In his photograph of the shrine in the Cooktown cemetery, and in the subsequent photographs of Chinese artefacts, Yang is staging the primary, embodied relationship to the past that is commonly unreflexively enacted. This is in contrast to rational, analytic thought – upon which

the disciplines of history and anthropology are based – which is premised on the separation of the thinking subject and sensory experience. Secular, critical practice calls for abstraction and 'trains us to be sceptical of the evidence they [the senses] produce about the world' (Chakrabarty, 'Museums in Late Democracies' 9). E. P. Thompson historicised this split between English understandings of 'education' and experience in the 1960s, and his work remains relevant here.

Drawing upon William Wordsworth's writings, Thompson outlines an understanding of 'experience' from the eighteenth century which associates it with lower classes of English society ('the common man') (Thompson 14). Moral and spiritual worth is believed to be obtained 'through experiences of labour, suffering, and through primary relationships', and is 'grounded very much less upon rational attributes' (ibid). Becoming '"set" in the aftermath of the French Revolution', the rational is associated with education and opposed to experience: education becomes entangled with 'social control' as students are taught to deny the worth of their life experience (Thompson 23). Education is 'leading away from, out of, the universe of experience in which the sensibility was grounded', and moving towards the 'abstraction of intellectual values from the context in which they must be lived' (Thompson 20; 27). In the nineteenth century this separation of experience from education is equated with the division of feeling and intellect; this distinction begins to have other meanings, but the 'tension' between them remains, Thompson argues (23).

Disciplinary history is founded on this distinction: to know the past is to know it *analytically*; to experience it is something less valid, perhaps something minor. History work that draws upon the embodied experience of the past refuses this negation of experience. Histories are more than their 'message': they are the mode and the occasion of their telling; there is an 'everyday nature' to histories, and a 'historical nature' to 'everyday life as well' (Dening, *Performances* 49). Trying to expand history to include the lived experience of the past is what prompts historian Kessler-Harris to ask if it is possible to know the past, not simply read the present into it.

Yang's work avoids the prioritisation of the analytic over lived experience, and addresses embodied knowledges. The Chinese artefact photographs both focus attention on Chinese people in Australia's past, and foreground the *experience* of the past, and in this way challenge 'the primacy of the analytic over the lived' (Chakrabarty, 'Museums in Late Democracies' 8).

Yang includes a photograph of 'burning towers'[15] in Beechworth, Victoria, because – he relates in his accompanying narrative – as Victoria's gold rush occurred forty years before that in northern Australia, 'very little evidence of it remains' (*Sadness* 40). In conjunction with this comment, the photograph stresses a rare experience of the past: what matters is less the photograph than that he is able to experience this artefact of the past; the photograph is a record of that. In another photograph Yang shows the 'most beautiful joss house, or Chinese temple' he has been to: 'All the other joss houses I saw had, over time, been destroyed and rebuilt…this one still had its original cladding of delicate corrugated iron' (*Sadness* 41). Again, what the photograph highlights is a (rare and valued) experience of a past in the present through its material traces. Chinatown in Broome, which remains 'in its original condition' because a Lord McAlpine bought the whole town and preserved it for tourists, is still 'exciting' for Yang: it makes the past something he can *feel* or apprehend bodily. It has a presence: the buildings are 'unlined', he notes, 'and they must have been very hot in summer' (*Sadness* 41).

Not adopting a postcolonial approach and considering his performances as representations 'in a certain knowing fashion' – as constructions, for instance, with reference to political formations – addressing his work in terms of sensory experience opens up the complexity of ways of thinking about and living with the past (Ram 265). Approaching the photographs of Chinese artefacts as simply showcasing a Chinese presence in Australia's past leaves something unaddressed: as Ram articulates it, 'such forms of knowing leave untouched the magic of performance', referring to the force of its sensory presence (265). Yang's broad project is to record the times – his times, which involves representing people underrepresented in 'mainstream narratives of the nation' (Chakrabarty, 'Minority Histories, Subaltern Pasts' 15). Chakrabarty identifies such works as 'minority histories', and reads them as political: they 'in part express the struggle for inclusion and representation that are characteristic of liberal and representative democracies' (ibid). Chakrabarty goes on to reflect that democratic histories work from the possibility of 'incorporating' the minority into the mainstream histories: the oppositional 'impels the discipline ever outward from its core' ('Minority Histories, Subaltern Pasts' 16). The status of minority is situational, and not permanent. Yet none of this is a focus in Yang's work: his attention is on experience, and how it is recognised in cultural memory, or obscured.

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[15] Burning towers are used by the Chinese for prayers and meals for the dead.

Yang's final photograph in this series of artefacts is of a Chinese mine shaft at Pine Creek, south of Darwin (Figure 6). Yang says it has a 'special fascination' for him because it is near Yam Creek, where his maternal grandfather worked after arriving in Australia from China (*Sadness* 42). He does not expand on this comment, but, having arrived at this material site, relates some brief information about his grandfather and resumes the narration of his family history.

Each of the photographs of the artefacts is meaningful as an experience of the Chinese past of Australia, but this final one has a particular significance for Yang. Something similar is signalled to in an experience of Patricia Williams, an African-American legal scholar who, whilst 'writing about the history of contract law', finds the deed of sale for her 'own great-great-grandmother to a white lawyer' (Behar 13). As Ruth Behar comments, 'that bitter knowledge…gives "the facts" another twist of urgency and poignancy' (ibid). This familial connection brings the past to life: it is *felt* in the present. 'It undercuts the notion of a contract as an abstract, impersonal legal document, challenging us to think about the universality of the law and the pursuit of justice for all' (ibid). Chakrabarty gives another example of this situation when he quotes[16] Anne Vitart-Farduolis, a curator at the Musée del'Homme in Paris, who writes about what happened when a Native American man came to the museum and, claiming to be the grandson of the man whose 'intricately painted animal skin' tunic was on display there, spoke about its design and meaning:

> This garment, formerly beautiful and interesting but passive and indifferent, little by little became…[an] active testimony to a living moment through the mediation of someone who did not *observe* and *analyze* it but who lived the object and for whom the object lived.
> (original emphasis; qtd. in Chakrabarty, 'Museums in Late Democracies' 9).

In each of these circumstances, the past has a presence that is embodied and lived. The personal connection activates an intersubjective instance: like the photograph, the tunic by itself is an inert example of the past, but a personal link to it activates it. This is an important instance of the realisation of the subjective presence of those of the past, opening up the possibility of the 'humane banality of affect' (Jones, 'Thaumatropes' 111).

It is the personal connection that gives the past presence: the mine shaft Yang sees is more moving to him because his grandfather worked in something like it: physically, he can learn

[16] From James Clifford's 'On Collecting Art and Culture'.

about what his grandfather's present might have felt like. Williams' connection of a relative to a legal document brings together something from the world of experience and the analytic: the name on the contract represents a person she has a link to. The person indicated in the document has a subjective presence because of this connection, and the document becomes 'alive' for her.

Significantly, Vitart-Farduolis has a similar experience, though she herself has no familial link to the material past. This means that the subjective experience of the past is possible without a personal connection to it, but *affectively*, through someone else's experience of it. When someone who claims a connection to the tunic talks to her about it, the tunic comes alive for her: the present of the past is felt. For each person here, the past is not analytically objectified. Nor are people of the past represented: instead they are suggested through the experience of material objects of their present. None of the situations are proscriptive: they do not attempt to explain what the past was like. Instead, the material – *in juxtaposition* with an explanation of a familial connection to it – provokes the historical imagination.

Yang's performances themselves are constructed to stress embodied ways of knowing the past, and people. He also attempts to make the audience feel emotionally. Experiencing a feeling about the past also informs an understanding of the past; '"emotional patterns"', as Kessler-Harris discovers, 'are not our own business at all, but the stuff of which history is made – the living texture out of which people make decisions' (21). In *Sadness*, the oral narrative juxtaposed with photographs of gay men with AIDS attempts what the Native American's commentary does for Vitart-Farduolis: to make what could be objectified 'come alive', and affect the audience.

The book of *Sadness* begins in Act One with a photograph of a man in a hospital bed on a right page. It is a mid-shot, showing the man from waist up; he is at a 45-degree angle, towards the right. He is wearing a Bugs Bunny t-shirt, and nestled in his right arm – and lying parallel to him – is a soft Felix the Cat toy. The toy is black, aside from its white eyes and large, white, smiling mouth; its head is bigger than the man's. Its huge eyes highlight the circles around the man's eyes. He looks straight at the camera. The shadow underneath his chin emphasises his jaw line; his face looks thin, his head only skull and skin, little flesh. The photograph's top left is dark; this and Felix's black body contrast with the whites of the bed and the man's t-shirt. The white of the bed linen emphasises the man's pallor. The black and white photograph is the size of half the

page, and appears above text, and under the chapter's title: 'Friends'. Below the photograph, to the right, is written in handwriting: 'Allan. St Vincent's Hospital. 1988' (Yang, *Sadness* 1).

The text underneath the photograph is what Yang speaks when performing. It explains that at the time this photograph was taken, Yang had not seen Allan for three years; he was in hospital visiting someone else when he recognised Allan. With this description, the reader/viewer is placed in Yang's position, seeing from his perspective. Yang writes of 'a strong desire to burst into tears' because of the change he sees in Allan: '[h]e seemed like an old man' (ibid). Yang's comments are central to the affectivity of the photograph, making it more than an anaesthetic image. Looking at this photograph with the awareness of Allan's bodily change and of Yang's grief, the viewer is positioned to respond empathetically, to feel some sense of loss and sadness. This is also stressed by the photograph itself, with its contrast between the cartoon characters and the stuffed toy, and the skeletal, ill man.

'I thought of him as a young man', Yang reflects a few pages later (*Sadness* 4). This page is again divided horizontally between text and photograph, with the photograph appearing above. This is on a left page; the right page is taken up by a large close-up of a younger Allan, smiling and looking to the right of the camera; the handwriting at bottom middle says: 'Surry Hills. 1980' (Yang, *Sadness* 5). Allan here has dark curly hair, and in the background is a white, patterned lace curtain, which curves round to half cover his right (the viewer's left) shoulder. Behind his other shoulder is darkness. This is juxtaposed on the left page with a photograph of Allan when he is very ill. Shot from chest up, his head is at a 45-degree angle, appearing as if collapsed on the pillow. He has a large forehead and receding hair, and a dark, cropped beard and moustache. This does not cover his skinniness; the sockets of his eyes are visible, and his eyelids are not quite closed. He looks unconscious. To his left, tucked in between the bed's pillow and the wall, is Felix. His head is pointing down and his smile cannot be seen.

The spoken narrative introduces a personal link to the photograph. This creates the possibility for it to be similarly experienced by the audience: introduced thus, the viewer does not view Allan objectively, but – potentially – as a subjective presence. To paraphrase Ram: 'What gives *life* to the sequences…is its *emotional* stance' (original emphasis; 269). The audience/reader is placed to be affected, as Yang proceeds, 'little by little' turning photographs into 'active testimony to a living moment through the mediation of someone who did not *observe* and *analyze* it but who

lived the object and for whom the object lived' (ibid). This is further emphasised through Yang's presence in performances on stage; as Lo notes, in the narratives are 'elements of resonance and irony which always refer back to the embodied presence of Yang in performance' ('Dis/orientations' 67).

In *Sadness* Yang also introduces the mystery of his uncle's murder. He is told various stories about what happened; the murder remains a force entangled in many other lives in the present. He eventually tracks down and visits the alleged site where it took place. There, he says: 'I stood in the place where my uncle had been shot. I tried to put all the bits of the story together' (*Sadness* 34-35). Above this statement is a picture of Yang himself (Figure 5). The horizontal photograph takes up two-thirds of the page. Yang is standing in front of a wall of sugar cane. The photograph acts as record of Yang's experience of having 'been there' and locates him literally in the place of his ancestor.

Having heard varied accounts of the murder and visited the site, Yang also looks at more traditional historical sources: court documents and evidence from the subsequent murder trial. He presents a photograph of the papers his uncle was holding when he was shot, with the handwritten label: 'Blood-stained documents' (*Sadness* 68). The conjunction of all of these varied sources performs the 'historical narrative process itself...one of multiple perspectives, complex subjectivities and contingency. The event, as a larger problematic, is historically present in the way it effects these narratives and experiences' (Smaill 166-167).

Materiality and loss are repeatedly tied together in *Sadness*. When Yang's friend Scotty – who has AIDS – takes an overdose of pills and dies, a close friend preserves Scotty's room 'for over a year' (Yang, *Sadness* 17). After his friend Peter dies, Yang is asked if he would like to visit and photograph Peter's place before it is changed, and he does (*Sadness* 52). This image of his place is produced in *Sadness* (52). Showing a cluttered desk, detailed pin-up board, cluttered shelves, a ladder, a mannequin, boxes, even saws, it is at once both full of presence, and the absence of life. Someone chose and received these objects, arranged them this way intentionally or randomly, moved about in this place everyday: it is not a general space but specific, and particular to Peter. Yet Peter is no longer a living presence himself; the room will always now be empty of him. The objects are merely a trace.

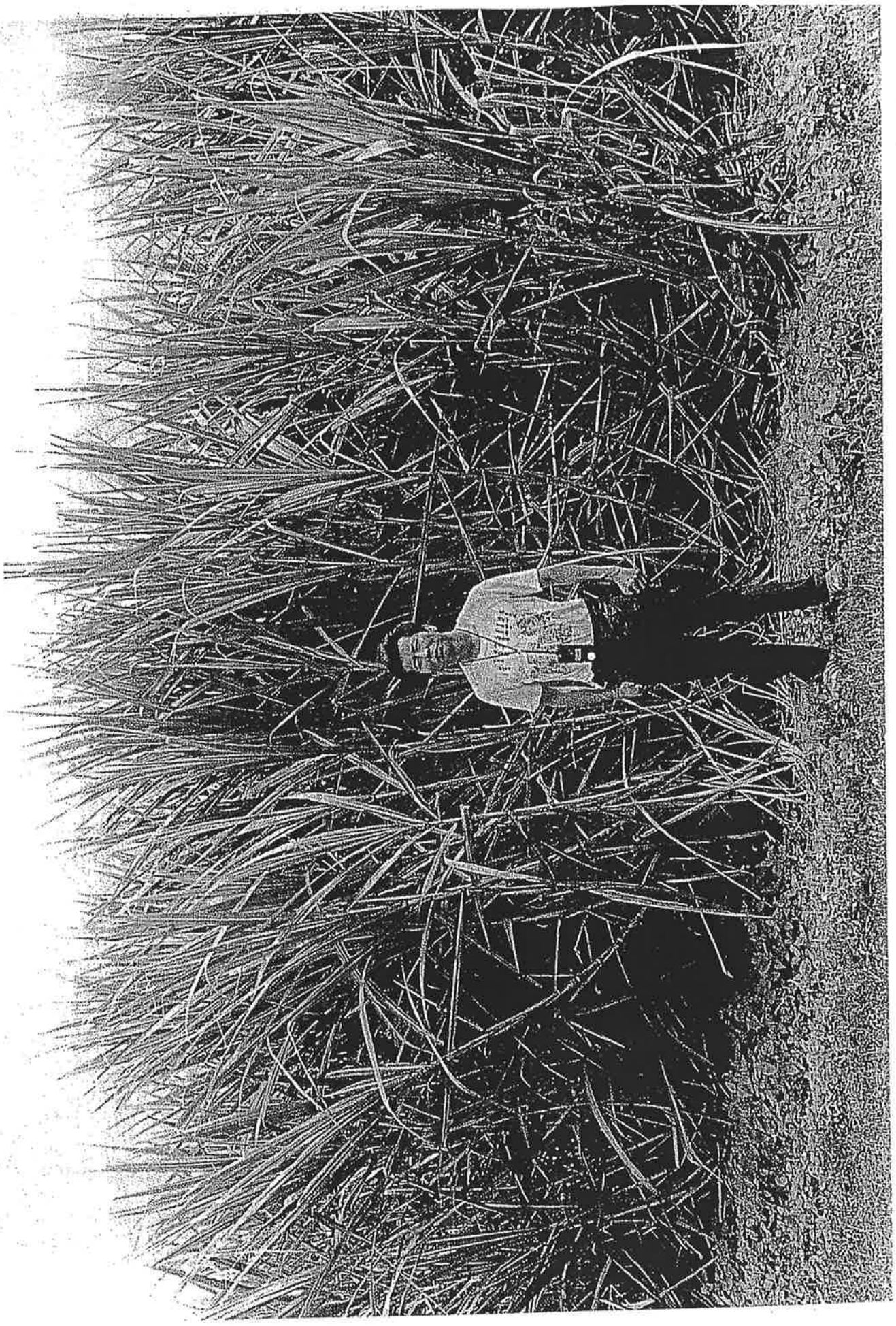
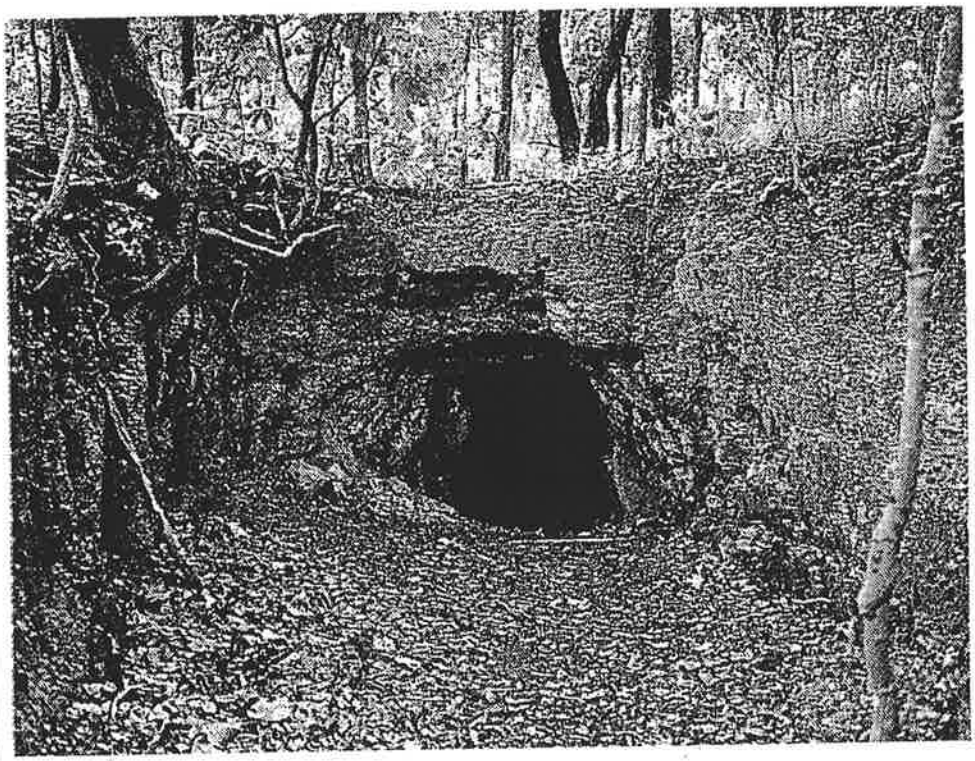


Figure 5



Chinese shaft, Pine Creek.

Figure 6

After his mother dies, Yang returns to her home and finds: 'The hardest thing was walking into that room, home, and she wasn't there' (Yang, *Sadness* 70). He displays a photograph of her living room. One third of the page's size, it sits in the middle of the page. There are pictures and paintings on the living room's walls; on the left is a television and cabinet, and to the right is a kitchen table and behind it a door. In the lower middle of the photograph the empty floor is visible. Although the room is full of objects, the vacant space is suggestive. Again, it is a photograph of a room at once full of a particular person's presence, and absence. This is emphasised through contrast; the photograph of his mother's living room is on a left page, and on the right is a photograph simply titled 'Mother' (*Sadness* 71). A mid-range shot, it shows Yang's mother looking at a rose. The photograph is slightly blurred, suggestive of movement, and life. The 'logic of remembering, as distinct from that of history, leads inexorably to the realms of the sensory and embodied', Chakrabarty writes ('Museums in Late Democracies' 10). This is suggested in this photograph.

The most extreme example of this dual absence and presence is represented in the photograph in the next chapter. One of the last photographs of the book, it is of Nicolaas when he is dead (Yang, *Sadness* 74). The photograph is on the left of a double page. One half the size of the page, it is horizontal and shows Nicolaas from the waist up. His head is in the top left corner, his body at a 45-degree angle to the left. Top right, a cabinet is visible. Nicolaas' body has spots all over it. His arms are folded across his chest, one hand above the other. His left hand, underneath the right arm, is clearly visible.

On the right page is Yang's last comment to Nicolaas. After this he writes:

> Always we think there is more time.
>
> The next day he died.
>
> I was confronted by that indescribable abyss that exists between those two opposites: the living and the dead. (Yang, *Sadness* 75).

Juxtaposing these stories of Chinese and gay Australians highlights that they are incommensurable, but coexist. The present is not black or white, but shadowed.

The juxtaposition also brings attention to feeling, in particular the feeling of sadness, as indicated by the title of Yang's work. Kessler-Harris writes of the important recognition in twentieth-century American historiography that '"emotional patterns" are not our own business at all, but the stuff of which history is made' (21). In his preface to *Sadness*, Yang explicitly articulates this:

> When I looked at my slides from this four-year period I saw that I had been to more wakes than I had been to parties. At first I was appalled by this. I thought, I can't do a show about death, it's not good box office. But after I thought about it for a while, I decided to go with that idea because I sensed that it was, in my circle, the mood of the times. (i).

Learning through embodied experience has significant implications for the politics of difference. 'The realm of the lived', Chakrabarty writes, 'ultimately belongs to embodied existence. And experience always touches on this level. It follows then that experience does not have to always connote a subject (or an identity) defining the experience as such' ('Museums in Late Democracies' 11). Experience can undercut differences between identities, collapsing claims for particular consideration. But it can also, potentially, produce commonality. For Vitart-Fardoulis the past becomes alive for her in a tunic when a Native American claims it is his grandfather's, and tells her about the design and make of it. She closes her description of this event by saying: 'It scarcely matters whether the tunic is really his grandfather's' (in Chakrabarty, 'Museums in Late Democracies' 9). What matters to her is that experience of the past as lived; differences between people are insignificant compared to feeling the past. This also points to the construction of memory and identity, and suggests that '[i]dentities and memory are not things we think *about*, but things we think *with*': they are employed or made to work for certain reasons and outcomes (Gillis 5).

Yet despite Vitart-Fardoulis' dismissal, identities are important: differences do matter. An influential anthropological essay by Renato Rosaldo raises this issue of the force of difference. In 'Grief and a Headhunter's Rage: On the Cultural Force of Emotions', Rosaldo reflects on interpretation and understanding in anthropology, arguing for the importance of lived experience in comprehension. He gives a personal account in support of this position, based on his work with the Ilongot people of the Philippines. Ilongot men have a practice of human headhunting; an older Ilongot man will explain that 'rage, born of grief, impels him to kill his fellow human beings' (Rosaldo, 'Grief' 178). As an anthropologist, Rosaldo finds the Ilongot believe this explanation to be 'self-evident beyond explication. Either you understand it or you don't. And,'

he admits, 'in fact, for the longest time I simply did not' (ibid). Assuming that more verbal clarification or another analytical perspective would 'better explain' the practice, he finds both language itself and the rational approach do not equate to full understanding; there is something more involved that they both miss. It is his own experience that enables him to have a more complete appreciation of what the Ilongot mean: it is 'not until I was repositioned through lived experience that I became better able to grasp that Ilongot older men mean precisely what they say' (Rosaldo, 'Grief' 179). Only after his wife dies through an accidental fall during fieldwork and he experiences the anger of grief, can he grasp the force of the Ilongot explanation: 'I sobbed, but rage blocked the tears' ('Grief' 183). 'Nothing in my own experience...had equipped me even to imagine the anger possible in bereavement. It was not until after Shelly's [his wife's] death...that I was in a position to grasp the force of what Ilongots had repeatedly told me about grief, rage, and headhunting' ('Grief' 193). Through experience, the force of cultural difference is lessened and knowledge made possible. In consequence, Rosaldo invokes 'lived experience as an analytical category', arguing that 'ethnographies that eliminate such qualities as anger, lust, and tenderness both distort their descriptions and remove potentially key variables from their explanations' ('Grief' 185; 188).

Yet what are the consequences of this approach? Rosaldo is careful to limit his conclusions, writing: 'Ilongot anger and my own, of course, only overlap in a significant respect, but they are not identical' ('Grief' 188). This acknowledges that there are differences, though implies that they are not overly determining. He comments defensively: 'warnings against facile notions of universal human nature can be carried too far and harden into the equally pernicious doctrine that, my own group aside, everything human is alien to me' (ibid). Acknowledging differences, he is pointing out, does not necessarily mean separation from others: there remains a sense of community. Behar, who writes supportively of Rosaldo's work, argues that in anthropological thought and practice generally there has been a 'shift toward viewing identification, rather than difference, as the key defining image...We now stand on the same plane with our subjects; indeed, they will only tolerate us if we are willing to confront them face to face' (28). Differences at cultural and individual levels exist alongside commonalities, they are suggesting; one does not rule the other out.

Rosaldo and Behar's comments are indicative of the tension between lived experience (and commonality) and identity politics (and difference), and between lived experience and the

analytic. Rosaldo is arguing both against the devaluing of experience in favour of the analytic, and against the complete separation of the two: his work is one example of their 'necessary dialectic' (Thompson 27). Stressing their disconnection is not considered useful; to keep alive differences between lived experience and the analytic, and explore their proximity, is a dialectic that is seen as enabling. This moves 'away from the archives' and opens 'up to the politics of experience': it does not deflate them (Chakrabarty, 'Museums in Late Democracies' 9).

This is what Wendy Brown has described as the 'cultural paradox' of our times:

> Refusing to be neutralized, to render differences inconsequential, to be depoliticised...[the marginalised] have lately reformulated our historical exclusion as a matter of historically produced and politically rich *alterity*...[Yet] Even as the margins assert themselves as margins, the denaturalising assault they perform on coherent collective identity in the center turns back on them to trouble their own...identity is unravelling...as rapidly as it is being produced. (200-1)

The awareness that identity is constructed has lead to critiques of the construction of the central or 'normal' identity of the self, and affirmations of the differences that constitute the 'other', even as these differences themselves are revealed as constructions. Despite Vitart-Fardoulis' dismissal, it *does* matter that the Native American man does or does not have a connection to the tunic. Consequently, Chakrabarty writes:

> I do not have to remind the reader that this Native American man could have walked into a museum in the nineteenth century and said the same things but he would not have been heard. Why do we hear him now? Because the politics of identity – the question of who can speak for whom – are, like it or not, part of the cultural politics of a liberal democracy. ('Museums in Late Democracies' 9)

Feeling the past is important, but it does not occur outside the political. Vitart-Fardoulis' comment simply values experience over the analytic, reinscribing their differences in an either/or distinction. This is inadequate, given that questions such as who is speaking, from where and for whom continue to be very powerful present-day issues; if we give no force to identity politics, what, Holt asks, 'authorizes a claim to a diversity of representation?' (118). Moreover, there is no automatic connection between experiencing and knowing the past if difference is respected and given some import. As Holt concludes, 'the contradictions of so-called identity politics...are, it seems to me, necessary ones; they demand not an abrupt denial of that form of politics but more reflexivity and sensitivity in its exercise' (ibid). Reconceptualising history by taking the embodied experience of the past as meaningful approaches history as working with *both* the

analytic and lived experience: not subsuming one into the other, but keeping alive their politics and tensions.

Brian Massumi comes to the same conclusion from a different perspective: identity politics are important, he argues, but not definitive. Identity politics fail if identities are defined, because identities are not fixed: 'surrounding bounds continue to shift' (Massumi, 'Everywhere You Want to Be' 32). As a result, '[a]pproaches centred on the psychic or discursive constitution of the "Other" are also of limited usefulness if they fail to draw the consequences of the fluidification and coincidence of boundaries for the "interiority" of the "Same"' (Massumi, 'Everywhere You Want to Be' 31). Instead, if we admit that limits are 'fluctuating and intermittent...if they are derived, and if the equation they are a derivative of is one of potential – then the entire problem shifts ground' (ibid). The emphasis then turns to how they are being invoked, and why: what work can they be made to perform? This fluidity does not lead Massumi to dispose of the politics of difference; he is aware of its continuing force, and usefulness: 'the fact remains that they *are* set, and reset...It is less a question of abandoning the politics of specific identity than of supplementing and complicating it' (Massumi, 'Everywhere You Want to Be' 32). One way of doing this is through affirmation: accept that there are 'forces greater than one's identity' – for instance, affect and lived experience – and '*affirm* it, take it as it is *and* is not (but might be), assume it, undefining. In short', he concludes, '*embody* it' (original emphasis; my emphasis last; Massumi, 'Everywhere You Want to Be' 33).

Sadness is distinct from grief. Grief infuses the theorising that Gail Jones calls for in 'Skulls, Fontanelles and the Spaces Between', but, more fierce than sadness, it is also more isolating. Yang closes *Sadness* with a chapter called 'Friends and Family'. On a double page, he spreads a wide angled shot of hundreds of people at a candlelight vigil for those who have died from AIDS. Their distinctiveness is evident; individual faces can be seen. Yet they are also brought together through the common experience of loss. They are all there to remember.

7.3 Histories: Relics and Refuse in *Shadows*

As in *Sadness*, in *Shadows* Yang juxtaposes several different histories. He talks about Germany in and post- World War II; his experiences of a divided, and later unified, Berlin; and how they are remembered privately and officially. He describes visits to Enngonia, an Aboriginal community in New South Wales, and to a nearby site of a Aboriginal massacre. He also talks about South Australia's treatment of people of German descent during World Wars I and II and visits the area near where they were interned. The performance is grounded in the personal, but moves out and 'tells stories other than my own' (*Shadows: A Monologue* 1). Through juxtaposition he avoids making overt comparisons, leaving the connections and divergences between the varied ways in which the past is remembered to be made by his audience.

Lo describes Yang's work as a 'project in recovering his-story', and reads in it 'a stress [on] the interrelatedness of subjectivity and historicity' ('Dis/orientations' 66). To be a subject is historicisable. Yang begins from this point, talking about his own experiences in varied social and political contexts. Using the autobiographical to situate his narratives, he then moves outwards from the personal, telling stories of other people's experiences. This allows for modest knowledges: always located, his stories open out from the self, highlighting the collusions between his own experiences and others' whilst maintaining their particularities.

The use of contrast is a powerful tool in *Shadows*, giving prominence to unexpected similarities between different pasts. It is evident from early on, when Yang recounts a visit to Berlin in 1981. At this time, Berlin – and Germany – are divided and ruled by different powers (the West has armed forces of the US, Britain and France; the East is run by Communist Russia). In East Berlin, an unofficial record of a certain period of the past is prominent: 'it was like time had frozen since WW2. Many of the bombed buildings had not been rebuilt' (Yang, *Shadows: A Monologue* 4). In the authorised version of the past given in the Pergamon Museum, what strikes Yang is somewhat different from the official story: the focus in the museum is on 'European culture', and surprising to Yang is its familiarity: 'I realised I had had a very European education [in Australia]...In the sixties many of my peers went to Europe, mainly London, to experience culture' (ibid). Although the Australia that Yang invokes of the 1950s and 1960s and Germany in

the 1980s have incommensurable pasts, Yang finds that the museum offers a similar experience to that of his education; both concentrate on past European culture, and bear little relation to the local present. In both situations the present and recent pasts are ignored; in this museum in East Berlin, as '[t]hen, in Australia, the European culture was considered the only culture' (ibid).

Shadows performs a reflexive meditation on the value of histories, remnants of the past and their relations to experience. Both the Pergamon Museum and Yang's education emphasise a cultural lineage that is not related to the experience of the recent past. When talking about having his portrait painted, Yang describes this discrepancy between experience and representation as a flaw. In George Gittoes' portrait of Yang, behind Yang are 'classical plaster statues' used as models for students at the Julian Ashton Art School (in Sydney); Gittoes' point is that Yang is 'an Australian Chinese sitting in a completely European environment where there were no Asian faces' (Yang, *Shadows: A Monologue* 5). Although he likes the painting, to Yang it is inconsistent because 'I never went to the Julian Ashton Art School and when I look at the portrait I don't quite recognize myself' (ibid). The context he is placed in in the portrait is not one he can relate to from experience, and consequently the work has less value.

When he first visits Enngonia in the early 1980s, Yang mentions that the community has a workshop with materials for painting, welding, craft and sewing, with the aim that they might become self-sufficient through the arts. In the next section, Yang notes that the artist Hans Heysen's significance in Australian art history has developed because he is 'attributed as being the first painter in Australia to paint a gum tree as it looked' (*Shadows: A Monologue* 8). With European settlement, 'the landscape was perceived through European eyes, until Heyson [sic] came along. So his contribution to Australian culture has been considerable' (ibid). The contribution of indigenous art here goes unremarked, but this is another potential of the art materials at Enngonia: it is possible that the community there might create representations that depict their experience, what they 'see'.

Not 'facing' the circumstances of the present is shown to be a strategy used with real effects in *Shadows*. In a section titled 'South Australia', Yang outlines the treatment of people of German descent during both World Wars. Prior to World War I, '7% of the South Australian population was German', and '[t]hey were a most respected social group', but this counted for nothing when war began: 'they became the most hated and despised. Residents of enemy origin were interned

regardless of whether they were naturalised Australian citizens or not' (*Shadows: A Monologue* 9). People of German descent were 'seen' by other South Australians in an abstract context, one that ignored local, lived experience; Germans were treated as enemies and as a threat: 'The German language was banned, the 49 Lutheran schools closed down. Further cultural suppression and destruction occurred with the Naming Act of 1917, 69 place names of German origin were changed' (ibid).

In the present, many of the place names have returned to the German terms. Yet the selective character of what is publicly remembered is not restricted to the past: visiting a museum in Hahndorf based on 'the history of the Germans in South Australia', Yang finds that this past is not represented in the present (ibid). He searches 'for some section about the internments during WWI and WW2, but there was nothing' (ibid). Not what those in the present choose to remember, its absence implies it bears no relation to them today. But what is 'forgotten' is affective, and gives definition to the present as much as what is overtly recalled. That this past still has a force is confirmed when Yang's 'South Australian contact' explains that '"it's hard to get a German family who was [interned] to talk about it. They're so ashamed about what happened. It wasn't their fault but they're [sic] internalised it all"' (ibid).

The affects of 'unseen' and unspoken pasts are also featured in the following section, in Yang's description of a trip he takes to Germany. On this visit he stays with a friend, Rafael. Rafael's father had been a German soldier in WWII, and was captured and held as a Russian prisoner of war; he has never spoken of his experiences. As Yang shows photographs of the house Rafael's mother lives in – 'quite luxurious and there's a beautiful beech tree just outside that door' – he relates to the audience Rafael's story about his father: when Rafael asked his father about his involvement in the war, '[h]is father couldn't answer. Rafael said his father never talked about the war, not even, he suspected, to his mother' (*Shadows: A Monologue* 10). Although not articulated, this past remains a significant presence *because* it is unspoken; the audience can only imagine experiences so powerful that they are unutterable. Yang gestures towards the intensity of this contrast between unspoken experience and its presence through juxtaposition, moving from 'Rafael said his father never talked about the war' into the present time of his visit there: 'This is a lantern gooseberry plant in the garden', he says as he shows the picture of this beautiful plant, before cutting back to Rafael's story (Figure 7). 'His father went up to the attic brought down [sic] a dusty carton and gave it to Rafael' (ibid). The contrast between imagining the unspeakable

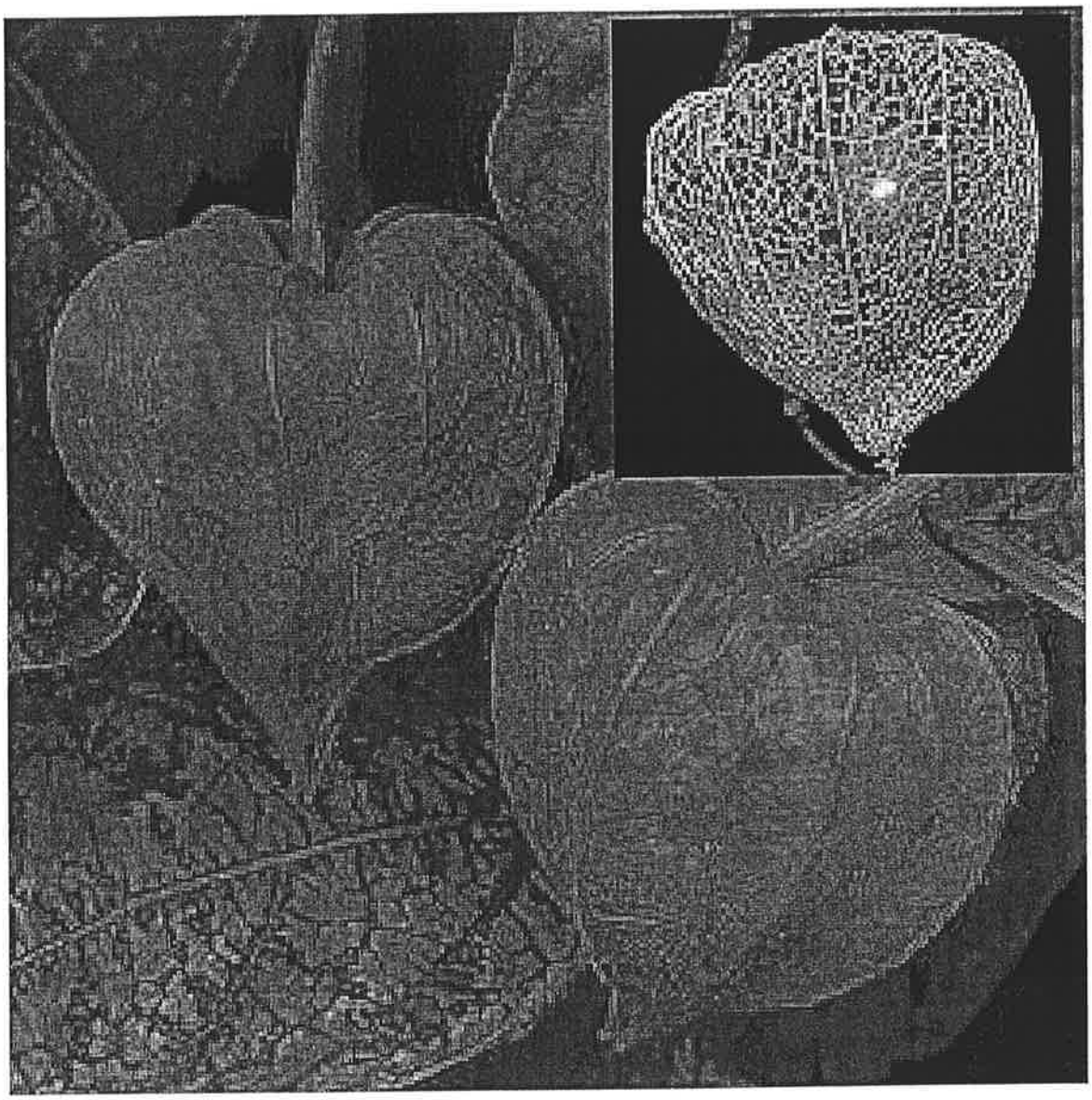


Figure 7

experiences of a Nazi soldier and prisoner of war, and the delicate plant he tends in his garden, is extreme. The plant offers some respite to the audience from the affective burdens of human histories, but it also highlights an unexpected similarity. Its lantern flowers exemplify the intricacy and preciousness of living things. Visible in Yang's photograph, they inspire marvel. Placed alongside them, Rafael's father's experiences have a similar intensity, though they are not visible, and inspire something opposite from marvel. Their juxtaposition suggests that unutterable human experiences are as much a part of the present as the overt, exquisite beauty of the plant. However their relationship is conceptualised, they co-exist.

The box Rafael's father brings down includes *Mein Kampf*, a book of Adolf Hitler's anti-Semitic propaganda. This book is now banned in Germany; it is an object of the past that is judged by authorities as so powerful that it ought not be seen. Showing it to Rafael is his father's way of responding to his question about his role in the war: in this action is the belief that the experience of such an object will convey something of the past to the present. Again, the absence of an articulated history belies its presence: although unspoken, the presence of the past is acknowledged by Rafael's father when he does not ignore the question. The attempt to address the inheritances of the past, however impossible, is important. (Rafael's own response to this past is one of interest: he begins to collect objects of the era. Yang shows photographs of his items: a German war medal, and a radio like those issued to every German household in the war.)

A different response to discomforting pasts, Yang argues, is at work in the withdrawal of an advertisement for the 2002 Adelaide Festival. Accompanying a picture of Hitler were comments such as: 'Hitler was rejected by the Vienna Art Academy. If his creative side were nurtured, perhaps there would have been a different world outcome. The Arts can make a difference' (Yang, *Shadows: A Monologue* 11). Following an outraged response by some members of the community, the advertisement was pulled, and Yang concludes that: 'In effect Hitler was banned in Adelaide on the grounds of taste' (ibid). Whilst *Mein Kampf* is accessible in Adelaide, the advertisement, with its suggestion that the past could have been otherwise, is judged distasteful and withdrawn as something that ought not be seen. A 'fundamental human decision' is being made here about what those in the present do, and do not, have a relationship with (paraphrasing Muecke, 'Devastation' 127).

That we need to acknowledge what we *are* tied to is suggested in the order of the narratives in *Shadows*. The South Australian section, which illustrates the investments those in the present have in what they choose to forget, is followed by that of Rafael's father. The father's action of giving his son the box of items can be read as providing a model for beginning to negotiate unspoken pasts: when words are unavailable, approaching the past through the experience of its remnants is a potential alternative. Juxtaposing different histories, as *Shadows* does, enables possibilities such as this one: of proffering models for remembering discomforting pasts, models that can be adopted by locally specific places with incommensurable pasts, without the presumption of any abstract unities. The very different stories from Germany, Enngonia, and South Australia are not connected neatly. Rather, similar to those in *Sadness*, they are placed alongside each other, brought together through Yang's experience, a method which places them in proximity to each other but does not neutralise their differences.

Yang ends this section by reflecting on how the past is represented in the now-unified Berlin. At Checkpoint Charlie, the old point in Berlin of entrance and exit between the East and the West, Yang sees a memorial that represents a version of the past different to that which he lived: with sandbags is 'a huge photo of a handsome German soldier, suggesting something friendly and glamorous, the exact opposite of the experience as I remember it in 1981' (*Shadows: A Monologue* 11). This misrepresents the past as experienced, obscuring its significance to the present. The opposite approach is taken in art work by Amsell Keiffer, which he views in the Hamburger Bahnhoff Museum:

> What looks from a distance to be an attractive landscape, On [sic] closer inspection reveals, that the signs are identification tags, and the landscape is made of actual razor wire. In this work delicate doll like garments are splattered with concrete and earth and set in a landscape of lead. (Yang, *Shadows: A Monologue* 12)

This work is attempting to provoke feeling in the viewer and thereby gesture towards what the past felt like. (Yang's repeated documentation of the different things he eats when travelling is another example of this focus.) The value of representations, Yang argues, is not their ability to explain or interpret: it is their capacity to address experience.

The return to Berlin is placed alongside Yang's account of a return visit to Enngonia. Ten years since he first travelled there, there is now 'a malaise over the place'; 'the government money that had been around in the eighties was not around in the nineties. The painting and the welding

workshops were gone' (Yang, *Shadows: A Monologue* 13). During this trip he learns that the site of an Aboriginal massacre is nearby, and he makes a journey to see it. It is fenced off, but kangaroos have entered anyway and 'made rather a mess of the ground. Bones littered the place' (Yang, *Shadows: A Monologue* 17). Whilst Yang had believed that they were human bones, another's 'cynicism had rubbed off on me and it had moved in my mind, [to] the site of the alleged massacre' (ibid).

Yang holds that 'there is a strong case' for the claim that Aboriginal people were massacred in the settlement of Australia and that this was a form of genocide (ibid). Having raised this point, he moves into the next section; the notes in the manuscript for *Shadows* read: '(Dissolve piece: Sachsenhausen)' (ibid). Sachsenhausen, near Berlin, was the first concentration camp in Germany.

Yang explains that though it 'wasn't an extermination camp, nevertheless many people were killed here. "Genocide" is a word invented in the 1950's [sic] used to describe events that occurred at places like this' (*Shadows: A Monologue* 18). With this word 'genocide' as a hinge between them, Enngonia and Sachsenhausen are placed in proximity to each other. There is much debate about whether the treatment of Aboriginal people in Australia with and from settlement constitutes genocide. A. Dirk Moses takes a moderate position and suggests that there are 'genocidal moments' in Australia's history: 'the genocide charge, at least for certain episodes of Australian history, *is* true' (104; original emphasis; 102). In contrast, Inga Clendinnen maintains that genocide is associated with 'deliberate mass murder: innocent people identified by their killers as a distinctive entity being done to death by organised authority', and that 'to take the murder out of genocide is to render it vacuous…it is essential to keep such words mirror-bright because, given the nature of human affairs, we will surely continue to need them' (7; 26). This debate spills over into that of comparative histories: can different pasts be compared meaningfully? Can other histories be compared to the Holocaust, for example, or is it unique?

Yang works carefully here. He refers to a massive decrease in Aboriginal population and quotes contemporary discursive references to violent, fatal actions towards Aboriginals, to conclude that massacres 'may not have been completely systematic but there is a *strong case* that it was a form of genocide' (my emphasis; *Shadows: A Monologue* 17). In this statement he avoids a definitive judgement, but posits that there is a persuasive argument for the use of the term 'genocide' in

relation to the treatment of Aboriginals. There is no explicit statement tying together either the colonial authorities and the Nazi regime, or Aboriginals and Jews and other minority groups identified and attacked by the Nazis, but the dissolve from Enngonia to Sachsenhausen suggests that there are points at which they may be considered comparatively.

One of the ways which they may be compared is how they as discomforting pasts are remembered in the present. This is in keeping with his previous sections on Germany and South Australia. With such a focus he avoids the charges of making the Holocaust sacred or banal (Todorov; cf Moses 107). Instead it approaches it as in Martin Jay's description:

> Historicizing the Holocaust need not mean reducing it to the level of the 'normal' massacres of the innocents that punctuate all of recorded history, but rather remembering those quickly forgotten and implicitly forgiven events with the same intransigent refusal to normalize that is the only justifiable response to the Holocaust itself. (204)

How are these pasts accessed in the present? The massacre site near Enngonia is not public, nor officially sanctioned. It bears no authorised monument or signage, it is hard to find and has been made deliberately difficult to access: 'I'd never had [sic] found it by myself...we went through five [gates]. They had fenced off parts of the site and they'd gone to a great deal of trouble' (Yang, *Shadows: A Monologue* 17). Yang is only aware of it because Ruby, the community's matriarch, tells him about its existence. Both Ruby and Peter, the man who is showing Yang around at Enngonia, are unsettled by the site. Ruby tells him that the place has 'bad vibes' and that it is not 'a place for women': 'she had accidentally walked through it...It made her dizzy. She was sick and nauseous for days' (Yang, *Shadows: A Monologue* 16). Peter is too spooked to visit it with Yang. For them, its power is greater than the physical remains themselves. Yet it is important to Yang that he visit it, as is indicated in his persistence in trying to get there: Peter is willing to take him, but argues they need permission from Bob (the farmer whose land it is on). When they receive permission, Peter makes excuses about the weather and finally refuses: he is 'spooked out and didn't want to go', so Yang tries to find it himself (ibid). After two unsuccessful attempts, he finally – with a bit of fast-talking – he gets Bob to take him there. It is not enough to hear about it from others: Yang seeks experience it for himself.

Even when he does, it is not rationally conclusive: Yang admits that some of the bones might not be from humans, and refers to 'the alleged massacre'. But he now *believes*: 'There was no doubt

in my mind that they were human bones' (Yang, *Shadows: A Monologue* 17). Seeing amongst the other bones those of a child's hand, he states: 'I felt I had discovered a key, though not a solution, to their dispossession' (ibid). This comment suggests a desire to have an understanding of the past in terms of its continuity: rather than events happening in isolation, and inexplicably, the 'assertion of continuity' in histories can offer understanding when confronted by 'dilemmas which seemed to come from nowhere but which actually come with long pedigrees' (Limerick 19). The stories that Ruby tells him, Peter's reaction and seeing the material remnants of the past provide Yang with knowledge about the past that is incomplete, but that informs his understanding of it. Standing at the site, Yang experiences *both* past *and* present: he 'engage[s] the contrasts – live[s] with them and feel[s] them' (Kessler-Harris 21).

Unlike this unofficial and uncertain massacre site, at Sachsenhausen Yang can point precisely to 'the site of a gallows where each morning prisoners were forced to watch executions. // Here people were shot. // These were the ovens where bodies were burnt' (Yang, *Shadows: A Monologue* 18). The site is now a museum with memorials. Here history is concrete (signs point to where barracks were, for example), marking out an authorised remembering of the past. The past as represented here is an officially recognised part of the present. In Berlin, Yang visits another exhibition in an old bunker, in the block that was the SS headquarters in WWII: 'It's open to the public seven days a week and it's free. One thing I'll say about the Germans', Yang comments, 'is they're not in denial about their past' (ibid). He goes on:

> Hitler is like a stain or mark across Germany and I think the German people would like to absolve themselves of the guilt of Hitler, but the world won't let them because Hitler has become the popular icon for evil. In the end they just have to live with it. As we all have to live with our marks. (ibid)

Yang's argument is for acknowledging the discomforting pasts we live with. He expresses caution about resolving issues of the past, noting that because 'Berlin was a divided city for nearly forty years…I'm sure reconciliation is still going on' (*Shadows: A Monologue* 12). Instead, what he emphasises is the *desire* for unity, over unity itself and its practical difficulties. Placing blame on the past, we 'could forget the importance of life' in the present (Muecke, 'Devastation' 127). What is significant for Yang are the negotiations of the past's presence by the living. 'The process of reconciliation began with a desire to smash down the wall and unite', he stresses (*Shadows: A Monologue* 12). The outcome is not guaranteed, nor is it necessarily realised, but what is important is public recognition of the inheritances of the past, rather than a

final state of reconciliation with or against it. 'Museums and memorials', he says, are valuable even if for only one reason: 'They can provide a platform for conversations about terrible events, conversations that would be difficult to bring up in everyday life' (*Shadows: A Monologue* 19). The experience of material traces of the past also implicate us in its acquisition. They point to what we are connected with, and where we are. 'Things and people are mutually transformative', and experiencing remnants of the past can open up particular possibilities in understanding and for change (Muecke, 'Devastation 127). Rafael's collection of German objects from WWII can be considered in light of this.

Yang's final visit to a museum is to Berlin's Jewish Museum. With accompanying photographs, he says of one area in it:

> There's a room called holocaust tower. The concrete walls are thick and the ceiling very high. The heavy doors close shut.
>
> The only light filters in through a very high slit. You know what it is like to feel helpless. (Yang, *Shadows: A Monologue* 19)

This experience conveys some understanding of the past, albeit partial and incomplete. Commenting that 'Berlin is full of memorials', Yang highlights the potential for many different conversations about the past that their presence enables (ibid). This stands in pointed contrast to the massacre site near Enngonia, and to the section on South Australia.

Yang's concern with living with the past is indicated when he mentions Gittoes' son, Harley, who is thirteen when he visits Sachsenhausen:

> He was a very sensitive boy and he had no experience in protecting himself. Harley got very frightened. He saw entities. These entities followed him home. He became distraught.
>
> George had to invent an exorcism to help him. He got Harley to repeat the Lord's Prayer like a mantra.
>
> Over the following days, the shades, the shadows, the ghosts of the past, which had come to haunt Harley, released him. (*Shadows: A Monologue* 18)

In experiencing the traces of the past, people are made vulnerable to its affects. 'We have all sorts of problems with bad stuff these days', writes Muecke, 'problems of accumulation and disposal'

('Devastation' 126). For Yang, uncomfortable questions about the past need to be asked, but attention must also be paid to the ramifications of learning about them.

In his final section, Yang says that it is '[t]ime to acknowledge positive things': histories, and people, are not composed of blunt characteristics – light or dark, good or evil – but exist with shadows (*Shadows: A Monologue* 20). A history for the present must admit this complexity; 'Exploring the meaning of contrast...[is a] way to view the historical process' (Kessler-Harris 21). As well as knowledges to discard, there are relations to retain. 'Hard, yes, but by no means hopeless' (Yang, *Shadows: A Monologue* 20). In this spirit Yang closes with photographs of tens of thousands of people walking across the Sydney Harbour Bridge in 2001 for reconciliation. He says:

> To me reconciliation is a conversation where the actions of the past are acknowledged and a resolution sought.
>
> This day we acknowledged the shadows of the past, and moved towards hope for the future.
>
> (Dissolve piece of march.) (*Shadows: A Monologue* 21)

Coming after stories that explore ways of remembering and registering discomforting pasts, rather than the possibility of accurately representing the past, the focus on reconciliation suggests that a *sense* of the past may inform 'an effective politics in the present' (Roth 215). Understandings of the past shape perceptions of the present: what its lineage is, what its features are and what its capabilities might be; 'particular kinds of historical consciousnesses participate in constructing culture' (Warren Susman qtd. in Kessler-Harris 11). Telling these particular stories, trying to convey the feel of these different pasts, is an attempt by Yang to inform a present politics. This is history's force. The stories of the past that are remembered give definition to our present through illumination and shadow.

8. CONCLUSION

We realise that the meanings in the text are mere shadows
the more we experience the fullness of the meanings in our ordinary living.
(Dening, *Performances* 30)

Relationships between cultures and between the past and the present are not always clearly visible. They can be obscured through affective identification, and affects can overemphasise them, resulting in alienation and isolation. In current Australian scholarship, the place of difference remains hazy and variable.

The questions currently being raised in Australian scholarship have arisen from several contexts. The rise of postcolonialism during the 1980s has been broadly influential, bringing attention to the practices of colonialism and its subjection of different others, as well as stressing the value of the 'colonised' and their rights. With the recognition of the value of the other came the imperative to mourn the experiences of the other within colonialism. Having become an established perspective in the past twenty years, this is currently being read more critically: this urge to mourn appears to be a therapeutic impulse of the West. Whilst mourning the effects of colonial practices on the other depends upon the recognition of the value of the other, in mourning the self is also (re-)established. There has been a charge that, rather than doing something different from the colonial model, which used the other to define the self, Western scholarship has been complicit with colonialism: that work in areas of cultural difference reproduces colonial attitudes, and is inextricably entangled with a desire to heal the self.

Debates about histories of the settlement of Australia have similarly raised questions of the role of the scholar, as well as specific historiographical concerns. The politicisation of the past, the accuracy of the histories that are told, and the grounds on which they are defensible, are all areas which have emphasised the investments those in the present have in stories about the past. How we learn about the past and how we interpret it are points at which desires to keep the past separate from the present are made evident, for instance. Acknowledging the complexity of the

relationships between the past and the present – their distinctions and their convergences – has become a contentious issue.

The establishment of the field of Aboriginal History has brought official recognition to the experiences of Aboriginal people as subjects in history. This has led to a critical revisioning of colonial histories, bringing attention to the ways in which they have negated the value of Aboriginal lives. Reading Aboriginal people's experiences with colonisation as traumatic has established the lived effects of colonisation. But this has also problematically construed Aboriginal people as traumatised, and settler-descendents as aggressors, thereby perpetuating the power of colonialism and the legitimacy of it as a model through which to interpret the past and the present.

This thesis has explored how the issues of these various perspectives are addressed through an affective, ethical approach, that has developed in the disciplines of history, cultural studies, anthropology, literary studies and performance. All of the work discussed enters into intersubjective scholarship, and generates models of cultural difference that raise the ethical dimension of engaging with this field. This thesis has explored the ethical and historiographical questions being raised in – and by – such work.

The disciplines of history and anthropology have been premised on the notions that the past and culture are explicable through reason. Yet it is argued that if we take cultural difference seriously, all experience cannot be interpreted within the logic of cause and consequence. How pasts that are resistant to rationality – and hence, historicism – can be represented, was explored in this thesis largely through two models of conceptualising cultural difference.

One emphasises difference through the use of juxtaposition. Placing marked texts alongside each other – in parallel – is a method that has been adopted by several writers as a way of recognising the singularity of others by refusing to speak for them, maintaining a stress on the differences between the self and other. This approach was examined by looking at Klaus Neumann's work on incommensurable pasts, and Stephen Muecke's work on unrepresentable cultural differences.

Whilst this model overtly respects difference, it is also capable of suggesting similarities – without being prescriptive. Differences are maintained, but not polarised: voices are placed in

proximity to each other. If the self's identity was previously implicated in the oppression of the other, with a stress on *respect* for the other, the self's legitimacy need to be re-conceptualised. I argued that this was at work in Peter Read's projects. Writing autobiographically, he suggested that the experience of loss undercut difference.

However, this kind of focus raises, but does not address, the impact of the subjective in research on cultural difference. In this thesis, the ethical possibilities and constraints of cross-cultural research were articulated with reference to the work of Gail Jones. In Jones' model, knowledge was partial, which made it imperative that the singularity of the other be recognised – yet Jones herself admitted that that recognition was inextricable from the self's projections and desires. From this perspective, cross-cultural scholarship was always, inevitably compromised.

Juxtaposing one's own historicisable, lived experiences was finally offered as model for opening out towards others'. The possibilities of such an approach were explored through the work of a non-professional historian, William Yang. In Yang's performances, a turn to the significance of embodied experience in knowing has stressed experience not as a common feature of humanity, but as recognition of the value of human relationships – with places, objects, pasts and people. This places the working in parallel in the context of a lived relation.

In short, it was argued that the realisation of the aim to work differently from colonialism remains troubled. Whilst overall the ethical is cast as the recognition of the singularity of the other, and the placement of the other in a proximate relationship to the self, defining the role of imaginative work in history and anthropology remains fraught. Speculation continues to be decried as fiction rather than fact, or appropriation rather than recognition. Yang places importance on gaining a *variety* of sources of the past: oral stories, material remains and archival sources, and imagining from there. Australian writer Simon Robb, in *The Hulk* (2003), adopts a different approach, placing the imaginative work as an ethical supplement to the archival.

The hulk of the book's title is a prison ship for delinquent boys that was kept off the coast of South Australia at the end of the 1800s. This is an 'impossible' ship: it is 'culturally familiar (it belongs to the convict history of Australia) yet appears where it is least expected, in a supposedly convict-free location (Adelaide)' (Robb 5; 3). Admitting that he is affected by the idea of this

past, Robb wants to learn about the lives of the boys who were imprisoned on the hulk, motivated by a desire that is both ethical and suspect. Yet he finds in the few primary archival sources 'no record whatsoever of the boys themselves' (5). How to realise their singularity and lived experience, when '[t]hey exist only as the absent product of a set of rules governing mind, body, and soul' (ibid)?

One possibility is to turn to the resources of fiction and imagine their lives. But Robb wants to do something other than fictionalise. He writes: 'I felt a strong desire to build a whole boy, without, I might add, a recourse to fabrication. I wanted, in part, to make these boys speak without fabrication or fiction. I wanted to hear something impossible' (ibid). He wants to realise something as impossible as the appearance of the convict-like ship in waters claimed to be convict-free. To do so, he interviews boys incarcerated in South Australia in the present day, and uses the interviews 'to make these absent boys speak by using a method of substitution' (Robb 5-6).

In a subsequent section, Robb presents the voices of the present-day boys as if found in a scrapbook belonging to a teacher who was employed on the hulk. The voices are not identified; it is through their language that the reader can locate them in the present. This construction puts pressure on the model of parallel texts that render difference visible, without necessarily distancing them. In *The Hulk*, the authority of the experience of the present boys is inserted in the text to suggest – through the reader's own imaginative work – the experience of those in the past. The distinction between the present and the past is invoked to order to be obscured, as if the line that separates sea and sky is covered by fog.

Rather than stressing the differences between the past and present, Robb uses the present to fabricate the *feel* of the past. In turn, the past unsettles the present; the past is – impossibly – a presence in the present. Robb argues that in highlighting his substitution and fabrication he is merely foregrounding a process of negotiation with the past. 'I can say, in my defence,' Robb writes,

> that these base progressions are examples of the original story moving through the humours of a modern man like yourself, and that I am admitting to nothing other than the generative means of any so-called history. (9)

As with any so-called history, the risk is that constructing a narrative about the past obscures the difference of the past from the present. This is both a risk and a challenge, and it has strong similarities for those crafting narratives about culturally different others. What is being surfaced in such affective writing is the meaningful attempt to forge relationships between people in particular times and places. Beginning from such a point does not insist on universal principles of intelligibility, nor does it contend that there are shared human characteristics or experiences. Gail Jones puts it this way:

> Of course, cultures are never back to back, never antithetical, but always, and necessarily, tessellated and hybridised…so the [thaumatrope]…like our theorizing, is complicit anyhow in a form of anterior misrepresentation. Yet I wonder if one of the winds I wished to describe is really, at some level, the breath on the thaumatrope: the impelling exhalation, the fast-motioning embrace of that which [one] wishes to reconvene... ('Thaumatropes' 113).

What this work foregrounds is the desire for connection – albeit a suspect, impossible desire. From this we seek to understand the complexities of the present as they filter down through the past.

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