Chapter 1

Introduction

The books we read inevitably construct versions of the world and its peoples
(McGillis, 1997, p. 12)

Many Australians have grown up with "the story that the whole race of the Tasmanian Aborigines had been killed off last century" (Bird, 1998, p. 14). The fate of the Tasmanian Aborigines[1] is now so indelibly printed on our historical imagination that it is hardly surprising that the mythology regarding their total destruction persists even now. This attitude prevails in all sorts of literature written by and about Tasmania, but it is particularly disturbing to see this in children's literature. This thesis examines children's literature of Tasmania in this particular context. Physically isolated from mainland Australia, Tasmania offers a pristine, unspoilt environment, but it has a complex and dark past involving convict hardships and atrocities carried out by settlers and colonisers against its Indigenous inhabitants. Additionally this study examines how the body of Tasmanian children's literature considers history in a number of ways, with a particular focus on Indigeneity[2]. Between 1950 and 2001 a small number of children's writers used the island as a setting and subject for their novels, most of them women writers who lived on the island. Although each of the selected books explores specific instances of white writers' representations of Indigeneity, as a body of work they represent a continuing perception which represents Tasmanian Aborigines as forever lost or invisible.

Through an overview of children's literature published over fifty years, this study examines the ways in which Tasmanian Indigeneity is constructed by children's writers and illustrators. While these writers were all writing in the second half of the twentieth century, most have been slow to respond to and reflect global movements and understandings of decolonisation. The colonialist ideologies engendered by the majority of writers in this study demonstrate a conservative approach to representations through the roles, characterisations and cultural contexts of Tasmanian

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[1] The Tasmanian Aboriginal community has restored the name "Tasmanian Aborigines" "to reflect their distinctive relationship to their own country and their indigenous rights that flow from it" (Ryan, 2012, p. xxvi).

[2] Critics and cultural commentators use the terms "Aboriginal" and "Aboriginality" interchangeably and "Indigenous" and "Indigeneity". All these terms are used in this thesis.

Aborigines and their life experiences. Indeed, the last two decades of the twentieth century continued to produce literature for children from Tasmania which revived colonialist and paternalistic attitudes towards Indigenous subjects.

Taking a broadly chronological approach, this thesis will focus on Jane Ada Fletcher's *Little Brown Piccaninnies of Tasmania* (1950), Fitzmaurice Hill's *Southward Ho With the Hentys* (1952), Nan Chauncy's *Tangara* (1960) and *Mathinna's People* (1967), Beth Roberts's, *Manganinnie* (1979), Pat Peatfield Price's *Hills of the Black Cockatoo* (1981), Nora Dugon's *Lonely Summers* (1988) and *Clare Street* (1990), Mary Small's *Night of the Muttonbirds* (1981), Elizabeth Stanley's *Night without Darkness* (2001), and Gary Crew's and Peter Gouldthorpe's *The Lost Diamonds of Killiecrankie* (1995). Many of these works were recognised through the Australian Children's Book of the Year Awards established in 1946 which aimed to promote a canon of Australian literature. Consequently, through these awards, particular ideological perspectives on Tasmanian Indigeneity were supported and transmitted. While the works examined are ideologically bound in ways which were intended by their authors, it is valuable to explore perceptions as writers themselves are subject to the ideological constructs of their own writing cultures.

Methodology: Framing the Study

In the depiction of Tasmanian Aboriginality the island of Tasmania has provided a fertile setting for colonial and postcolonial writings for adults. In contrast, there is a relative dearth of literature written for children which represents Tasmanian Indigeneity through fiction. The books selected for study in this thesis represent the corpus of children's literature focussing on the characters of Tasmanian Aborigines and their way of life. A search of the catalogues of the State Library of Tasmania showed that these books are not held by that library and offered no additions to this list. Moreover, there is no discrete collection of children's literature from Tasmania.[3] The sample of literature discussed in this thesis is necessarily small, as there are no books by other non-Indigenous writers which represent Tasmanian Aborigines as characters in a sustained narrative. My search did not reveal any works written by

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[3] Nella Pckup, Tasmanian President of the Children's Book Council of Australia (personal communication, 14 April, 2013).

Indigenous writers which represent Tasmanian Aborigines and their way of life in fiction for children.

A determining criterion for selection of these works is that they were all published by well-known publishing houses and available to national and international markets. They are all sustained narratives, chapter books, in mostly historical settings. Hence, local and self-published works as well as re-tellings of traditional Tasmanian Aboriginal stories are not included. In this study "children" includes "young people"; the selection therefore comprises literature targeted at readers from age seven to fourteen, whilst the picture books discussed are targeted at the older readers in this audience. Most of these works were promoted to school audiences to enhance or support the evolving primary and lower secondary school curricula in social science and history. All the books discussed have been available (but not necessarily widely used) in school classrooms and libraries since their first publication. Fletcher's and Hill's works were acknowledged by The Children's Book Council of Australia Awards in 1951 and 1953 respectively.

From the 1950s, improvements in post-war standards of living enhanced educational opportunities and library services for children stimulated the production of children's literature, including a boom in non-fiction books such as popular history, natural history and junior encyclopaedias.[4] With the exception of New South Wales, Australian school curriculum reform from the 1960s and 1970s began to incorporate history within a social education framework. Tasmania in the 1970s led this move because, "it was argued at the time, the latter was better able to develop more conceptual skills" (Taylor, 2012a, p. 29).[5]

After the 1950s, Australian fiction for both adults and younger readers began to move away from romanticized versions of national history and "idealistic affirmations about

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[4] Children's encyclopaedias from the 1950s and 1960s referred to the romantic notion of "the last Tasmanian" or "Queen Truganinni, reiterating a "Last of the Mohican" sense of tragedy and legend, as in The Australian Junior Encylopaedia" (Barratt, 1959, vol 1, pp. 304-306).

[5] However, it should be noted that Indigenous people throughout Australia did not have equal access to education and the evolving social studies curricula (personal communication with Dr Lawrence Bamblett, Research Fellow (Education) at AITSIS 29 May, 2013). Theresa Sainty, Aboriginal Education Services, confirmed that this was certainly the case in Tasmania (personal communication 13 June, 2013).

Australia's future" (Pierce, 1992, p. 307) towards the "expiation of various sources of guilt associated with Australian history" (Stephens, 2003, p. xii). This is certainly a notion evidenced in Nan Chauncy's works from the 1960s, which are empathetic to the post-World War Two compulsions of children's literature which stressed building bridges of understanding in the aftermath of race conflict. In this global context, Chauncy's work is significant in its implications for the "beginnings of our coming to terms with a national guilt in our treatment of the Aboriginals" (Saxby, 2002, p. 77). However, the socialising concerns of this small corpus of children's literature representing Tasmanian Aboriginality reflect the pervasive ambivalence of several of these non-Indigenous writers as they negotiate the problematic overlap between their own awareness of historical complicity in the colonising processes of dispossession and genocide as experienced in Tasmania. In the last fifty years, discourses of Tasmanian Indigeneity have changed considerably. Whilst some are loath to let go of their colonialist and paternalistic attitudes towards Tasmanian Indigeneity, a few of the texts discussed in this thesis unsettle the dominant discourses on race and history.

This thesis examines the representations of Tasmanian Aborigines in children's literature in the light of their colonial and postcolonial experience. It draws from a body of literature from a range of disciplines, including history, anthropology, ethnography, literary studies, Aboriginal autobiographical writings and cultural commentary. The time frame of the works selected, from 1950 to 2001, reflects an evolving understanding of childhood and child development by children's writers, from a conscious (and nationalistic) intent to "teach" history or social studies through fiction, to an appreciation of the capacity of children to understand the potential for politicisation that children's literature can hold for them.

My examination of the representation of Indigeneity in children's literature in Tasmania builds on the work of Clare Bradford, whose use of postcolonialist theory demonstrates how children's literature recycles the colonialist discourses that are inscribed within mainstream Australian culture. As does Bradford, I have used Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin's definition of the term "postcolonial" as referring to "all the culture affected by the imperial process form the moment of colonisation to the present day" (Ashcroft et al, 2002, p. 2). My use of the term "postcolonial" is not predicated on a specific historical period but as a term which acknowledges the survival of colonialist ideologies in Australian cultural discourse (see Boehmer, 1995, pp. 3-4). Leela Ghandi also suggests that this term is “more sensitive to the long history of colonial consequences” (Ghandi, 1996, p. 3). With regards to the Australian historical condition, “Postcolonial” therefore incorporates the continuity of colonial and the period after colonisation, that is Federation in 1901. I also share Bradford’s conviction that “[t]o interrogate white imaginings of Aboriginality is therefore to engage in processes of decolonisation” (Bradford, 2002, p. 14).

Bradford’s seminal *Reading Race* (2001), investigates how generations of Australians “have been positioned to understand Aboriginal culture, relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, and relationships between Aboriginality and national identity” (Bradford, 2001, p. 9). Bradford calls attention to a common thematic concern of non-Indigenous children’s writers towards Indigeneity which emerges through my study, that of authenticity. Firstly, through white writers assigning authentic Aboriginality to a remote historic past; and secondly, through their interrogations of what it means to be a “real” Aborigine. In her later publication, *Unsettling Narratives* (2007), Bradford discusses how notions of “authenticity” problematise and enhance settler prejudice towards Indigenous peoples (Bradford, 2007, pp. 84-93). Particularly in Tasmania, notions of “authenticity”, “full-blood” and “traditional” that percolate through children’s literature, have informed understandings and representations of Tasmanian Aborigines even to the present day. Indeed, the labelling of Tasmanian Aborigines as inauthentic, reignited by Keith Windschuttle’s role in the “History Wars” (see later section “The History Wars”), undermines their contemporary claims for the restitution of their lands and their cultural identity.

As this thesis describes, the cultural history of Tasmania is constructed through its colonial origins. Colonialist discourses regarding the representation of Tasmanian Aborigines reverberate through the literature produced for children even into the twenty-first century. A major issue which informs the discourses produced by these writers is that of identity. A potent consequence of historical dispossession that emerges through this literature is the issue of who is recognised as Tasmanian Aboriginal and how to represent that identity. The conflict between recognition as Tasmanian Aborigines and non-recognition through notions of “authentic”

Aboriginality underpins these white writers' constructions of Indigeneity for their child readers. Tasmanian Aboriginal writer Greg Lehman argues that this issue is not yet reconciled; "Heavily qualified criteria for recognition remain major obstacles for the small, dispersed, Tasmanian Aboriginal groups, characteristic of those who have suffered most from colonisation" (Lehman, 2006). Doris Pilkington (Nugi Garimara) asserts that "We know how the colonists with their contempt and superior attitudes, contributed to much of the bias, ethnocentricity and negative stereotyping in our history books" (Pilkington in Brewster et al, 2000, p. 158). These attitudes prevailed in fiction for younger readers for decades after they had begun to be contested through adult fiction.

The notion of authenticity in the representation of Indigeneity is in itself problematic, being encumbered by white imaginings of Indigenous peoples as the primitive other, the noble savage, "the dying race metonymized by figures memorialized as 'the last of a tribe' of people" (Bradford, 2007, p. 85). This thesis demonstrates how, in children's literature, varying representations of Tasmanian Aborigines as the last of a race participate in the textuality of colonialism as a means of sustaining, or, in some cases, disrupting the foundation myth of settlement. The concept of "other" was fundamental to colonialism, where discourse was based on binary constructions of self/other, civilised/native and us/them. The problem faced by all these non-Indigenous writers from 1950 to 2001 is how to represent an "other" around whom there is a perceived history of cultural erasure.

The racist definitions of Aboriginal identity formulated from 1910 to the 1940s that classified Indigenous people into castes through the terminology of "full-blood", "half-caste", "quadroon" or "quarter-caste" and "octoroon" are embedded in the literature explored in the earlier chapters of this thesis. In the 1960s, the Commonwealth Government defined an Aboriginal person as "a person who is a member of the Aboriginal race of Australia" (creativespirits, 8 July 2013). This definition was employed until the 1990s, but its latent connotations of classification of human beings into "physically, biologically and genetically distinct groups" (Ashcroft et al, 2005, p. 198) reaffirmed colonialist assumptions regarding Australian Indigeneity.

Tasmanian Aboriginal writer and activist Jim Everett cites the Commonwealth Government's working definition of Aboriginality that is designed to assist government agencies in providing services that specifically target Aborigines. The "working" definition depends on the following criteria: that an Aboriginal person is descended from Aborigines; that the person identifies as being Aboriginal; and that the person is accepted as being Aboriginal by the community (Everett, 2006). Hence, "Aboriginality" is not a singular identity, but a multiplicity of constructed and embraced identities encompassing urban and western educated Aboriginal people. Marcia Langton's theory of inter-subjectivity incorporates contemporary modes of representation:

> 'Aboriginality' arises from the subjective experience of both Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people who engage in any intercultural dialogue, whether in actual lived experience or through a mediated experience such as a white person watching a program about Aboriginal people on television or reading a book (Langton, 1993, p. 31).

Tasmanian Aborigine Theresa Sainty suggests that:

> Being Aboriginal means different things to different people. Some people only have heritage – a direct line of ancestry. For me being Aboriginal is about my connection to community, country and culture (personal communication, 13 June 2013).

Sainty's view concurs with Langton's, that the "vast majority of Indigneous Australians who are recognised as Aborigines by their community, a definition that is much more social than racial (Langton, 1993, p. 29). The literature discussed in this thesis reflects a slowly evolving understanding of Tasmanian Aboriginality on the part of non-Indigenous children's writers, including that of Dugon who tentatively explores the notion that "Aboriginal people define Aboriginality not by skin colour, but by relationships" (creativespirits, 8 July 2013). An intriguing revelation is the fact that there have been no publications since 2001 which represent Tasmanian Aborigines in fiction for children.[6]

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[6] Searches in the catalogues of the National Library of Australia and the State library of Tasmania showed that there are no publications since 2001 representing Tasmanian Aborigines in children's fiction.

Tasmania: A Fertile Setting for Children's Literature

In the literature examined in this thesis the island of Tasmania is presented as a place different and remote from the mainland. Isolated and untouched, it is the site of idyllic and unspoilt childhoods, but is marred by a shameful past of dark secrets, of atrocities and massacres of its Indigenous people, yet the present makes Tasmanian Aborigines invisible. Children's writers such as Fletcher, Chauncy and Roberts recognised the uniqueness of Tasmania's setting and history, but they are constrained by a sense of continuity for an audience that itself is implicated in the past. These children's writers, particularly those resident in Tasmania, are conscious of the tangibility of white family heritage and the potential of descendants' involvement in what is now acknowledged as the desolate fate of Tasmania's Aboriginal population; hence their elusion of the specifics of Indigenous tribal locations and names.

Separated from mainland Australia by the Bass Strait, the hilly island of Tasmania has been perceived in contemporary literature as economically and socially marginalised due to its location at the end of the world (for examples see Koch, 1958; Dugon, 1988 and 1990). The landscapes of the colonial stories of Fletcher, Hill, Chauncy, Roberts and Price refer to bush settings. Only Dugon provides a glimpse into Tasmania's two small cities, Hobart in the south and Launceston in the north, whilst the Indigenous family she depicts is relegated to the outskirts of an unnamed little township. The works of Small, Stanley and Crew are set on the windblown islands of Cape Barren Island, Big Dog Island and Flinders Island in the Bass Strait. Historically, these islands are the sites of exile, and imprisonment, as well as survival, all of which are alluded to in their stories.

The particular social and cultural context of Tasmanian literature offers a fascinating site for study, in which Tasmania as an island is seen on the one hand as a metonymic space as regards the Australian experience, and, on the other hand, a place with its own cultural entity, seen by writers as a place frozen in time. Originally, "The island was literally seen by Britain as *terra nullius,* an empty land, a belief that required the virtual genocide of the Indigenous population in order to be maintained" (Polack, 2000, pp. 220-221). Reiterating the myth of *terra nullius* and the myth of extinction was ideologically useful for colonisation and facilitated the perpetuation of other mythology regarding Tasmanian Indigeneity. This included the myth that the Tasmanians were a separate “race”, distinct from other human species; hence a whole species was lost when they died out. Additionally, the claim that the Tasmanians had been eradicated despite the heroic efforts of the humanitarian George Augustus Robinson (1788-1866) was harnessed to portend the doom of mainland Aborigines. Robinson’s writings, communicated through Plomley’s *Friendly Mission*, which since its first publication in 1966 has been “the principal source of both authoritative fact and romantic imagining about Indigenous Tasmania” (Lehman, 2010, p.164) reflects “the stifling parochialism characteristic of so much Tasmanian history (and Aboriginal identity politics)” (Johnston and Rolls, 2010). Consequently, Plomley’s “lifelong arguments that Tasmanian Aborigines were extinct and his rejections of assertions by their descendants of continuing culture” (Lehman, 2010, p. 164) have been incorporated by those writers whose works span over thirty years of this fifty year survey, from 1950 to 1981.

This thesis also demonstrates the pervasive and enduring influence of these children’s writers’ perceptions of Robinson as the hero conciliator who “saved” the Tasmanian Aborigines. Ultimately, these myths have been mobilised throughout most of the twentieth century to ensure that the Australian Government could ignore the claims to recognition, land rights, welfare and education of mixed race Tasmanians, as officially they don’t exist as a separate or unique population and culture. Evoking the myth of *terra nullius* simultaneously denied both existence and traditional ownership to lands now occupied by non-Indigenous people. The concept of *terra nullius* was abandoned by the 1992 Mabo judgement which accelerated Tasmanian Aboriginal land claims. Meanwhile, the notion that the only real Tasmanian Aborigines are full bloods was used to deny native title until 1994 (Ryan, 1996, p. 308). Written mostly as historical fiction, the children’s literature in this study invokes these myths through a recurring sense of loss, tragedy and a denial of existence.

As non-Indigenous writers, the writers in this study understand the ways in which children’s literature imparts a strong sense of belonging to Australia. Chauncy, Price, Dugon and Small were all post war migrants who saw the island of Tasmania with the fresh eyes of outsiders who were acutely aware of its unique historic past. The post Second World War demand for Australian-produced literature for children encouraged more original Australian storylines which appealed to British and English–speaking readers for whom the colonial experience had been similar. This “renaissance in children’s literature”, as recognised by scholars in the field Maurice Saxby (Saxby, 2002, p. 26) and Brenda Niall (Niall, 1988, p. 548), also reflected the colonialist ethos in which by “the 1950s Australians felt that they had conquered and subdued the land and they were more determined to provide a rosy future for their children” (Silvey, 1995, p. 37). For many communities this rosy future was applied to a particular construction of a more “universal” childhood which also extended into adolescence; a period of development which was supposedly shared across class boundaries.

This thesis explores how the construction of history is linked with what these children’s writers chose to represent and believe. It aims to show the ways in which historical sources contributed to the representation of Tasmanian Aboriginality. By situating the literature more firmly in its historical, social and contemporary context it examines how this children’s literature might support and be informed by social and political attitudes and policy at the time of publication. It also considers what history was being constructed, as well as what history was available, to these writers.

Tasmania: Historical, Social and Contemporary Context

The significance of this thesis lies in its exploration of how children’s literature in Tasmania operated as a vehicle for reflecting and transmitting the attitudes and discriminatory government policy of protection and assimilation. These attitudes were deeply embedded and implicitly assumed by that particular generation of child readers. Notions and policies of protection and assimilation, followed by tolerance, are ideologies which have informed the production of this children’s literature.

For over thirty years since its settlement in 1803, Tasmania had witnessed violent clashes between European settlers, mostly British, and local Indigenous peoples which resulted in the rapid decimation of the Tasmanian Aboriginal population. In their quest for land acquisition Tasmanian settler-colonisers were unable to subjugate the Aboriginal people by violent means. In October 1830, at the behest of Governor George Arthur, a cordon of civilians and soldiers, from the north to south east, attempted to drive all the Aborigines into the Forestier Peninsula. The Black Line, as it is known, was a farce in that it amounted to the capture of only one old man and one small boy.

Subsequently Arthur approved Robinson's self-devised "peaceful conciliation" of the Tasmanian Aborigines, which took place between January 1830 and August 1834. Relying upon a group of a few Europeans and a small group of "tame" Aborigines, including Wooraddy and Truganinni[7], Robinson tricked most of the surviving "wild" Aborigines to surrender. Robinson's "conciliation" of the Big River tribes and the Oyster Bay tribe, was consolidated in December 1831.

Upon their removal to Flinders Island in Bass Strait, northeast of Tasmania, Robinson's "domesticated" Aborigines from then on had Christianity, western style housing, clothes, diet and bureaucracy imposed upon them. If they were recalcitrant or unchristian they were "subjected to the whipping post or the stocks" (Pybus, 1991, p. 147). Robinson was regarded as a hero by his contemporaries and by subsequent generations, because of his publicised methods of "peaceful conciliation". However, Robinson's own journal entries reflect the duplicitous nature of his self promotion as well as the violence and treachery that he dealt to his Indigenous captives. Members of the last intact cohesive Tasmanian clan of the West Coast, including Towterer the chief of the Lowreenne people and his wife Wongerneep, the parents of Mathinna (Pybus, 2008), were duped into dispossession and captivity on Flinders Island by Robinson.

For most white Tasmanians the death of Truganinni in 1876 was confirmation of the total extinction of the Tasmanian Aborigines. Photographs and stories of Truganinni as the last Tasmanian abounded until the end of the twentieth century and continued to be fostered in children's literature (for examples, see Price, 1979; Kohler and Kohn, 1980). The Tasmanian Museum in Hobart continued to display the skeleton of Truganinni as representative of "the last of her race" until 1947, when public decency demanded its removal. Writers of Chauncy's generation likely had vivid memories of this particular exhibit, though there is no reference to it in her archives. The scandalous treatment of Tasmanian Aborigines as ethnographic specimens, as objects of the colonial gaze, has had lasting reverberations on public perceptions of Tasmanian Indigeneity. Those who chose to identify as Tasmanian Aborigines faced another thirty years of official exclusion and discrimination, until the 1970s when public and official perceptions of a living Tasmanian Aboriginal identity began to be overtly challenged by successful activism (Ryan, 2012, p. 314). Participating in the denial or the ignorance of any living Tasmanian Aborigines enabled generations of white settlers and migrants to satisfy themselves that "The era of dispossession was over", consequently, "White Tasmanians possess the land by virtue of being its sole occupants, an impregnable position, morally and legally" (Pybus, 1981, p. 178).

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[7] Truganinni was born about 1812 on Bruny Island and died in Hobart on May 8th 1876. There are several spellings of her name, including Trukanini, Truganinny and Truganina. For example, Chauncy refers to her as "Truganini" in *Tangara* (1960) whilst in *Mathinna's People* (1967) she calls her "Trugernanna". In this thesis, I have used "Truganinni", but I have maintained author's usage in their quotes.

The idea that Aboriginal people were doomed to inevitable extinction had its roots in Social Darwinism[8], whereby Darwin's theory of the Survival of the Fittest was appropriated by anthropologists and applied to human beings. "Social Darwinists argued that nature's constant laws mandated the extinction of all unfit creatures and species to make room for new, supposedly fitter ones" (Brantliger, 2003, p. 15). For Social Darwinists, Patrick Brantliger contends, "the most lethal aspect of extinction discourse has probably been its stress on the inevitability of that vanishing" (Brantliger, 2003, p. 190). In particular Social Darwinism served to rationalise racist theories of the innate cultural and intellectual inferiority of Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in which Aboriginal people are essentialised as Stone Age people, therefore at the lowest stage of human evolution. This assumption of a racial hierarchy teetered on "the paradoxical dualism that existed in imperialist thought between the *debasement* and the *idealization* of colonized subjects" (Ashcroft et al 2005, p. 201); an ambivalence which underpins representations of Australian Indigenous people as members of an inferior race who simultaneously were idealised as child-like and malleable.

Inextricably tied up with Social Darwinism is the concept of race, including the paranoid fear of miscegenation. Henry Reynolds in his *Frontier: Aborigines, Settlers*

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[8] Social Darwinism "is now known as scientific racism, that is, the use of scientific techniques to sanction belief in white racial superiority" (Ryan, 2012, xix).

and Land discusses how another theory which explicated the extinction of inferior races, the “doomed race” theory, justified the dispossession, deculturisation and violence of colonisation (Reynolds, 1989, p. 121). “Ultimate pessimism in Aboriginal capacities to advance found expression in the idea that they were doomed to inevitable extinction” (McGregor, 1998, p. 13). Integral to this interpretation was the view that as a weaker species of human beings Indigenous people fell prey to disease, alcoholism, dislocation and dispossession. Their demise was therefore deemed to be an inevitable consequence of culture contact with colonial settlers, particularly with their interests in land ownership and industrialisation.

Henry Reynolds and Russell McGregor hold that the doomed race theory was embraced until the middle of the twentieth century (Reynolds, 1989; McGregor, 1998). Although by 1967 doomed race theory was becoming less popular in academic circles, it continued to inform the literature which was written for and that was accessible to children, as well as their school curriculum, well into the 1980s (for example, see Travers, 1968; Kohler and Kohn, 1980, p. 22). However, proponents of the doomed race theory were at odds concerning the definition of racial extinction as their racist ideology did not acknowledge the propagation of people of mixed descent. For many it meant that only people of full descent could be counted as being Aboriginal. With the hardening of racial attitudes a new policy of protectionism evolved, “to protect them from overt justice and brutality – for the short time they had left upon this earth” (McGregor, 1998, p. 18).

The policy of protection continued the process of dispossession and deculturisation in that it “was directed to controlling the Aborigines as much as to protecting them” (McGregor, 1998, p. 54). The evolution of the practice of the forcible removal of Indigenous children was enshrined in the policy of protection in the late nineteenth century and continued until as late as 1972 on mainland Australia. The Australian Government now acknowledges that “Indigenous children have been forcibly separated from their families and communities since the very first days of the European occupation of Australia by governments and missionaries” (HREOC, 1997, p. 27).

The White Australia Policy (1901) and the Assimilation Policy (1937) evoked some distorted representations of Aboriginal people from 1950 to the 1980s as exotic and noble, but unless successfully assimilated, to be destined as fringe dwellers and forever marginalised from mainstream society. This view is reflected in the literature examined in this study. The study considers to what extent the texts explore the tropes of the last of the Tasmanians through their appropriation of Social Darwinist and doomed race ideology. Although doomed race ideology began to weaken after the atrocities of the Second World War, for children's writers Tasmania provided a unique example of the embodiment of this theory. In the 1950s, Jane Ada Fletcher's Tasmanian Aborigines are represented as extinct doomed noble savages, whilst Fitzmaurice Hill reduces them to both savage and invisible. Writing in the 1960s, Nan Chauncy elicits some empathy and dignity for what she has interpreted as a doomed race. Beth Roberts in 1979 and Pat Peatfield Price in 1981 represent Tasmanian Indigenous people as doomed or lost forever. Nora Dugon's modern realistic fiction of 1988 and 1991 cautiously acknowledges the contemporary existence of Tasmanian Aborigines, as does Mary Small, though Dugon's Aboriginal characters are relegated to the margins and rendered invisible. However, the individual Indigenous characters in the works of Gary Crew (1995) and Elizabeth Stanley (2001) are also metaphors of the last Tasmanian. Hence, the perception regarding the total demise of the whole of the Tasmanian Aboriginal people is reiterated until the twenty-first century.

The History Wars and Tasmania

The context of this thesis spans the evolution of what is now known as the "History Wars". In 1968 anthropologist W.E.H. Stanner disturbed what he referred to as "The Great Australian Silence" in which Australian history had assumed "a cult of forgetfulness practised on a national scale" (Stanner, 1968, p. 25), which historian Ann Curthoys argues was integral to

> a popular collective imagination that erased prior indigenous occupation from consciousness. Instead of a story of Indigenous suffering as a result of colonisation, dispossession, loss of liberty, health and very often life itself, popular Australian understandings of the past stressed the sufferings, defeats and heroism of white Australians as they colonised the country (Curthoys, 2005, p. 167).

However, from the late 1960s, through the collective works of historians such as Charles Rowley and Henry Reynolds, amongst other scholars, this great Australian silence was broken. From the 1970s Australian history began to be re-evaluated in the light of a new sense of national identity which distanced itself from Australia's British inheritance. Influenced by work in other disciplines, especially anthropology and literary studies, a historiography emerged which critically examined questions of colonialism and postcolonialism (see Manne, 2003, p. 2; Curthoys, 2005, p. 75).

Meanwhile, the strengthening Indigenous political movement fostered a new perspective on Aboriginal history. The impact of culture contact, violence and various government policies which sanctioned removal, institutionalisation and attempted assimilation of Indigenous peoples were critiqued by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous writers of history and literature (see Manne, 2003; Taylor, 2012b). The debate on these issues was informed by two public events. Firstly, the bicentennial celebration of the British settlement of Australia provided an opportunity to enhance white public awareness of the disasterous impact of the 1788 invasion for Aboriginal people. Secondly, the 1992 Mabo case that overturned "the fiction" of *terra nullius* and recognised original prior occupation and native title rights (see Macintyre, 2004) was certainly influenced by Reynolds' scholarship.

The Mabo decision further unsettled conservative historians and their view of Australian history "as a patriotic version that celebrated Australian history as a resounding success". Geoffrey Blainey's argument that the unduly positive representation, "the Three Cheers View of history" was being superceded by an unduly negative view, the "black armband" view of history (Blainey, 1993, pp. 10-15). The 1997 Government commissioned the *Bringing them Home Report* on the long standing practice of removal of Aboriginal children from their families elicited public empathy and awareness of the intergenerational impact of Government policy on Indigenous people. The Report described Aboriginal child removal as "genocide", as defined by the United Nations in 1948.

The Howard government's response to the question of genocide raised by *Bringing them Home* was to deny the existence of any 'stolen generations' on semantic grounds. Despite referring to the treatment of Aborigines as "the most blemished chapter" in Australian history, John Howard's refusal to make a Parliamentary apology to members of the Stolen Generations further vitiated the movement towards Reconciliation (see Transcript 7.30 Report, ABC, 3 April, 2000). By the late 1990s the History Wars gathered momentum, as official denials competed against a counter-revolution in public sensitivity regarding the dispossession of the Aborigines. Conservative historian Keith Windschuttle's revisionist *The Fabrication of Aboriginal History, Volume 1*, published in 2002, takes issue with what he sees as the prevailing consensus regarding European colonisation of Australia.

Claiming that "The notion of sustained 'frontier warfare' is fictional", Windschuttle focuses on Van Diemen's Land because, he says, it was generally regarded as the worst case as there are no "full-blood" Tasmanian Aborigines left (Windschuttle, 2002, p. 3). Windschuttle's hastily written history attempts to demonstrate that no massacres had ever taken place and challenges the historicism and accuracy of Reynolds' estimate of 20,000 killings. Windschuttle sees no British wrongdoing in the frontier settler clashes in van Diemen's land when he argues that the Indigenous Tasmanians were a "primitive", "maladapted" and "dysfunctional" people who were "active agents in their own demise" and who had managed to survive more "by good fortune than by good management" (Windschuttle, 2002, p. 386). More than any other publication, Windschuttle's *Fabrication* has fuelled the public debate which comprises the "History Wars".

The reception and understanding of the construction of colonial history is particularly pertinent to Tasmania, where "the general Tasmanian community ... [has] lived for so long with the comforting thought that there were no local Aborigines to remind them about their own history" (Reynolds, 2012, p. 273). The timespan of this thesis which explores the representation of Indigeneity in children's literature from Tasmania from 1950-2001 embraces the eras of "the great Australian silence" (Stanner, 1968) and "the flowering of of post-settlement Aboriginal history" begun in the 1960s and early 1970s by Rowley, Reynolds, followed by Ryan. These historians, amongst other writers, reflect how discourses of Tasmanian Indigeneity have radically changed in the last fifty years.

Reclaiming Tasmanian Aboriginal Rights and Identity

For much of the twentieth century, interpretations of race and identity underpinned the Tasmanian Government’s intractability regarding the recognition of Tasmanian Indigeneity (see Brantliger, 2003, p. 130; Ryan, 2012, pp. 292, 322; Reynolds, 2012, pp. 270-273) which is subsequently fostered in literature destined for a younger audience. Textually, this enables the myth of *terra nullius* to persist through most of these works as their Aboriginal characters are rendered as either lost or invisible.

From the early 1970s, the time that most of the Tasmanian children’s literature explored in this thesis was produced, several significant issues invigorated Tasmanian Aboriginal reclamation of rights and identity. The return of Truganinni’s skeleton for cremation by the Tasmanian Aboriginal people in 1975, and the subsequent return in 1982 of all Aboriginal skeletal remains held in Tasmania to Tasmanian Aborigines, was pertinent “acknowledgement that the modern Tasmanian Aboriginal community was connected to its ancestral past” (Ryan, 2012, p. 321). Also during this time the complex and contentious issue of land rights in Tasmania was being fought, fuelled by the Franklin River dam proposal in the mid 1970s which revealed cave sites that indicated Aboriginal occupation of some 30,000 years (Ryan, 2012, p. 316). Land is a vital issue to all Aboriginal people. The issue of land rights is ongoing in Tasmania, and is held by Tasmanian Aborigines as integral to recognition of their identity.

By the 1980s the impact of the hidden histories of the Stolen Generations was reverberating in the public sphere (HREOC, 1997). Yet there are no indications that these children’s writers were aware of the ways in which this assimilationist practice impacted on Tasmanian Aboriginal families. Cape Barren Islanders in particular have been subject to dispossession and forced removal of their children. Indeed, “most of the Aboriginal children in Tasmania had been ‘stolen’ within living memory; that is, between 1935 and 1980” (Ryan, 2012, p. 141). Mary Small writes that she was unaware of the forcible removal of children from Cape Barren to the Tasmanian mainland of the previous decade when she wrote *Night of the Muttonbirds* in 1981 (personal communication, 5 May, 2012).

With the exception of Gary Crew, the white writers whose works are represented in this survey have apparently undertaken no consultation or collaboration with Tasmanian Aborigines who are the subject of their works. Nor have they acknowledged the cultural context for the reception of their works by Tasmanian Aborigines. Elizabeth Stanley, who wrote the most recent book in this study, suggests that for her this collaboration was thwarted:

> I have never had any feedback from indigenous Australians about the book and, sadly, never had the chance to talk with indigenous people living in the Furneaux group, because they lived apart on Cape Barren Island and I was told white Australians were not particularly welcome to visit (personal communication, 15 May, 2013).

However, for most of these writers there were no more Indigenous people in Tasmania, so the possibility for consultation is eliminated. For them, Truganinni was inded the last of her race. A significant paradox is revealed in this work which is that writers, in their attempts to represent what they know about Tasmanian Aborigines, are participating in the elegiac discourse of erasure, disappearance and loss that continues to marginalise the people who are the subjects of their stories.

Exploring Indigeneity in Tasmanian Children's Literature

In Australian children's literature Aboriginalism as a discourse encompasses what white writers thought white children ought to know about Aboriginal people. Children's literature which appropriated this discourse simultaneously treated Aboriginal children as invisible as an audience. Aboriginalism in children's literature therefore treated Indigenous people as subject, to be talked *about*, and as object, as the other. As this thesis will show, the majority of these writers of Tasmanian children's literature who did attempt to understand Indigeneity were unable to step outside this ideological perspective.

This thesis takes a largely chronological approach, beginning in Chapter 2 with Fletcher's *Little Brown Piccaninnies of Tasmania* (1950), a quasi-fictional textbook that depicts Tasmanians as primitives, failing to survive through their own lack of skills and ability to adapt. Her child noble savages are destined to be lost in oblivion. As can be seen from this study Fletcher's perceptions (including doomed race theory) were being reproduced as late as the 1980s. Chapter 3 looks at *Southward Ho with the*

Hentys (Hill, 1952), an historical adventure novel of an English family's emigration to Australia. Hill represents Aboriginal people as savage, but certainly not noble. Hill's novel is a throwback to Australian colonial writers' reflections of the manly ideals of rugged individualism for white Anglo-Celtic inhabitants of newly acquired territory, the land on which caricatures of Aborigines are rendered invisible.

Nan Chauncy (discussed in Chapters 4 and 5) was also influenced by Social Darwinism and formally acknowledges the works of Fletcher and her mentors, James Bonwick and Ling Roth (Chauncy, 1960, Acknowledgements). Chauncy's work represents a more sustained investigation of Tasmania, and because of this her work is given prominence. Her writing is more modern and nuanced, in that her social realism incorporates an environmentalist ethos as well as an empathetic view of Tasmanian Indigeneity; she also depicted child characters with whom young readers could identify, socially and psychologically. Chapter 4 shows how Chauncy's time-slip novel *Tangara* (1960) explores the close friendship of a contemporary white girl and a Tasmanian Aboriginal girl from the past with an elegiac quality that informs her next novel. Her representation of Indigeneity in *Tangara* and *Mathinna's People* (1967), discussed in Chapter 5, reflects a conscious attempt at non-racism, to dignify and respect her Aboriginal characters. However, whilst Chauncy's exposure of frontier violence and massacre challenges contemporary prejudices towards Aboriginality she represents the Indigenous inhabitants as lost forever. Chauncy's research for *Tangara* inspired *Mathinna's People* which describes the gradual dispossession of Towterer (Mathinna's father) and his family, who witnessed the Black Line and died on Flinders Island. Written as a memorial to a disappeared race, this expression of "sorrow for a doomed race" suggests that their loss was an inevitable consequence of colonisation.

Chapter 6 continues the exploration of loss, through Beth Roberts's and Pat Peatfield Price's recuperation of the powerful colonial motif of the lost child. Roberts's *Manganinnie* (1979) refers to Robinson's "conciliation" of the Big River tribes and the Oyster Bay tribe, but Manganinnie is another last Tasmanian, having witnessed the massacre of her whole tribe. Her own personal loss of children and family is temporarily consoled by her "finding" of Joanna, the lost white child. In *The Hills of the Black Cockatoo* (1981), Price's Tasmanian Aborigines are lost, looking for their family. As the last members of their tribe they are fated to die out, partly due to their own incapacities (reiterating Fletcher's misinformation), but as their numbers are so depleted they are implicitly deprived of a viable future. It is a survival story that foreshadows total disappearance.

A dynamic change of genre is represented in Chapter 7. Nora Dugon's mostly urban settings for *Lonely Summers* (1988) and *Clare Street* (1990) offer a more contemporary outlook which includes reflections on changing differences in social attitudes, a more overt examination of class, child rearing and the changing dynamics of the family, as well as increased urbanisation. From an ideological perspective, Dugon's postcolonialism is inextricably tied in with identity and sometimes multiple identities. Dugon's works raise the concept of "authenticity" in that her protagonist is not full blood, so is not accepted as being a Tasmanian Aborigine. In particular, urban Aborigines are deemed to be less authentic, having lost most of their culture. Though it reflects a changing perspective of childhood and adolescence, Dugon's fiction depicts Tasmanian Aboriginality as marginalised and invisible.

Modern Australian picture books selected for exploration in this study take up the theme of muttonbirding on the smaller islands of Bass Strait in Chapters 8 and 9. In Chapter 8 Small's *Night of the Muttonbirds* (1981) and Stanley's *Night without Darkness* (2001) depict young Indigenous characters who must leave the island in order to be fulfilled through an allegory of flight and individual freedom. In Small's story, the protagonist Matthew's Indigeneity is negotiated through the lonely path of schooling on the mainland. Involvement in muttonbirding on Big Dog Island is the catalyst for his capacity to suggest a new future for his generation. However, in the most recently published book in this study, *Night without Darkness*, Harry's attempt to leave the island reiterates the motif of the last Tasmanian.

The final representation of Tasmanian Indigeneity in this study, set on Flinders Island, is seen in Crew's *The Lost Diamonds of Killiecrankie* (1995), self consciously postcolonial in its response to empire and opposition to it. Crew's authorial perspective is conspicuous - children are deemed to be not so innocent and not so apolitical, as he challenges readers to critique Robinson's role in the active destruction of a race of people, and to construct their own critical history of the impact of colonialism on Tasmanian Aboriginality.

Lessons in History: 'Historical Inaccuracies, Closed Minds and White Impassivity' in Tasmanian Children's Literature

Children's literature has explicit intentions as a medium of socialisation and plays a significant role in the transmission of adult values and ideological perspectives to young readers; but ideology is often hidden, often masquerading "as the opposite of what it really is" (Hunt, 1991, p. 142). Literature produced for children affirms and consolidates the ideologies of the society in which it is produced, and when used uncritically, it continues to confirm the ideologies of the time of its production, as literature is re-read by succeeding generations of child audiences. This thesis is concerned with understanding and revealing the ways in which the literature examined both upholds and promotes particular understandings of Aboriginality in Tasmania. However, for writers who choose to represent Tasmanian Indigeneity in children's literature, there is a danger that a lack of historicity and understanding of the contemporary circumstances of Tasmanian Aborigines may lead to these works operating as agents of repression. One of the greatest impediments for these writers is potentially what Johnston and Rolls suggest is the "parochialism" of Plomley's works (Johnston and Rolls, 2010). A sensitivity towards depicting local history which implicates descendants (and beneficiaries) of those colonisers involved in the dispossession and deculturisation of Tasmanian Aborigines is particularly evident in the children's literature discussed in this thesis.

Writing in 1982, Walter McVitty asserts:

> The presentation of Australian Aboriginality and culture in children's literature has been, from the beginning, a shamelessly racist catalogue of prejudice and misinformation, of superficial clichés, offensive stereotyping and entirely subjective interpretation. Although things have improved remarkably in recent times, there is still a long way to go (McVitty, 1982, p. 10).

The historical overview of the literature which is examined in this thesis reflects the "shameless racism" which McVitty highlights in 1982. Prejudice and misinformation, clichés, stereotyping and subjective interpretation are all imported into textual and visual representations of Tasmanian Indigeneity in children's literature. Recognising that what children read and what they view plays a significant role in constructing, as McGillis (1997, p. 12) suggests, “versions of the world and its peoples”, this thesis explores the active role that children’s literature performs in perpetuating racist attitudes. With regards to accurate and sensitive representations of Tasmanian Aboriginality in children’s literature, McVitty’s suggestion that “there is still a long way to go’’ still holds true for even the most recent book in the survey.

This is the first full scale study of its kind; its significance lies in its exploration of how children’s literature from Tasmania, despite the benign intentions of the authors, had the potential to transmit discriminatory attitudes that were deeply embedded and implicitly assumed for several generations of child readers. It looks at how writers, in their constructions of the world and its peoples, could ensure that their child readers remained “the most colonised persons on the globe” (McGillis, 1997, p. 7) in their appropriation of colonialist attitudes towards Tasmanian Indigeneity.

This thesis *Lost and Invisible: The Representation of Indigeneity in Children’s Literature in Tasmania 1950-2001* was originally inspired by Tasmanian Aboriginal poet Karen Brown’s “A Lesson in History” (1986), which confirmed my experience as a teacher on a brief exchange from Canberra to Hobart in 1998 when some Tasmanian teachers were still asserting that there were no more Tasmanian Aborigines. The notion of history is a problem for these non-Indigenous writers of children’s literature from 1950 to 2001 as they attempt to represent history through an accumulation of facts, or what they promote as truth. For Tasmanian Aborigines, their view of history is their living cultural identity (see Lehman, 2010; West, 1984; Langton, 1993).

A Lesson in History

The child sits at his desk,
twiddling a pencil,
idly staring out the window,
the teacher announces,
today we will learn,
about Tasmanian Aborigines,
mind snaps back to the present,
the child leans forward, attention eagerly given,
the last Tasmanian Aborigine, died in 1876,
hand goes up,
but, teacher, I’m Aboriginal,
how can you be, blond haired and blue eyed you are,
so white you must be,
but teacher, I am, I am,
Mum and Dad told me,
no you are not,
that’s the end of it, mouth turns down,
eyes glisten and slowly fill,
yes teacher, another lesson learnt,
of historical inaccuracies,
closed minds and white impassivity.

Karen Brown, 1986.

Chapter 2

Inscribing the Myth of Extinction: *Little Brown Piccaninnies of Tasmania* (1950) by Jane Ada Fletcher

Jane Ada Fletcher (1870-1956): Teacher, Anthropologist and Writer

Jane Ada Fletcher's *Little Brown Piccaninnies of Tasmania* (1950), a quasi-fictional reconstruction of history for primary school readers depicting the lives of pre-contact Tasmanian Aborigines, played a significant role in inscribing the myth of Tasmanian Indigenous extinction in Australian children's literature. Fletcher was influenced by Victorian race scientists, such as Charles Darwin, Charles Lyall and Thomas Huxley, who promoted doomed race theory, who interpreted "doomed" as "inevitable" (see Brantliger, 2003, pp. 17- 44). Fletcher's writings adhered to the logic of doomed race theory as applied to the Tasmanian Aborigines, and its accompanying sentimental regret at their loss. Her ideological convictions were shared by other writers for children in the twentieth century who perceived Tasmanian Aborigines as lost or invisible. Claimed to be "the first author to fictionalize Aboriginal culture for European children" (Morris, 1993, p. 67), Fletcher's view of Aboriginality was conservative. Yet, in 1950 it was recognised that she was attempting to do something radical and innovative in writing about Aborigines, in a children's writing culture that had to date essentially remained silent about the fate of the Indigenous population in Tasmania. Her work was Highly Commended in the Children's Book Council of Australia Book of the Year Awards, which is a reflection of how seriously her work was taken at the time (Children's Book Council of Australia, 2011).

The importance of Fletcher's work to this study lies in its representation as an example of the educational impulse in writing about Australian Aborigines for children. It is apparent that her work influenced Nan Chauncy, Beth Roberts and Pat Peatfield Price to embrace the subject of the Tasmanian Aborigines and interpret their story for future generations of children. Nevertheless, *Little Brown Piccaninnies of Tasmania* is informed by Fletcher's readings from the nineteenth century, and as such it contains a number of racial stereotypes, misinformation and ideology that, even in 1950, was outdated.

Like most of the authors in this study, Fletcher was not originally from Tasmania. In her early adult life she had drifted southwards to the island, which gave her an outsider's view of Tasmania and fuelled her interest and her representation of Indigeneity in her writing. Fletcher was eighty when she wrote *Little Brown Piccaninnies of Tasmania,* her most popular book for children. Born on Stonefield Station, Victoria in 1870, and raised in rural Queensland by parents who were keen botanists and ornithologists, Fletcher's childhood interests in the bush were fostered by Wobblee Wobblee, an Aborigine who worked on their property, who used to take "her piccaninny walkabout" (Morris, 1993, p. 69). This was Fletcher's only personal contact with any Indigenous people.

The sudden death of their mother in 1889 forced Jane and her two sisters to move to Bundoora, Victoria, to live with their maternal grandmother. The 1890 depression in Victoria led to a poverty-stricken lifestyle for the sisters who became completely financially dependent on family. Moving southward to escape "granny's acid tongue", Fletcher endured four years of arduous farm work on her aunt's bush farm in northwest Tasmania. In 1896, she took an unpaid position as an assistant teacher, "a teacher of sewing", a euphemistic title given to "make the idea of women working more palatable", in a rural community which up until then was unused to women in the teaching profession. Eventually Fletcher was formally employed in a paid position as an elementary school teacher in rural Tasmania (Morris, 1993, pp. 70, 71).

Fletcher's interest in natural history fuelled her writing for the *Victorian School Paper.* Her articles on natural history embraced her own practice as well as emerging pedagogy of the era, encouraging children to become observers of their natural environments, as opposed to the commonly espoused rote learning. From 1915 to 1916, Fletcher contributed to the school readers *Stories from Nature* and *Nature and Adventure.* A keen ornithologist and photographer, Fletcher wrote several papers on local birdlife for the Australian journal of ornithology, *Emu,* from 1912 to 1925. Retiring from teaching in 1925, Fletcher moved to her final home at Eaglehawk Neck, on the narrow isthmus that had served as the "impassable barrier" to the penitentiary of Port Arthur.

Fletcher lived in a place and time when it was almost impossible, particularly for a woman with no financial or spousal support, to gain formal university qualifications. Being unmarried, however, gave her the freedom to pursue her studies informally. Her professional education as a primary school teacher was gained on the job, where she earned recognised qualifications. At the time she came to be seen as a pioneer in her writings on the Tasmanian Aboriginal People.[9]

Fletcher's writings for adults and children embraced her interest in Aborigines. *Tommy and the Emu* (1923), *Wanna, a small Tasmanian Aborigine who made friends with Captain Cook at Adventure Bay* (1939) and *Piccaninny Frolics* (1949) preceded *Little Brown Piccaninnies of Tasmania*. *Wanna* was her first publication for children to depict Tasmanian Aboriginal children at the time of the first contact with white people. Captain Cook emerges as the Aborigines' hero, as he saves them and Wanna, a Tasmanian "piccaninny", from being shot by his underlings. Her other publications on Tasmanian Aborigines included anthropological pamphlets: *Notes on the Dialects of Some of the Aboriginal Tribes of Tasmania, Our Paleolithic Forerunners, Tasmania's Stone Age Race* (1953), and, in 1954, *The Stone Age Man of Tasmania: A Brief Account of His Lfe and Conditions*.

Influences on her Writing: Fletcher's Social Darwinism for Children

Fletcher's engagement with Tasmanian anthropology was influenced by several writers who promoted doomed race theory. Her inexorable belief in the total extinction of Tasmanian Aborigines was reinforced by the death of Truganinni in 1876, as well as her readings of James Bonwick's *Daily Life and the Origin of the Tasmanians* (1870), a source which she acknowledged in her own later research.[10] Joseph Birdsell's paper, 'The Racial Origins of the Extinct Tasmanians' (1949) further perpetuated the extinction myth for her. Her final publication in 1954, *The Stone Age Man of Tasmania,* appropriates H. Ling Roth's 1899 social evolutionary discourse. Written “for the ordinary person who could not obtain books about the natives”, this pamphlet made extensive use of Bonwick’s 1870 work and Roth’s *The Aborigines of Tasmania* (1899).

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[9] McBryde (1993) explains that, until the end of the 19th century, science was not included in the formal school curriculum which instead emphasized the classics and literature, and was consequently the province of men. "Science was then largely natural history, and largely taught informally in the home, most often by the mother. So it became an important intellectual activity for women" (McBryde, 1993, p. 35). Jane Fletcher's childhood interests in the bush and ornithology certainly informed her later writings.

[10] Bonwick wrote two other works on the Tasmanian Aborigines; *The Last of the Tasmanians, or the Black War of Van Dieman's Land* (1870), and *The Lost Tasmanian Race* (1884). I can find no evidence of Fletcher having read those publications.

Bonwick and Roth, both Social Darwinists, supported the prevailing doctrine that the Tasmanian Aborigines, and by extension all other Aborigines, were doomed to extinction. Whilst these writers acknowledged the impact of European violence on the Tasmanians, as well as disease, alcohol and destitution, their writings romanticise “the Lost Tribes” as exemplars of noble savages doomed to extinction (Bonwick, 1870, Preface). They also supported the Victorian racial science concept of race as a discrete construction, which meant that only full-bloods were counted as “authentic” Aborigines, a view perpetuated well into the twentieth century.

Bonwick lived in the colony in the 1840s, he worked with colonial government records and visited the Aborigines on Flinders Island in 1859, but Roth never had any contact with the Tasmanians. Roth’s (1890) study is a collation of other people’s observations and “an obvious instance of anthropology as a science of mourning”, lamenting the loss of a noble race of savages (Brantlinger, 2003, p. 138). However, both authors appreciated the causes of the hasty decimation of the first Tasmanians. Bonwick’s *The Lost Tasmanian Race* (1884) acknowledges that, commencing in 1805, “Disease began immediately to work on its depopulating effect” on the Aborigines. This, combined with threatened famine for the infant colony, prompted the government to give convicts “the licence to forage” and consequently take liberties with its primitive inhabitants (Bonwick, 1884, p. 30). Bonwick also believed that George Augustus Robinson’s intentions to civilise the Aborigines meant the eradication of their beliefs, customs, language and individual identities. Robinson’s strategy of removing the last vestiges of his captured Aborigines to Flinders Island and, finally, to Oyster Cove, entailed their living in damp and cold conditions, hindered by their cumbersome European clothing, and forced to lead sedentary lives. Bonwick argues that Robinson’s attempts to civilize and convert the Aborigines to Christianity actually killed the last Tasmanians:

> The more civilised they became, the more dependent the Blacks on their masters for supplies, and the less disposed were they to exert themselves. Listless and good, they wanted energy to pursue the bounding kangaroo, or clamber after an opossum (Bonwick, 1870, p. 256).

Roth affirms this view: “The very efforts made for their welfare only served to hasten on their inevitable doom. The white man’s civilisation proved scarcely less fatal than the white man’s musket” (Roth, 1899, p. 5).

Fletcher was very selective as to what she appropriated from these anthropological writings, since she does not acknowledge the role that Europeans played in the destruction of Tasmanian Aboriginal people and their culture. Her focus was rather on the Tasmanian Aboriginal people as a doomed Stone Age race whose prehistory and fate were of interest. In this she was not alone, as anthropologists’ “supposedly scientific views” informed white Australian discourse and policy regarding Aboriginal people to at least the 1960s (Brantlinger, 2003, p. 139). Furthermore, in nineteenth-century thinking mixed race descendants did not indicate survival of a people. The pertinent consequence of this misinformation was that the Tasmanian Aboriginal identity of descendents was not recognised until late in the twentieth century.

Thus, despite her close (but limited) contact with Aboriginal people in her childhood, Fletcher wrote about Aboriginal people as of “a bygone age”. Her studies of Tasmanian anthropology were imbued with doomed race ideology and theory of social evolution. Fletcher’s readings apparently did not embrace Clive Turnbull’s *Black War: The Extermination of the Tasmanian Aborigines* (1948) which documents their decimation through introduced disease, massacre and dispossession. Also available in the era was a 1946 issue of *The Tasmanian Reader*, which published an article “Extinct Hunters: the Tasmanians”, concluding:

> After the war of 1825 to 1831 there remained scarcely 200. These wretched survivors were gathered together into a settlement, and from 1834 onwards every effort was made for their welfare, but “the white man’s civilisation proved scarcely less fatal than the white man’s bullet,” and in 1877, with the death of Truganini, the last survivor, the race became extinct (*Tasmanian Readers VI*, 1946: 32-42).[11]

It is not recorded whether Fletcher was aware of these current publications which challenged her position. By the 1940s emerging scholarship in the field was beginning to contest the “inevitability of extinction” of the Australian Aborigines (see

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[11] In *Tasmanian Readers VI*, Roth (1889) is unacknowledged and the date of Truganinni’s death is incorrect.

McGregor, 1997 x-xii).[12] This lack of currency with regards to historical veracity and accuracy of sources was common in popular adult literature and literature targeted at children until the last decade of the twentieth century, which explains the persistence of these myths in these genres.

Fletcher's conviction that all Tasmanian Aboriginal people were extinct empowered her, as it did other writers of the era, to tell their story for them. Like other white writers who took up the subject of Indigeneity, she appropriated an Aboriginalist discourse, one which insists on speaking *for* Aborigines, since they are assumed to be incapable of speaking for themselves; a strand of colonialist discourse which relies on "a representation of Aboriginality as having a pure and authentic quality untouched by historical and cultural change" (Bradford, 2001, p. 15).

Influences on Fletcher's Writing: Contemporary Literature

Fletcher's writings were inspired by the *Tasmanian School Journal* which included articles on Tasmanian Aborigines alongside excerpts from British and Australian classics. School readers promoted the "rich heritage of Australia" and "Australianness" as unique and ideal, inspiring children's "pride of race" and sense of racial superiority (see Bradford, 2001, pp. 21-26; McGennisken, 2008).

Contemporary adult writers included Ion Idriess whose perspective on Aboriginality is evident in *Nemarluk* (1941), in which the author hopes "that your sympathy will go out towards the aboriginal, the last of God's Stone Age men" (Idriess, 1941, Author's note). Another influential writer of the era was Daisy Bates (1863-1951), who gained a reputation as an authority on the Aborigines of Western Australia. Bates's *The Passing of the Aborigines* (1938), detailing her observations of Aborigines living in remote communities, continued to influence popular opinion as late as the 1970's (Shoemaker, 1989, p. 50). Bates's contention that Aborigines were doomed to extinction excluded "part descent population, [i.e. "half-castes"] whose very existence she deplored" (White, 1993, p. 63). Bates's writings wreaked long term damage on white perceptions of Aboriginality, particularly through her allegations of infanticide and cannibalism (see Bates, 1938, Chapter 21). Repeated publications of Bates's and Idriess's[13] works reflects the continued interest in Aboriginal themes, but also demonstrates the enduring misinformation and stereotypes which abounded in Australian literature targeting an adult audience.

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[12] McGregor (1997), in his discussion of the evolutionary science of the late 19th century, demonstrates the consolidation of the doomed race theory from 1880 to 1939.

Bates's and Fletcher's writings reflected the beliefs and values of their own generation. Though it reached a narrower audience, Fletcher's writing also demonstrates the powerful relationship between anthropology and racism, of anthropology as a science developed within the racialised politics of a settler culture, just as her work reflects her experience of a society which was class and gender bound (see De Lepervanche, 1993). In Tasmania, class distinctions were reinforced by a general reluctance to discuss or admit to convict ancestry. As a Victorian woman, living for most of her life in isolated rural communities in Tasmania, Fletcher was obviously a pioneer in her determination to communicate her anthropological interest in the Tasmanian Aborigines to general adult and child audiences. Lacking the formal qualifications of a university education, she appropriated uncritically the power-knowledge relationship of the recognised experts in the field. As a Tasmanian, she did not interrogate the mythology surrounding the total extinction of the Tasmanian Aborigines.

However, Fletcher's work was celebrated in its time. By taking the prehistory of Tasmania into the primary school classroom, Fletcher's interpreatation of the Tasmanians' isolationism as a contributor to their failure to evolve to a higher state, but also to the loss of skills previously held, was an idea that was being popularised and espoused by archaeologists (see Ryan, 1985). The awarding of the Children's Book of the Year Award in 1950 by the Children's Book Council of Australia suggests that *Little Brown Piccaninnies of Tasmania* was in fact in step with the mainstream understanding of Tasmanian Aboriginality.

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[13] Gary Crew states that his early reading of "popular writers of history" encompassed several of Idriess's novels (McKenna and Pearce, 1999, p. 13). Crew's discussion and his writings demonstrate how fiction enables a potent construction of history for young readers.

Fletcher's Thematic Treatment of the Disappearing Savage

Little Brown Piccaninnies of Tasmania attempts to explain to younger readers the way of life of Tasmanian Aborigines before the arrival of the white man, through a sort of prehistory, based on a romanticised and assumed way of life of noble savages cavorting nude in the pre-pastoral era.

The book begins and ends with the Dutch experience of culture contact. Its circular narrative includes an expository first chapter, "A glimpse into the past", followed by five chapters depicting the daily lives of Aboriginal children and their families in pre-historic Tasmania. Three girls, Cawna, Weetah and Loyna, are introduced in chapter two, hunting to provide dinner for their families. In the third chapter, three boys, Padina, Mella and Travella, are seen tracking and hunting kangaroos. "Work and Play", the title of the fourth chapter, are one and the same thing for these children, who apart from Weetah's role as firestick carrier, are barely differentiated from one another. Chapter five, "The Feast", depicts the family as a group and explains firestick farming. The discovery of a beached whale provides food for the family. The last chapter, "The Comptema", depicts more hunting scenes and the arrival of Tasman's ships.

The appearance of *Little Brown Piccaninnies of Tasmania* is reminiscent of the school readers of the era of its publication, but even in 1950 it looked quite old fashioned. The format of 7 ½ inches (18.5 cm) x 10 inches (24.75 cm), and the slimness of its thirty nine pages, identifies it as a book for younger readers. The sparse black and white pen illustrations on every page in which Aborigines are consistently coloured in honey brown or golden are indicators to the target audience. However, the pages are essentially dominated by the text. The yellow cover has little information. An inexperienced reader might assume either that this is a fictional story of little brown piccaninnies or that it is an information book. The throwback quality of the text is replicated in its use of an obscure Victorian font in which the words are crammed onto the page.

The social science textbook organisation of information is reinforced at the end of the book by the "Vocabulary of native words" comprising a list of sixteen words, with no logical or alphabetical order. The first entry in the list is “Comptema”, translated to “Devil”. Apart from “Potark” (cave), “Talba” (the night devil), and “Liena” (fire), the rest of the vocabulary refers to the animals that are hunted by the little piccaninnies. Fletcher’s vocabulary is taken from Robinson’s list of about a thousand words compiled in the 1830s (see Plomley, 1976).

Illustrations by Margaret Senior[14], a recent migrant from the United Kingdom, provide strong direction to the reader. First impressions of the subject are gleaned through Senior’s caricatured drawing on the yellow cover of the book, depicting a curly headed, scarily grinning Aboriginal child, with a very large forehead, broad nose and widely spaced eyes, that are almost cross eyed. The child’s face is superimposed against a map of Tasmania, depicting various species of Tasmanian fauna. The juxtaposition of the Aborigine against the exotic fauna subliminally reinforces the status of the Aborigine in an evolutionary hierarchy.

Throughout the book, Tasmanian Aborigines, children and adults are depicted with lean honey brown bodies, all with short curly hair, naked, asexulised and childlike, mostly seen from a back or side view, particularly the adults (in the interests of reader perception of modesty). Hairstyles for men and women as well as skin colour are inaccurately represented. Fletcher’s description of Tasmanian Aborigines’ “deep brown” skin omits the detail that she included in her 1954 pamphlet *The Stone Age Man of Tasmania* which insists that “The natives’ custom of rubbing themselves with oil and charcoal tended to make their skin look quite black” (Fletcher, 1954, p. 6). In this latter publication she also describes how the men indulged “their vanity” by “wearing ochred and grease–plastered curls down to their shoulders” (Fletcher, 1954, p. 60). Text and illustrations reinforce Tasmanian Aboriginal cultures as homogenized and generic, through the cute little piccaninnies who cavort, grinning, across the pages. Their faces are not individualized, so the reader cannot identify specific characters, nor, importantly, identify *with* the characters. There are no portraits or close ups of faces, as all views are seen as if from a distance. In their support of the ephemeral mood of Fletcher's narrative, Senior's golden cherubs are remote objects in the sketchy grasslands of their home. This collaboration has resulted in a less authentic depiction of their subject than that which is described in Fletcher's unillustrated 1954 pamphlet. Fletcher's "little brown piccaninnies" are less black than the real thing.

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[14] Two years after the publication of *Little Brown Piccaninnies of Tasmania,* Senior won acclaim for her colourful and more detailed illustrations of Eve Pownall’s more expensively produced *The Australia Book* (1952) which was awarded ‘Children’s Book Of the Year’ by the Children’s Book Council of Australia.

In the illustrations Aborigines are almost always depicted moving from left to right across the page. Thus, Senior's visual language depicts the Aborigines moving *away* from the centre of the page and out of view, implicitly off the right hand side of the page, as opposed to Tasman's ships which move *into* the picture, from right to left. Semiotically, as readers read from left to right, Aboriginal characters are seen to be disappearing, whereas Tasman's men and ships are disrupting this movement.[15]

This is clearly not a work of fiction, but a reconstruction of history. Unlike historical fiction, characters are undeveloped and there is no real conflict, either personal or dramatic. Fletcher's unpoetic, didactic language presents mere reportage of minor escapades on hunting expeditions. Fletcher's lack of creative imagination and her psychological distance from her child audience is reflected in her unconvincing wooden caricatures cavorting in an Australianised version of fairyland. Moreover, Fletcher never indicates the exact geographical location of her story. Her Aboriginal child characters are generic stereotypes; they could be *any* Tasmanian Aboriginal people, or *any* Aboriginal people, or *any* primitive people. Senior's illustrations enthusiastically embrace Fletcher's view of Tasmanian Aboriginal people as mythological specimens, objects to be studied from afar.

Little Brown Piccaninnies of Tasmania contained ideological content that was consistent with the colonisation and post war migration ethos; "That he who cannot accept "progress" must fall" (Fletcher, 1950, p. 7). Fletcher's text is also a reiteration of nineteenth-century writers' lament of the dying savage who is blamed for self extinguishing. Blaming the victim for his own inadequacies was necessary for social progress. The demise of savagery also inspired mourning, and a form of sentimental racism which was successfully transported into children's literature.[16]

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[15] Clare Bradford in her *Reading Race* refers to Kress and van Leuwen's *Reading Images,* p. 199, which claims that "movement from right to left tends to produce the effect of someone retreating, escaping or refusing to conform to cultural norms" (Bradford, 2001, p. 247). I suggest that Senior's illustrations in *Little Brown Piccaninnies of Tasmania* have established their own code of left to right movement, that these symbolic codes will be varyingly received and interpreted by readers. Moebius (1986) suggests that "a character on the left is likely to be in a more secure space than one on the right, who is likely to be moving into a situation of risk or adventure." Senior's illustrations show Aboriginal characters and a family group moving across the pages to the right, to the unknown, the insecure.

The Historical Context of *Little Brown Piccaninnies of Tasmania*

As was common practice of the era, neither Fletcher nor Senior acknowledged information or historical sources which was available at the time of their book production. The paratextual elements of the Preface and glossary, referred to as "vocabulary" on the back page, construct a discourse of anthropologist as the voice of authority, which is reinforced throughout the text. Fletcher's story sets up binary oppositions of white and non-white that quickly positions whites as superior, reproducing a colonial mentality which assumes that the coloniser represents a more advanced state of colonisation than the colonised (see McGillis, 2000, p. xxii). Describing Tasmanian Aborigines as a Stone Age people is a factual inaccuracy, as is the lack of acknowledgement of any descendants (see Ryan, 1996, pp. 1-6). Dwelling on what was missing technologically and culturally works towards the construction of Fletcher's doomed race ideology, positioning her subjects on the bottom rung of the evolutionary ladder, their technological insufficiencies causing their inevitable extinction.

Indeed, Fletcher was so convinced of the Tasmanian Aborigines' racial inferiority that her version of Darwin's social evolution theory as reproduced in her 1954 pamphlet reads thus:

> Later on in the earth's history the formation of Bass Strait separated the Tasmanian from his kindred of the mainland who were probably the first inhabitants of the Australian continent. Thus the Paleolithic man remained in his small island unaffected by the migrants of the more virile tribes who evidently entered Australia bringing with them a better class of culture in their tools and weapons, and, also bringing the wild dog – the dingo (Fletcher, 1954, p. 2).

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[16] Other twentieth century representations of Aboriginality in children's literature are provided by Frank Dalby Davison's *Children of the Dark People* (1936), which he also refers to as "The Story of the Lost Children", Mary and Elizabeth Durack's *The Way of the Whirlwind* (1941) and Mary Durack's *The Courteous Savage* (1964), all of whom depict their Aboriginal protagonists as noble in life as well as death, and tragically "doomed to vanish from the face of this land" (Durack, M., 1964, p. 86).

On the dust jacket, the publisher of *Little Brown Piccaninnies of Tasmania*, John Sands, recommended: "The story of Tasmanian little brown piccaninnies has never before been written for our own children. This lively picture of a vanished race captures the very spirit of innocent fun, yet adds besides a valuable link to Australia's historical record". *Piccaninni* is a term which probably originated from the Portuguese, *pequenino* meaning "very little" appropriated from pidgin English. Originally applied to African and Afro-American small children, and subsequently imported to Australia, piccaninnies were always black or brown and always little. The title *Little Brown Piccaninnies of Tasmania* thereby foreshadows the tone of the whole text. The Preface, written by Archibald Meston, Education Officer for High Schools in Tasmania, extols the pleasures for white children in reading of "their dark-skinned brethren … the happy, affectionate, dark skinned people who dwelt in the pleasant land of Tasmania before the coming of our race" (Fletcher, 1950, Preface). Meston positions readers to immediately see the power and bravery of the white man, versus the cowering fearful Aboriginal observers, who let off a warning smoke signal to their kin, thereby reinforcing preconceived notions of "savage" versus "civilised":

> In this book our boys and girls may wander in imagination with their dark skinned brethren in search of rowitta, or cower in fright at the sight of Tasman's vessels while the warning smoke signal rises above the tree tops, or carry back to the camp the glad news that a mighty parraba has come ashore (Fletcher, 1950, Preface).

Young readers are encouraged that "when the last page has been read [they] will put the book down with regret". However, it is not clear whether readers should feel regret at finishing the book, or at the loss of the race. Meston also wrote for child audiences, but in his own writing was less inclined to whitewash the violence meted out to Aborigines by white colonisers. In his *Junior History of Australia* (1934) he writes of soldiers "killing many of them", in what became known as the Risdon Cove Massacre of over three hundred Aborigines who were on their annual kangaroo hunt. He also discusses the use of convicts as shepherds who "looked on the aborigines as wild beasts and hunted them down … Dreadful stories are told about the way natives were treated" (Meston, 1934, p. 34). Clearly Meston perceives that there are differing authorial intentions and responsibilities in fiction and non-fiction for younger readers, and hence very young readers should be quarantined from the awful truths of massacre and murder. But Meston's tone of his own non-fiction writing, of almost twenty years previous, has not been applied to his endorsement of Fletcher's imaginative writing for her audience.

Fletcher's pedestrian style varies from idiomatic to an assumed knowledge of culturally specific language used by whites towards Aboriginal children. Her didactic message in the introductory chapter, "A glimpse into the past" is never explained: "It is sad to know that these happy fun-loving people have gone from the face of the earth. That he who cannot accept "progress" must fall" (Fletcher, 1950, p. 7). This foreshadowing of the "hazy legend" (Fletcher, 1950, p. 39) of a people (and their children) who no longer exist ensures that there are no nasty surprises for the reader.

Fletcher's View of Australian History: The Anthropologist as Translator

Fletcher based the scenarios of the story in *Little Brown Piccaninnies of Tasmania* on incidents recorded of pre-British settlement of Tasmania. Historically the first of these incidents took place on the east coast of the Forestier Peninsula, northwest of Blackman Bay, named by Abel Tasman in 1642. Blackman Bay was an accessible day trip by road for Fletcher; the local history of her area inspired her story depicting the impact of first contact of Indigenous people with European "visitors", the Dutch and the French. Historical details of the events are minimised for a juvenile audience. Geographical location and historical dates are unspecified, giving the impression that these events take place in unknown lands in the very distant past. Fletcher's depiction of the hunting and gathering activities of "the little brown piccaninnies" are sandwiched between an expository introduction to their culture and the causes of its demise, and Abel Tasman's arrival to claim the island for the Dutch. Although "English ships followed the French" (Fletcher, 1950, p. 7) no British people are depicted in this story, so the possibility of any descendants' (particularly local) involvement in the sad disappearance of these "happy fun-loving people" (Fletcher, 1950, p. 7) is nullified.

Fletcher is constrained by her own lack of understanding and by her lack of information in the field of her subject, as evidenced by her exploitation of historical sources that had been well superseded by 1950. In spite of the readings that influenced her, especially those of Bonwick and Roth, which promote a credible interpretation of the impact of culture contact on the first Tasmanians, Fletcher is confined by what she believes is the didactic role of children’s literature. She comments that “My interest in the Stone-Age inhabitants of the by-gone years led me to think out and write a story for children showing the daily life, play and continuous hunt for food of the piccaninnies of these Stone-Age folk” (Fletcher, as quoted in Morris, 1993, p. 80). Her explicit intentions were to instruct and to entertain, and she would have been well aware of the impelling need to appeal to interested adults, i.e. teachers, parents, librarians and the purchasers of books for children. Yet, the target age group of the book is unclear. The title, *Little Brown Piccaninnies of Tasmania*, appears to cater for a budding interest in social studies, whilst its Australian setting and context works towards a new nationalism for young white Australians, particularly Tasmanians, who could see their island represented in children’s culture. However, at the time of her writing, the originality of Fletcher’s book was in her representation of the pathos of what amounts to very brief culture contact and the “inevitability” of its consequences for a very young audience.

The tone and the message of her book reflect the naïveté of her assumptions about children, for her theme of the total extinction of the Tasmanian Aborigines is a highly politicised subject to deliver to children. Evidently, Fletcher believes that they should be protected from the whole truth of any violence, hence the “smudge that had been a man” (Fletcher, 1950, p. 5) and the failure in all food hunting expeditions of the piccaninnies actually to make a killing. In the middle of the twentieth century, Fletcher’s child readers are protected in a nineteenth-century space of “delightful innocence” (see Nodelman and Reimer, 1992, pp. 88-89) of Anglo-Celtic childhoods. Fletcher’s views of history and anthropology underpin her story and indicate that she does not have the understanding, nor the tools of analysis and the ability, to distil the significant historical events for her readers. Hence she has sanitised what she believed or understood what happened. Moreover, in her representation of Indigeneity, Fletcher has assumed an audience that does not include Tasmanian Aborigines, because she believes there are none. Her narrative expounding her belief in the self-exterminating savage is therefore clouded with paternalistic sympathy for a doomed lost race. Consequently, Fletcher is constrained by what she believes is the ideological role of children’s literature as an agent of socialisation, and its capacity to shape the moral consciousness of young readers. Fletcher's story recreates the following historical events as pivotal.

Fletcher's Historical Sources and Connections in *Little Brown Piccaninnies of Tasmania*

In 1642 the Dutch navigator, Abel Tasman, was reportedly the first European to have sighted Tasmania when he mistook it for the mainland of Australia (West, 1971, p. 16, first published 1852). Historian John West records the naïve misunderstanding of Tasman's sailors in an incident that is reiterated in other children's books:

> They remarked the trees, sixty feet from the ground to the branches, and two and a half [fathom] in circumference: the bark having been taken off with flint stones, and steps cut to climb for birds' nests, full five feet from each other and indicative of a very tall people (West, 1971, p. 16).

After "very tall people" Tasman's journal adds, "or in possession of some sort of artifice for getting up the trees" (West, 1971, p. 550), a clarification which is often omitted from other historical accounts. Fletcher's story also misrepresents this detail. Her version depicts Tasman pondering in his cabin: "Niches cut into the trunks of the giant trees, so widely spaced that none but the toes of a giant could reach from one to the other above it. Why?" (Fletcher, 1950, p. 39).

Tasman's men saw smoke rising from the trees and heard human voices. The surf prevented their landing, but the carpenter swam ashore and erected a post, on which the Dutch East India Company mark was carved, and the Dutch royal flag raised as a "memorial to the posterity of the inhabitants. They did not show themselves, and we suspected some to be not far from thence, and watching carefully our doings" (Tasman's journal, as quoted in West, 1971, p. 16).

West records another, more tragic, misunderstanding. Early in 1772, the next European visitor in search of the "southern continent" was the French Captain Marion, who anchored in Frederick Hendrik Bay.[17] Marion's visit is "Chiefly remarkable for a fatal collision with the natives, who according to the French, exhibited uncommon ferocity" (West, 1971, p. 17). Captain Marion misinterpreted the gift of a firestick as a "ceremony of friendship" which he assumed, according to his prior knowledge of custom in the Pacific, was to light a heap of wood. The Aborigines "retired to a hill and threw a shower of stones. The French fired their muskets, and the natives fled: their pursuers found in the wood a dying savage – the first victim of European intrusion" (West, 1971, p. 17).

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[17] Marion anchored in Frederick Bay, which was renamed Marion Bay, slightly to the north of Blackmans Bay (West, 1981, p. 551).

Fletcher's story is framed by the responses of the Indigenous people watching in the bushes, who remain hidden from the intruders' eyes. Her interpretations of the Tasmanian Aborigines' first perceptions of Europeans support the view that they were terrified of the whites, believing that they were the spirits of their ancestors. Tasman's ships were perceived as huge winged monsters, referred to as *comptemas* by the piccaninnies in the story. In the "vocabulary of native words" at the end of the book, the first entry "comptema", is translated into "devil". In the last chapter of the story, entitled "The Comptema", the leader of the tribe, Canagong, refers to the ships as "evil" (Fletcher, 1950 p. 36) and a "demon" (Fletcher, 1950, p. 38), while the Aboriginal onlookers are all "terrified" (Fletcher, 1950, p. 37). Fletcher's Tasmanian Aborigines are constructed as primitive and superstitious, as anybody who believes in devils would be.

Defined by Deficits: Racial Pessimism in Fletcher's 'Glimpse into the Past'

The first chapter "A glimpse into the past" is dense in its stereotyped, inaccurate and racist representations of Tasmanian Aborigines. Throughout her story, Fletcher refers to these hunter-gatherer people as "Stone Age people". Fletcher's "glimpse" is a typical textbook overview and structure, with a predictable detailed listing of appearance, i.e., skin colour and hair, and their capacity to embrace technology in the form of making clothing, shelter and boats. Fletcher believed that diet, "the monotonous fare of the Tasmanian, so deficient in carbohydrates" and "the rigorous climate" is partly attributable to their primitive existence and nomadic lifestyle, and "checked any initiative which might have arisen to better the conditions" (Fletcher, 1954, p. 2). Her language is peppered with value judgements and explanations of the Tasmanian Aborigines' intellectual deficiencies, which she constructs discursively in her importation of doomed race theory. Consequently, her comments regarding the inadequacies of their diet, weaponry and clothing, as well as their superstitious fear of the dark, all work towards a construction of the self-exterminating savage.

The story opens with a view of Tasman's ship sailing in, disturbing the innocence of the dark-skinned race living in Tasmania: "called after a brave Dutch sailor, who sought to find lands of gold for his country"; a "forgotten" island, which lay "undisturbed" for two centuries until French ships arrived. The history of culture contact is seriously distorted. The tragic outcome of the French sailors' conflict with the Indigenous inhabitants "a quarrel … over fresh water" is implied: "a dark smudge lay on the beach. A smudge that had been a man - a hunter of wild game" (Fletcher, 1950, p. 5). This is Fletcher's only reference to the violent consequences of frontier conflict in her story. Her consistent use of euphemism with regards to killing attempts to disassociate and distance any violence for her young readers. The "dark smudge", referring to one Tasmanian Aborigine, is an overt elision of the historical truth of these first encounters.

Dismissing this event and its significance, Fletcher defines Tasmanian Aborigines by their deficits. They "were not negroes. Their hair was curly, but different from that of a negro. Nor were they black skinned – rather a deep brown". "All the centuries these folk dwelt in Tasmania, they appear never to have advanced in knowledge beyond that of their distant forefathers. They did know how to make fire by rubbing. That was not easy. The right kind of flint was absent" (Fletcher, 1950, p. 5).

The claimed inability of Tasmanian Aborigines to make fire is a trope of children's literature representing Tasmanian Indigeneity. Fletcher's depiction of the first Tasmanians' lifestyle and culture is consistently evaluated negatively, through Anglocentric values and attitudes. The text dwells on what they did not know, of what was missing: they "never learnt how to heat water", how to make clay pots, nor develop the ability "to sew skins together to cover their bodies". We are reminded of their permanent nakedness, a sure sign of their primitive state. What follows is a list of technological knowledge which anthropologists of the era assumed should be learnt by man in his various stages of evolution. *"Somehow* (my emphasis, as this qualifier is indeed paternalistic) they found they could keep warm by rubbing themselves with seal oil or with fat from the animals they speared" (Fletcher, 1950, p. 6).

Fletcher's claim that "This oil or fat was their only clothing" is inaccurate, as renowned Tasmanian colonial artists Benjamin Duterrau's and Thomas Bock's depictions of Robinson's Aborigines show their subjects enveloped in lush possum and kangaroo furs, which were definitely not costume devices worn in the interest of modesty whilst posing for their portraits. Fletcher would have had free access to these images exhibited in The Tasmanian Museum in Hobart from 1889 onwards and would have appreciated their anthropological intentions. Fletcher's emphasis on the Tasmanian Aborigines' total lack of clothing is another trope in children's fiction, suggesting that they were so primitive as to not understand the need for clothing as protection against the elements, nor did they have the technological competence to make clothes out of animal furs or vegetable matter. Fletcher's value judgement "somehow" reinforces the difference between savage and civilised. She assumes that as a people who had not learnt how to clothe themselves, Tasmanian Aborigines had limited cerebral capacity which hindered their progress and ultimately ensured that they succumb in the human struggle for survival.

Fletcher's description of the Tasmanians' lifestyle reinforces the perceived deficits of their culture, evoking a sad, aimless existence: "Ever wandering after food, the natives built no houses, but slept beneath lean-to shelters of broken boughs or bark strips, arranged to give protection from the wind" (Fletcher, 1950, p. 6). The unending search for food forces them to eat an exotic diet of bull-kelp, fern roots and a fungus known as "native bread". Stating that "the men never made a proper boat", advances discussion of Tasmanian Aborigines' avoidance of the consumption of fish, which she treats as a "strange dislike", a superstition:

> Though the bays and rivers teemed with scale fish, these were never eaten. Even in later days when white men gave fish to the blacks, they threw them angrily away.
>
> Sad to say, the white man did not seek to find the reason of this strange dislike until the last aborigine had died out. Then it was too late (Fletcher, 1950, p. 6).

Fletcher's authorial tone concedes that "They were brave folk, though ... Plucky indeed ... and ... Their lubras, too. Fancy climbing ... giant gum trees, supported by ropes placed round the tree's trunk" (Fletcher, 1950, pp. 6, 7). Ultimately, the land is "discovered" by the white men. The storyteller's archaic prose "So passed the island from the hold of its primeval folk" is reiterated in the statement of their unequivocal demise, “Later, this brown-skinned race died out”. The rhetorical conclusion confirms their technical incompetence and consequent failure to survive in the face of a superior technology, invoking a Social Darwinist interpretation of their demise. “How could their rod-like spears, their stone knives and throwing stones, their wooden waddies keep this southern home from the grasp of the white newcomer?” (Fletcher, 1950, p. 7).

The introductory chapter of *Little Brown Piccaninnies* is hardly an entrée to a “lively picture of a vanished race” as claimed by the publishers. It is a catalogue of racist constructs, consisting of factual inaccuracies and value-laden terminology, all of which work towards Fletcher’s application of doomed race theory to her story. In what amounts to an overview of games played, and rehearsals for adult and specific gender roles, there is no mention or evidence of kinship or family organisation. This first chapter exemplifies Fletcher’s vision of storytelling as a vehicle for teaching social science. Purporting to be an objective, anthropological view, it is heavily embedded with subjective ideologies. Hence, bush humpies are inferior homes to caves. Fletcher’s “glimpse into the past” reminds the reader of her task: “But, before the curtain of forgetfulness drops entirely, it is well to wander along the trail of the past and linger with those who left only a few stone tools as records of their daily lives” (Fletcher, 1950, p. 7).

The subsequent chapters reflect various aspects of the imagined childhoods of Fletcher’s noble savages. However, the narrative is complicated by the inconsistent codes of language attributed to the children, who sometimes speak in contemporary idiom, and at other times in an alien, formalised code.

The second chapter, “The Cave Finders”, takes the reader “back in time”, long enough to recreate the children’s fear of the dark as a superstitious belief. Three girls, Cawna, Weetah and Loyna, are hunting a wombat for “dinner” for their families. Cawna balks at following the wombat’s tracks “into the hill under the cliff” (Fletcher, 1950, p. 9):

> Cawna’s dark eyes filled with fear. She trembled. She cried: “It is full of darkness. Talba, the devil of night, may be sleeping inside. He will tear us to pieces” (Fletcher, 1950, p. 9).

Imagery of darkness, ascribed to both Cawna and the wombat hole, as well as that of "the devil", "night" and the possibility of being torn to pieces is deliberately sinister and alienating to the reader, who is not expected to identify with any of the characters.

Weetah's contemporary idiom consistently refutes the existence of Talba, "the devil of the night"; "Rubbish! ... Nobody's ever seen one ... You whack him with sticks" (Fletcher, 1950, pp. 9-10). Loyna's more formalised reflection is expressed through clumsy sentence structure:

> Into her mind had rushed all the tales told to the piccaninnies by their older folk. The tales of [spear carrying] Talba of the Darkness, who walked at night looking for blackfellows who were not safely in their camps before the sun tumbled down into his bed away beyond the tree tops (Fletcher, 1950, p. 10).

Loyna's "tales" are represented as superstitions, while reminders of blackness and darkness polarise the Tasmanian Aboriginal culture as "other" to readers. Fletcher's Indigenous characters function as a vehicle for the demonstration of the hunting methods, making good use of those "few stone tools", and the gender roles of a people who have "died out". However, this chapter depicts girls out on their own, hunting a wombat. It is unlikely that a girl of Weetah's age would transgress the gender roles of her tribe, as she is reprimanded by her peers for attempting to hunt a snake, "Weetah, you are a bad piccaninny. What made you do that?" She replies "Men do. Why shouldn't little lubra try?" (Fletcher, 1950, p. 12). The snake proves useful as it kills the wombat and the girls get the credit for providing a meal.

In the interests of a dramatic storyline, Fletcher's narrative is punctuated by inauthentic detail such as this. The children's role in finding food is depicted as typical experience for the little piccaninnies. Gathering food propels the narrative, as child's play intersects with the necessity of developing survival skills. Yet, Fletcher's "southern island representatives of the prehistoric Paleolithic man" (Fletcher, 1950, p. 3) are never seen as human beings with a kinship system and spiritual beliefs. Her pamphlet *The Stone Age Man of Tasmania* declares that:

> The aborigines were a race of food-gatherers, nothing more. Thus they remained. The passing centuries found them just the same with their brain power apparently stationery. So limited was it that in spite of the daily toil for food, no thought for the morrow prompted saving a portion for the next day's meal (Fletcher, 1954, p. 5).

Though published four years after *Little Brown Piccaninnies of Tasmania,* it confirms Fletcher's view of Tasmanian Indigenous culture as "stationery" and "limited" to "nothing more" than food gathering that permeates her story for children.

The third chapter, "Hunting Lyennas", depicts Padina, the eldest boy, with Mella and Trevalla engaged in the serious men's business of tracking and hunting kangaroos. As a reminder to the reader that these events take place in the remote past, child characters adopt archaic formal language "I say the lyennas are camping on the ferny rises yonder" (Fletcher, 1950, p. 15). The boys' successful hunting kills the lead kangaroo: "A waddy struck his head". How, exactly this was achieved is not explained, but "never more would he [the kangaroo] hear the magpie's carols" (Fletcher, 1950, p. 16). The gory reality of hunting and killing animals for food is tempered as "mercifully, when Padina lifted him by one leg and turned him over, he did not feel the jolt. His life had fled" (Fletcher, 1950, p. 16). In the accompanying illustration the boys are seen stroking what looks like a sleeping kangaroo. Hence, even the images are a dishonest representation.

Children's play is depicted as a means of practising adult roles, those of hunting and gathering. Each chapter introduces new characters, or new roles for old characters. As the carrier of the firestick, Weetah's role is crucial to the well being of the tribe. In chapter four, "Work and Play", "Weetah carried back her firestick with its lighted end pointed to the rear … thus the speed of her running would not make the smouldering stick break into flames too soon" (Fletcher, 1950, p. 18). The girls practise to be "real lubras" by cooking frogs, some of which get burnt. When the boys find baldcoot eggs, Weetah empathises with "the little piccaninny inside it jabbering" and prevents the boys from taking the eggs to the men who "like eggs full up with chicken" (Fletcher, 1950, p. 19). Weetah's decision to save the little chicks, instead of providing the men with more food, represents her as a potential nurturer of little ones, implicitly of her own children.

Their hunting games are always successful but the children are never actively responsible for the deaths of any animals. Animals mostly die by misadventure. The wombat is bitten by a snake, and in chapter five, "The Feast", their monotonous search for food is resolved when a whale is washed up onto the shore. The accompanying illustration at the beginning of this chapter is the most detailed in the book, showing a family group, moving from left to right, across the page. Two people have skins draped over their shoulders, one carrying a small child in the skin, but most are naked, with their backs to the viewer. The characters are indistinguishable, their gender is indeterminable, but the reader might assume that the two with waistbands are men, though this is never explained. The group is emerging, their backs bent, seemingly in exhaustion, from the forest into grassy plains ahead, towards the right hand side of the drawing. Instead of depicting the return to the coast as an annual event planned and known by all the tribe, it is represented as an expedient in response to the unfortunate, haphazard "having eaten out the game" (Fletcher, 1950, p. 25). This chapter explains the practice of firestick farming, as "the tribe fed upon whatever they could find or spear" (Fletcher, 1950, p. 25). The limitations of Tasmanian Aboriginal culture is reinforced through integration of visual and verbal language, of tired bent bodies traipsing through the forest and reductionist descriptions.

In the scenarios of her story, Fletcher briefly embraces landscapes and some crucial geographical features, such as the cave in chapter one and the frog lagoon in chapter four. But in "The Feast" she sets the scene and the tone of this penultimate chapter with a wet mist, portending wild weather and an "easterly wind swing to the south, raising big seas which pounded the rocks and rolled high up on the beaches" (Fletcher, 1950, p. 25). It is the most complex landscape description in the whole story, evoking a mood which colours the rest of the story and a sense of gloom as "everyone grew hungry".[18] The narrative quickly reverts to the informative. Food gathering is divided into traditional gendered skills:

> The men hurried to the forest with their spears and waddies. The women roamed the beach seeking shellfish washed ashore and, perhaps, penguins drowned in the kelp … It was not the boys' work to gather shellfish. Nor would the men allow them to come on a hunting trip (Fletcher, 1950, p. 26).

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[18] Fletcher's description is in keeping with the images of Tasmanian Aborigines painted by Benjamin Duterrrau, *Mr Robinson's first interview with Timmy* (1840) and John Glover, *Mount Wellington and Hobart Town from Kangaroo Point* (1831-33), Robert Dowling, Tasmanian Aborigines (1856-57) and Aborigines of Tasmania (1859) which depict Aborigines in nostalgic pastoral settings, against backgrounds of a stormy evening sky, a common visual trope for depicting the sense of doom and desolation that these and other artists felt for their subjects. Thomas Bock's portraits of the 1830s offer "the truest record in existence of the Tasmanian Aborigines" as he painted most of his subjects when they were in their prime or young and healthy (Dutton, 1974, p. 35).

Fletcher reduces the complex interactions of hunter-gatherer relationships to one that keeps women and girls firmly in their place. The division of labour through prescribed gender roles enables contemporary social ideology to percolate through the story, ensuring adults remain firmly in charge of social organisation. Though her subjects are Indigenous, extinct and primitive, hierarchies remain unquestionably intact. Fletcher's social science approach ensures that no subversive behaviours impede her ideological intentions, a form of censorship for younger readers.[19] However, the significance of tribal relationships is eluded as Weetah's father is never named.

The tribe's hunger is curbed by the parraba, a beached whale for which they compete against the seagulls. The story thus far has a laboured happy ending, as the tribe happily carve up the whale they "struggled with stone tools to cut off strips of flesh" (Fletcher, 1950, p. 28) in order to devour the "parraba, given to them by the kindly ocean" (Fletcher, 1950, p. 29). Repeatedly, the Aborigines are not actively responsible for their own food supply, as they demonstrate incompetence through their archaic hunting and gathering skills. Moreover, as primitive people incapable of adaptation, they are unable to survive the impending changes which they encounter in the next chapter, the arrival of the Europeans.

Fletcher's writing thus never really develops beyond that of a simplistic inventory of hunting and gathering events. Information takes precedence over storyline and credible characterisation which could invite reader empathy. In the final chapter, "The Comptema", set "by the white man's calendar" in December (Fletcher, 1950, p. 30), the group becomes dispersed, therefore potentially more vulnerable, as "Canagong sent the lubras away to grind ochre for his hair" (Fletcher, 1950, p. 32). The sole reference to ochre for use in hair is unexplained and not evident in the illustrations.[20]

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[19] Writing for a primary school market, Fletcher's hunter gatherers keep girls in their place. Thirty years later, Pat Peatfield Price does the same with her character, Tingali, who gradually loses agency to her brother (Price, 1981).

[20] Benjamin Duterrau's oil paintings of *The Conciliation* (d.u) and *Mr Robinson's first interview with Timmy* (1840) depict Tasmanian Aboriginal men whose hair has been styled traditionally with ochre Rastafarian type locks, and other younger men whose hair is cut short, and groomed in a fashion more acceptable to European tastes. Duterrrau's ideological intentions in these representations were to highlight the roles played by those selected by Robinson in his "friendly mission" of rounding up the Aborigines. The older men, with ochre covered locks, are relegated to the background of these pictures, whilst the younger men take a more active role in the foreground. Both paintings are claimed to be

The concepts of devil and evil are recurring motifs in the story. Weetah climbs a tree to catch a possum and spies two “comptemas - devils” they “have two wings almost as big as clouds” which they “fold up” (Fletcher, 2005, p. 35). “Fearing that the comptemas out there might smell its blood” (Fletcher, 2005, p. 35) the possum’s life is spared. Weetah has the most to say and do in the story, as well as the most knowledge of hunting and adult expectations. Here, she has yet another excuse for not killing any animal. From her position up in the tree she is able to report and interpret the arrival of the Dutch ships to her elders, whose knowledge and understanding of this phenomenon are no better than her own. Adults are depicted as forever childlike and unenlightened in their superstitious belief in the devil and its associated evil. Canagong is allocated the most dialogue of the adults, yet in whatever he says he is ineffectual. His leadership of the tribe is finally defined in “Tensely, Canagong spoke: “I fear the creatures [white man] on the sea are evil” ” (Fletcher, 1950, p. 36).

Readers have been warned that this event signifies the end of the story. Providing advance knowledge of the outcomes of the narrative positions white child readers as amused and superior observers, whilst aligning them with “the watchers in the forest” as they witness the Dutch carpenter laying claim on “this new land for his native country” (Fletcher, 1950, p. 39).

Conclusion: Stereotyping the Self-exterminating Noble Savage in Tasmania

Little Brown Piccaninnies of Tasmania aimed to inform young readers of the existence of what Fletcher deemed to be a prehistoric race of Stone Age people. Her subject, “the little brown piccaninnies”, are child versions of the noble savage, an idealized stereotype of primitive and exotic people living in a state of childhood innocence (see Smith, 1992, p. 218), leading a way of life which she assumed and recreated from Bonwick’s *The Daily Life of Tasmanian Aborigines* (1870). The historical sources for her story were eighty years old (therefore as old as she was at the time of writing), communicating information and ideological perspectives gleaned in the era when anthropology was only just becoming recognised as an academic

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Australia’s first history paintings and were on view in the Tasmanian Museum in Hobart in Fletcher’s lifetime.

discipline. Readers are constantly reminded of her ethnographic intentions as she gives the impression of historical accuracy.

Essentially a Victorian woman, Fletcher was imbued with the paternalistic attitudes of the nineteenth century that she assisted in sustaining well into the twentieth century. As a self taught anthropologist and primary school teacher her story for younger children is infused with the prevailing attitudes of the time towards race and Indigeneity. Her interpretation of the anthropology of Tasmanian Aborigines, her perspective regarding what knowledge should and should not be communicated to children closely informed her writing, thereby perpetuating stereotypes and inaccurate information. However, Fletcher's book was popular for its contribution to the body of Australian children's literature; firstly as locally produced literature, which reflected a growing pride in the unique culture of Tasmania, but also for its nostalgia for a lost past that was being embraced by a new generation of writers dealing with Australia's colourful history.

Fletcher's text elides all Indigenous knowledge systems of significant places as her purpose is essentially to mythologise Tasmanian Aboriginal people as the last innocent tribe of noble savages living in the distant past, in an unspecified location. In its perpetuation of doomed race theory for child readers, as well as the continued enactment of the myth of *terra nullius*, *Little Brown Piccaninnies of Tasmania* assures its readers of the certainty of the total extinction of the Tasmanian Aborigines. Fletcher's representation of Tasmania as devoid of Indigenous inhabitants sends a strong subliminal message that this space, with its exotic fauna and tragic history, is still invitingly colonisable.

In the 1950s Fletcher was keenly aware that she was writing for a new generation, the descendants of colonisers, and migrants as colonisers of a new space for themselves. However, as can be seen from the popular works of Bates and Idriess, Fletcher was not the only writer of her time to communicate a misinformed and pessimistic view of Aboriginal people. Referring to adult literature of 1945-1961, Adam Shoemaker argues that "The translations of anthropologists were, both in literary and in social terms, important factors which influenced the perceptions and opinions of those Australians either associated with, or interested in the Aboriginal people"

(Shoemaker, 1989, p. 88). Fletcher’s conviction that all Tasmanian Aborigines were extinct empowered her, as it did other writers of the era, to tell their story for them. Fletcher’s reputation as an anthropologist enhanced the authority of her ethnocentrism communicated through her writings for children. Overall, her works demonstrate a fossilisation of outmoded, inaccurate, racist ideologies whilst lacking the guilt or remorse that underpins Meston’s Preface and evident in the works of subsequent children’s writers who represent Tasmanian Aborigines. Inscribing the myth of extinction, *Little Brown Piccaninnies of Tasmania* served as a model for later children’s writers. Nan Chauncy acknowledges Fletcher as one of “the very few who recorded facts about the lost Tasmanian race” (Chauncy, 1960, Acknowledgements). Beth Roberts (1979) and Pat Peatfield Price (1981) share her pessimistic racialism. The perception of Tasmanian Aborigines as lost or invisible continued to percolate through children’s literature in Tasmania into the twenty first century.

In *Little Brown Piccaninnies of Tasmania* Fletcher takes an ethnographic approach and attempts to construct a narrative around her ideological constructions of Tasmanian Indigeneity. In contrast, in Fitzmaurice Hill’s immigrant adventure story, *Southward Ho with the Hentys* (1952), discussed in Chapter 3, Aborigines are not the main focus but their representation and location on the Tasmanian scene continues the idea of savagery and, paradoxically, their invisibility.

Chapter 3

Invisibility and Tasmanian Indigeneity in *Southward Ho with the Hentys* (1952) by Fitzmaurice Hill: 'Learning History without realising it'

Fitzmaurice Hill (1898-1973): Historical Colonial Adventure in Australia

In the 1950s, Aboriginal stories in children's literature were being more actively promoted than in previous decades. The development of scholarly research into Indigenous life and culture frequently referenced myth and legend, "often including examples in order to illustrate a point of belief or custom, and giving their own commentary on the story" (Saxby, 1971, p. 205). The Children's Book Council of Australia Awards reflected this interest. The 1952 winner was Henrietta Drake-Brockmann's edited version of Kate Langloh Parker's 1896 *Australian Legendary Tales,* and in 1954 Fitzmaurice Hill's *Southward Ho with the Hentys* (1952) was Highly Commended.

Throughout the 1950s the winners and highly commended publications of the award celebrated the themes of Australian flora and fauna, retellings of Aboriginal legends and historical works, including fiction depicting immigrant colonial adventures. Hill's novel of an English family's journey to permanent settlement in Australia follows the pattern of a heroic struggle for land ownership and prosperity gained through the steadfast efforts of new British migrant colonisers. In its very treatment of colonisation, *Southward Ho with the Hentys* appears to be a relic of a past era, as Hill's quasi–historical novel re-presents and recycles colonialist ideologies for another generation of readers, thereby reinforcing colonialism a century after its importance. In an era in which white writers were expressing greater interest in Indigeneity, or "the Aboriginal Problem" as many would have it (Tennant, 1976, p. 241), Hill's novel renders Aborigines as invisible and therefore easily dispensable in the execution of his colonial project.

Hill's immigrant colonial adventure presents a contrasting perspective to Fletcher's (1950) representation of Indigeneity explored in the preceding chapter. Whereas Fletcher's sentimentalised Social Darwinism reflected a level of empathy and engagement with her subject of *Little Brown Piccaninnies of Tasmania* (1950), in which she wrote regretfully of Tasmanian Aborigines as of a bygone age, Hill's

Aborigines are depicted as savage caricatures, a menace to successful colonisation by apparently benign English settlers. Hill's history is more naturalistically woven into his story as he has drawn on primary sources written by or about the participants of his story. His fiction reflects the era in which his novel was set, through its adoption of language use which sees Aborigines referred to as "native" and "the blacks". However, this terminology was also common in contemporary historical accounts (see for example, Bassett, 1954, and the *Portland Observer*, 1934) as well as popular literature such as that of Ion Idriess. In Hill's novel, Aborigines are evident in the landscape, but their very savagery renders them easily dispensable, which Hill manages through denying them a voice and a character in his novel.

Readers of *Southward Ho with the Hentys* are participants in the long march to progress as depicted in Eve Pownall's *The Australia Book*, (1952 winner of the Children's Book Council of Australia Children's Book of The Year), which sees men and boys, all white Australians, moving towards progress and prosperity. Bradford suggests that Pownall's publication had an enduring effect, as "canonical children's history of the 1950s and 1960s, defining "Australia" and its history for many child readers of these decades" (Bradford, 2001, pp. 15-16). Pownall's book shows women and Aboriginal people as passive and marginalised observers to the colonial project, as "two things march together – children's books and history" (foreward by Saxby in Pownall, 2008). Also published in 1952, *Southward Ho with the Hentys* endorses this view, but like Fletcher's work, appears to be a relic of a past era.

Born in Melbourne in 1898, Fitzmaurice Hill worked with the Australian Broadcasting Company from the 1930s to the 1950s as a broadcaster and writer of children's programmes. Apart from short historical dramas for radio productions, *Southward Ho with the Hentys* is his only work of fiction. His novel was written and published in Melbourne by Whitcombe and Tombs, a New Zealand publisher specialising in educational books, a conservative but lucrative market until the late 1960s. The publishers' intentions to "please the child, the teacher, the inspector, the parent and the Department of Education" (Ewart, 2011, p.u.) is immediately evident in the book's Preface by G. R. Leggett which promotes it as "a story which will give pleasant reading and correct information not only to children but also to adults".

Southward Ho with the Hentys has all the appearances of a boy's adventure story of the previous century. The nautical expression "Southward Ho!" in the title is reminiscent of the better known (but not necessarily read) nineteenth-century adventure by Charles Kingsley (*Westward Ho!*, 1859). The title also echoes an earlier Australian publication by T. Hodgkin (*Southward Ho! Being a plea for a greatly extended and scientific system of emigration to Australia, 1831 – 1913*, 1913). In the middle of the twentieth century, Hill's writing for younger readers promotes a similar script for successful emigration to Australia.

Southward Ho with the Hentys: 'Learning History without realising it'

As an adventure story which attempts to represent history, *Southward Ho with the Hentys* is written to a formula reminiscent of the literature of previous generations. The story is told from the perspective of a young migrant boy who, by successfully adapting to the new environment, is transformed into the new chum. The narrative also reminds readers of significant indicators of middle class English culture, attitudes and behaviour. The novel is based on the experiences of the real Thomas Henty, who sold his property Church Farm, West Tarring, Sussex, and emigrated to Australia:

> The adventures of a pioneer family who sailed from Sussex, England, aboard the barque *Caroline* in the Spring of the year 1829 and with Edward Henty established the FIRST PERMANENT SETTLEMENT in VICTORIA at PORTLAND BAY 19th Nov., 1834 (Hill, 1952, title page).

Whereas the Henty brothers have gained a place in history, the characters of Jim Hall and his family are totally fictional as explained in Hill's Foreword: "THIS IS A TRUE STORY- even though Judy and Jim Hall and their parents were created by the author in order to tell it". Hill writes his Foreword in the third person, promoting the authenticity of his story as well as his role as a writer of history. Hill's work as a writer for the ABC took him to Portland Bay, King Island, Swan River and Launceston, locations which inspired him to recreate the Hentys' story for younger readers. His acknowledged sources are James Bonwick's *Port Phillip Settlement* (1883), David Blair's *History of Australasia* (1879), Noel Learmonth's *The Portland Bay Settlement* (1934), and The Portland Observer's *Lone Furrows on Sea and Land* (1834), marking the centenary of Edward Henty's landing (Hill, 1952, p. 7).

As further demonstration of his rigour as a researcher who appreciates the importance of age appropriate content, the novel is dedicated to the author's "school-girl daughter", "she who caused this book to be written and criticised it with the candour and guilelessness of the child mind" (Hill, 1952, p. 7). Evidently, Hill's strategy of targeting one specific child in the hope that others will eavesdrop on the story facilitated him to make the transition from writing for radio to writing an historical adventure book for children.

Anyone reading Hill's novel could be forgiven for thinking that it was published a hundred years before, so carefully has the writer emulated the boys' adventure story of the previous century. The assumed reader is expected to be highly literate, to identify with the narrator, the pioneering son and the twin brother of the appropriately passive sister, Judy, and to appreciate and participate in the colonial perspective which propels the narrative. Even the appearance of the book, its cover, the lack of illustration and the relatively small font size for its era of production, closely resembles the literature produced for children of previous generations. The soft cloth cover, with only one (unacknowledged) illustration placed on its side facing the frontispiece, suggests that *Southward Ho with the Hentys* was designed as cross-over fiction from child to adult, and therefore suitable for school libraries. The one illustration, a black and white wash, is poorly executed, and depicts a robustly built man in knee high boots with a dog, in the foreground, and scattered cattle and row boats on the shoreline. A ship with sails furled and misty hills are visible on the horizon. The subtitle under the illustration bears the message "the long search ends - and the task begins". The novel's presentation confirms it as targeting an adolescent audience, and a story which would also be approved of as popular adult reading. The book has nineteen chapters, identified only by roman numerals and no chapter titles, another throwback to literature of past generations destined for cross over audiences.

Maurice Saxby suggests that the literature produced in Australia up to 1941 offered "middle of the road family reading", an era of more egalitarian reading, offering "a respectable, profitable and enjoyable experience for thousands of Australians from the so-called working class as well as for those who attended exclusive private schools" (Saxby, 1995, Preface). A decade later, Hill is highly aware of this role that children's literature also played in adult lives. As well as being educative, adults' reading of children's literature gave them something of what they had missed out on as children. The history lessons in Hill's *Southward Ho with the Hentys* are consciously delivered to parents and teachers. Saxby suggests that as the Second World War restricted imports of books from overseas:

> Teachers, librarians and publishers began to take seriously the content of children's books and see in them a means of self-education ... here was a turning to the early days of the colony as the setting for quasi-historical novels. There was a strong argument that self-development could take place through a carefully presented programme in social studies, and therefore stories which had a well delineated social setting provided the best of both worlds (Saxby, 1971, p. 28).

The Preface to the novel reveals Hill's intentions to promote "our history" to young people, in the hope that they will learn history "without realising it" and hence become "the historians of the future" (Leggett, in Hill, 1952).

In *Southward Ho with the Hentys* young Jim Hall tells the story of his family's move from England to Australia, allowing him to leave home, take risks and develop as a young man. In contrast, his twin sister Judy adopts the class and domestic roles appropriate to her status and her gender, typical of nineteenth-century novels of settlement "which more often imply mixed reading audiences of girls and boys, boy heroes feature in adventure sequences while their sisters and mothers wait anxiously for them to return home" (Bradford, 2000, p. 90).

As well as reinforcing the expectations of male and female roles of the 1950s, Hill's historical fiction reflects other contemporary ideologies which pervaded Australian society and popular culture of the era. In the 1950s, whilst acknowledging and affirming the settler coloniser foundations of its society, Australia was becoming increasingly preoccupied with its own post war progress. In the dismantling of the British Empire, Australia as a settler colony awaited a new influx of migrants, to be "recolonised", thereby imparting white British attitudes to the antipodes. The 1942 threat of invasion in Australia spurred the slogan "populate or perish" reinforcing the perceived need for the importation of "good British stock". At the height of the White Australia Policy, post-war migration and settlement in Australia were being actively increased (see Davison et al, 2001). While narratives of exploration were very common in this era**,** there was also a perception that Australia still held enclaves of wild and primitive races, fuelling deep anxieties about miscegenation (Shoemaker, 1989, p. 94), a perception that Hill’s novel fosters through its colonialist setting.

Although the main audience of Hill’s story would have been Australian residents, it was important not to deter new arrivals with accounts of conflict with venomous fauna and belligerent natives. Jim Hall and his family are privileged newcomers to Australia, a land promising opportunity.

Hill’s story incorporates the manly ideals of rugged individualism for white Anglo-Celtic inhabitants of newly acquired territory through a colonialist discourse that effectively distances the reader from the Indigenous people depicted in his story. There are many layers of distance between the reader and the Aborigines represented in the novel. In Hill’s story, Aborigines are only ever referred to as “the blacks”, as savages they are given less than a human status. Mainland and Tasmanian Aborigines are never identified or differentiated. Seen from a distance, talked about, but never interacted with, their invisible presence dramatises the exotic dangers which faced the new settler. In addition, important to his narrative purpose, Hill’s savages are never noble.

The Story of the Hentys: Adventure into History

The enterprising Thomas Henty and his large family of seven sons provided Hill’s inspiration for the story. When the fortunes of the real Thomas Henty declined at the end of the Napoleonic Wars, Henty, who had been supplying John Macarthur with merino sheep for several years, figured that the opportunities for breeding merino sheep in Tasmania would be better than in England. Thomas Henty “had been a farmer of standing in Sussex [and] had enjoyed a reputation as a good employer in England” (Peel, 1996, pp. 4, 5). Consequently, in 1828 he was able to entice and support an entourage of thirty three labourers and servants, their wives and children, from the village of West Tarring, in Sussex, together with 147 sheep, cattle, dogs and chickens, as new settlers in “Australia, that vast new land in which Britain was seeking to renew her strength” (*Portland Observer*, 1934, p.u). Upon selling his Sussex property Henty decided to transfer his family, stock and capital to Van

Diemen’s Land where he understood that land was still being granted free, and to where he had successfully exported many of his prized merinos.

However, in response to the British government’s sudden decision to establish a settlement in Western Australia, Henty’s eldest son James and his entourage accessed a large land grant on the Swan River. But here the terrain and soil condition proved impossible for the Hentys’ farming and pastoral ambitions. Consequently, James transferred all capital to the original destination of Van Diemen’s Land. After his expected land grant in Van Diemen’s Land was thwarted, Thomas Henty’s final project of moving across the Bass Strait and squatting on unclaimed land in Portland, Victoria, reflects the persistence of this enterprising family in the face of colonial bureaucracy. In Hill’s story, young Jim Hall is unaware of these machinations, but his homely mother can engage with the Henty vision of creating “a well-ordered productive English farm” (Peel, 1996, p. 8), which lack of funds had prevented in Tasmania.

Hill merges the complexities of these enterprises so that the activities of all the Henty men are amalgamated. The island of Tasmania provides a liminal space in which the young narrator of *Southward Ho with the Hentys* can participate in the various enterprises of the Henty family, which embraced farming, exploration and whaling around the Bass Strait. Jim Hall is the raconteur and observer of all adventures, both successful and less successful. He is the proud witness of the success of the Henty family as hard working, diligent, courageous pioneers. The narrative thereby introduces readers to the Henty family who hold a firm place in Australian, and particularly Victorian, colonial history.

The original Henty journals would have been accessible to Hill through the State Library of Victoria. Lynette Peel, editor of the Henty journals, depicts their daily life as well educated gentlemen farmers of colonial Australia:

> There is no doubt that the Hentys brought to Launceston and the settlement of Victoria the very best blood-lines of merino and Southdown sheep and the most advanced knowledge of sheep husbandry that England could provide in the 1830s (Peel, 1996, pp. 18-19).

The journals of Edward and Francis Henty (Peel, 1996) reflect their meticulous observations of the land and pastoral pursuits, along with their management of labourers and servants after they left Tasmania and began farming across the Bass Strait. Edward and Francis individually note their observations of the presence and the resistance of Aboriginal people towards colonisation of their land for sheep farming. Edward Henty's journal reports "Only one native, and he the Men set Dogs on. These were not my men or they would not have done it" (Peel, 1996, p. 39).

Younger brother, Francis Henty, later describes how the "natives" were not allowed near the sheep, as they attempted to rush the sheep and steal them. Frequently, the Aborigines disrupted the shearing by setting fire to the surrounding grass. Francis also tells of the losses and injuries sustained by sheep who were rushed by the natives. Through their journals, during their first years as permanent colonisers of the land around Portland Bay, the Henty brothers are represented as "genuinely anxious to treat the natives fairly and with kindness". Edward reportedly "abhorred Van Diemen's Land colonists who used man traps and advocated shooting down "the crows" or such of them as had survived the years of invasion of black territory by whites" (Bassett, 1954, p. 285). However, as ambitious settler colonisers of the era, the Hentys in their writings do not reflect upon the impact of their own actions upon the original Indigenous inhabitants whose land they appropriate for pastoral endeavours.

One of Hill's acknowledged sources, the 1934 celebratory publication edition of *The Portland Observer, Lone Furrows of Sea and Land*, lauds Thomas Henty and his sons as heroic pioneers, stating that "It has been established beyond all doubt that the Hentys were the first permanent settlers of what was later proclaimed the colony of Victoria" (Portland Observer, 1934, first page unnumbered). Moreover, the Henty family's "initiative and readiness to take risks seems to have taken a new impetus and to have set a new standard for the infant colony" (Portland Observer, 1934).

Hill's novel enthusiastically portrays the risk taking and gentlemanly qualities demanded of leading colonisers who were responsible for the livelihood of their employees, their wives and families. The reinforcement of class status is deemed to be essential for the success of the enterprise in Hill's historical adventures. Jim Hall's father, William, is beholden to Mr Henty who, we are frequently reminded, is a "gentleman" and hence a role model for the community, but especially for our protagonist, Jim. "Mould y'r self on him, Jimmy, an' ye'll not go fer wrong" (Hill, 1952, p. 101). This rationalises William Hall's attitudes and behaviours; as his wife reluctantly acquiesces to her husband's support of the Henty ambitions; loyalty to one's employers and potential benefactor is placed above the anxieties of one's spouse.

Hill's appropriation of colonialist tropes incorporates Victorian attitudes towards class and gender. In this story of adventure and settlement, women are apportioned their role as homemakers, nurturers and breeders of large families. If Hill had indeed read the Henty Journals, he would have found no reference to the women who participated in this colonial enterprise. Hill's narrative voice of Jim Hall as an older man looking back on his younger self replicates the marginalisation of females as depicted in boys' adventure stories of the second half of the nineteenth century, a genre which concerned itself with the "stereotypic adolescent 'British boy' to take his place in the world of action" (Wall, 1991, p. 66).

Hill's Version of Tasmania as the Real Frontier

Hill's novel reveals an attitude that until quite recently pervaded mainland Australia's perception of Tasmania as a marginalised place lacking in sophistication and material prospects, a veritable outpost (see Koch, 1958; Shakespeare, 2004). For Hill, the isolated island of Tasmania offers a locale for playing out his colonial adventure, the drama of which is elaborated by the menace of invisible tribal Aborigines in the distance. As a young adventurer, Jim Hall is an active participant in land settlement, even going to sea for a while and meeting the true pioneers of Tasmania's coastline, rugged sealers and whalers. His adaptation to the new land thus reiterates the evolution of settler culture ideology, whilst his first person narrative recuperates a "lost" history of the Henty men as pioneer heroes.

Hill constructs Tasmania as real frontier land and culture, eventually not suitable for permanent settlement for the Henty entourage. Its perceived wildness, both of the untameable convict community and the threat of Aboriginal reprisals on the new settlers, provides the setting and a proving ground for the colonising pioneers. Hence, Tasmania, where most of the action takes place, is a liminal space where white migration and ideologies of gender, class and race are naturalised and enacted. In this novel, the environment is but a backdrop to the socialisation of Jim and Judy in their new home.

Jim Hall's narrative perspective is that of an old man proudly telling of his own childhood adventures. He assumes an avuncular rapport with his audience as he announces "But perhaps I had better begin by telling you" (Hill, 1952, p. 9). This authorial perspective enables the distance of time to conflate adult and child perspectives, with the child narrator as the dominant voice. Jim is ten years old when his adventures begin, but Hill ensures that his narrative persona retells his childhood adventures with varying degrees of immediacy and distance, whilst retaining a comfortable adult overview. With one foot in his childhood, Jim also has access to adult activities and conversations, including the Henty men as gentlemen farmers, whaler Captain Dutton and his own mother, and is thus able to play with a range of current stereotypes regarding the settler/invader conflict and antagonistic attitudes towards mainland Australian and Tasmanian Indigenous people. Stylistically, therefore, Hill's narrative enables reportage of "the kind of stereotypes of thought, feeling and behaviour which was marketed for the next hundred years as 'Best British Boy' " (Wall, 1991, p. 70). Jim's Britishness, his deference for class, and his gendered and racial constructs are all seen as positive attributes for potential emigrants. Hill's characterization of Jim as the successful pioneer constructs him as the ideal Australian citizen, a potential leader, adaptable and decisive, an intelligent observer of human behaviour.

Yet, as author, Hill maintains an outsider's perspective; there is no real sense that he knows or appreciates the exotic and unique environments which form the settings of his novel. Jim's narrative voice ensures that distance is maintained between him and the location of the events he describes. As the child raconteur he uncritically reiterates the colonialist and racist discourses of his parents' generation. The frontier settings enable tropes of wildness and civilization to be enacted out on Tasmanian territory, or on the sea, which presents a temporary challenge to the landlubber farmers.

Furthermore, Indigenous voices are absent. However, reported conversations are reminders of their ominous presence in the landscape; a primitive, savage and untrustworthy menace to white progress that is fundamental to white colonisation. Hill ensures that Jim does not ever meet or see any Indigenous people, who would have been living in Tasmania and mainland Australia during the historical time frame of the novel, 1829 to 1834. All information regarding Aboriginal people is conveyed second-hand to Jim, and hence to the reader, through the comments and observations of the more working class, unrefined, pioneering seamen and labourers; men who represent the frontline of pioneering endeavours. However, Jim's aspirations lie in the promise of land ownership, and therefore rising above these less educated men. This includes his own father, whose Sussex dialect he documents but doesn't inherit, as his adopted country provides him with more sustaining role models in the form of the land-owning Henty gentlemen. Yet, the wild men of the Tasmanian seas whom he leaves behind have a formative role in this experience; their hearsay distances and softens the prescription, ensuring that it is the naïve young Jim who is responsible for the replications of the racial stereotypes that he appropriates.

White Fleece and Ignoble Black Savages

Jim Hall's narrative traces the journey made by the yeomen farmers who followed their masters in the promise of land of their own. The hook to catch the readers' attention is the Hall family pet, Captain Tuffens, the pet merino sheep whose real gender is eventually revealed when she starts to give birth to lambs in her adopted country. Captain Tuffens is the symbol of the successful Australian migrant settler, one who has successfully severed all ties with the homeland; for whom there is little nostalgia, just new fertile pastures and the chance to successfully populate with white fleece. Indeed, Captain Tuffens's lush white fleece is frequently referred to as the provider of wealth and a future for generations of Hentys. Moreover, the Halls, as yeomen farmers of the old country, can realise their dreams of land ownership in the new country.

Thomas Henty's own pedigree is established early in the novel, but his merino sheep are vital to his personal colonial enterprise. "We all knew that Mr Henty's merino fleece were the very best in all of England" (Hill, 1952, p. 11). Hill's claim that the flock originated from “the king’s flock at Windsor” (Hill, 1952, p. 11), “the king himself having first got them as a present from the queen of Spain” (Hill, 1952, p. 12), is a manipulation of the truth. According to Peel, the pedigree flock was originally smuggled out of Spain at a time of political unrest to enhance the breeding stock of King George III (see Peel, 1996, p. 19).

Henty’s white merinos have a potentially civilising influence on the primitive or savage way of life in the new country. “We were too young to realize that we were leaving England for good” says Jim, whose imagination is fuelled from ideas gleaned from books. At this stage, typical of many free settlers, making their fortune means returning to the home country “to live happily ever after” (Hill, 1952, p. 15). A letter from Uncle Harry stimulates discussion which evokes the imagined danger of the exotic dangerous land and its savage inhabitants:

> We began to wonder whether there were any savage beasts in New Holland. Dad said that there weren’t, but that he had heard tell of some queer animals out there that hopped round on their hind legs and were called kangaroos, and that the blacks hunted them with sticks that came right back to the hunter’s hand if they missed the kangaroo they were thrown at (Hill, 1952, pp. 15-16).

The juxtaposition of “savage beasts” with “queer animals … that the blacks hunted” enables readers to feel better informed than the young narrator whose naiveté is reflected in his description of boomerangs. Potential encounters with savages are foreshadowed by stereotypical references to skin colour. The Portuguese island of Madeira is the first foreign port which provides “strange” experiences in the form of exotic fruit and people who look different:

> strange fruit called a banana that grew in clusters, like big fat fingers sprouting from a thick green stalk … The brown skinned natives were very friendly, and some of them even had a few words of English, which they used in a very odd fashion, as if they were not quite sure of what the words meant (Hill, 1952, p. 23).

Jim’s anecdotes ensure that the reader is *told about* events rather than shown. Hence, the comment about language use is not supported by evidence, but used to support the idea that the further you get from England, the more foreign (and savage) are the people and the land, as evidenced by the unusual fruits, and the natives whose skin is brown (as natives are never white) and whose use of English is distinctly foreign. Hill’s constructs distance as foreign and inferior, as “brown skinned natives” are incompetent communicators of English. But he is also setting up the distance for future representations of other natives, Australian Aborigines.

En route, the native children "made Judy and me envious because they had been allowed to leave off all their clothes" to dive for pennies provided by Mr James Henty: "toss these in, not all at once of course, and you'll see how well these blackamoors[21] can swim". Naked native children who call out "T'row, t'row" provide an entertaining diversion from the tedium of months of sailing, and are stereotyped as quaint, primitive and forever childlike (Hill, 1952, p. 23). The length and conditions of the voyage are barely commented upon. When they lay anchor at Gages Rock, Rottnest Island, Western Australia, remote and unpopulated, is still the same as it had always been when the Dutch navigators "who had been the first to sail down these shores" arrived. "We had expected ... that the sun would be hotter than in England ... people already lived there. They were black. We knew, but they would have to have houses and shops, wouldn't they?" (Hill, 1952, p. 35).

The irony in Jim's naïve contemplations would not escape the young reader, who is intermittently positioned to feel more sophisticated than the protagonist. Jim's speculations and preconceptions regarding the climate and the degree of civilisation of the Indigenous inhabitants are dispelled later as the expedition encounters the real challenge of uncharted territory in Western Australia. Relocation nearby to Swan River on the mainland unexpectedly throws up evidence of failed attempts at colonisation. "Theer's grand piannies on the beach smashed and broke and all but covered wi' sand. Theer's plough's and tools, crates and boxes, bales and beds and broken chiny strown along the beaches as far as the eye can see" (Hill, 1952, p. 36). Jim's father William's description is an overture to the simple lessons of not doing one's homework before embarking on an expedition and the hazards of colonisation in Australia. Jim's commentary advises "The greatest mistake of course was to have allowed people to go out from England before some proper arrangements had been made to receive them. There were no houses, of course, because the blacks find a sheet of bark sufficient roof for their simple needs" (Hill, 1952, p. 37).

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[21] The Macquarie Concise Dictionary (3rd edition, 2003) and The Compact Oxford Dictionary (2003) cite 'blackamoor' as "a negro or person with very dark skin". The Encarta Dictionary (2012) cites 'blackamoor' as "an offensive term for a black person or somebody with very dark skin".

The prospect of encountering uncivilised blacks, whose simple needs, i.e. of not living in houses ("of course"), is compounded by fears of losing the stock:

> Once they got free in the bush, as the country was called, they could never be found again, even if they were not speared by the blacks ... Dad ... and all those with him were heavily armed with guns and cutlasses and pistols, and I remember getting a stinging box on the ear from Mum when I begged Dad to bring me home some spears from the savages he killed (Hill, 1952, pp. 37-38).

Jim's characterisation is inconsistent. His commentary presents an adultist perspective whereby he reiterates the wisdom that he has acquired from his elders, but through direct speech he resorts to the little boy who needs to be reminded of appropriate behaviour, an authorial device to re-engage the reader with Jim as the storyteller with a boyish sense of humour. Hence his flippancy and overt racism is attributable to his immaturity. Jim is the innocent purveyor of adult stereotypes, even embellishing on them with his own jesting of "spears from the savages he killed". Jim's mediation of information acts as a filter of the real situation, for Hill's authorial perspective quarantines the historical truth of the horrific violence meted out by the armed "roving parties" who murdered and massacred Aborigines (Reynolds, 1995, p. 78).

Ideologically, Hill imports concurrent tropes and stereotypes of white views of Aboriginal people into his novel of colonial enterprise. Jim and his companions never actually get to see any Indigenous people, and neither does the reader as they are never depicted in the novel, but whenever they are mentioned in conversation, Aborigines are always talked about in derogatory or derisive terms, often the butt of jests and jokes. Later in the story, Mr James Henty, newly arrived from England, "pretended that we were two natives that Mum and Dad had caught" (Hill, 1952, p. 62). Jim's socialisation as a pioneer nurtures his sense of innate superiority to Aboriginal people as reflected in his childish mockery. Hill repeatedly represents Aboriginal people as "savage", "queer" and primitive as they hunt with sticks and spears against "whites heavily armed with cutlasses and pistols" (see Hill, 1952, pp. 37-38). Jim also condones his father killing "savages" as reprisal for their spearing of his sheep. Hill's narrative never acknowledges the effects of colonisation on Aboriginal tribal life and, consequently, the cause of Aboriginal hostility to the presence of sheep on their traditional lands and hunting grounds. Typical of plot based adventure narratives, the social and historical realities of the impact of dispossession on the local unnamed Aboriginal people in Hill's narrative remain unexplained.

The invisibility of Aboriginal people in this pseudo-history of Australia is strategically important, for it facilitates their dispossession, textually, for the reader. The Henty journals and the other historical sources cited in the Foreword by Hill, depict their experiences as settler colonisers who were, in fact, in close contact with the Indigenous people whose lands they were in the process of appropriating. Hill's perpetuation of the myth of *terra nullius* validates the role of his heroes and their descendants whose "stories they told him gave it much of its reality" (Hill, 1952, p. 7).

In adopting the literary model of settler/coloniser literature, Hill promotes an outsider view of Indigenous people. At the time of publication, *Southward Ho with the Hentys* targeted Australian readers who, until the 1960s, "considered themselves to be inherently British" (Foster, Finnis and Nimon, 2005, p. 27), as well as those who were reading from the centre of the British Empire. Victorians, and especially Tasmanians, were particularly proud and possessive of their British heritage. Hill's outsider view similarly extends to the landscape of the newly adopted country, wherein the landscape is almost invisible. He makes specific mentions of actual places, including the Tamar River and Cataract Gorge, but a sense of place through description and particular landuse activity is never evoked. The reader is frequently reminded that the land is wild, untamed and no place for a woman, as evidenced in the numerous anxieties expressed by Jim's mother, Mrs Hall.

Recreating a 'Britain of the South'

Unable to get government compensation for his Swan River purchase, Henty attempts to secure a block in Van Diemen's Land and establish sheep farming in "a place called Launceston where there was good grazing country where a settlement had already been established for over twenty years" (Hill, 1952, p. 41). Knowing that the island is a penal colony, the fear of convicts is allayed as Dad [Mr Hall] says "Any who are still bad are locked up way across the island, miles and miles from where us'll be" (Hill, 1952, p. 42).

In fact, the only threat convicts pose is that Tickets of Leave or assigned convict servants competed for employment as agricultural labourers, which undermined employment opportunities for Henty’s men. Hill’s diminution of history ensures that Jim’s parochialism surfaces intermittently throughout the story, enabling adults to correct his childish “misinformation”. However, Hill’s story, as well as silencing the Aboriginal population, eludes the essential character of the original colony of Tasmania, to which 72,000 convicts were transported (Boyce, 2008, p. 2). Hill’s narrative privileges the small middle-class elite, the free settlers who sought to recreate a “Britain of the South”.

Jim’s prior knowledge of Van Diemen’s Land as an island is based on his limited experience of Madeira, its brown-skinned children and bananas, to which he adds his fantasy of “coco-nuts and oranges and strange brightly coloured shells … always warm and where the sun shone every day” (Hill, 1952, p. 43). This time his ignorance is dispelled by Captain Tewson, a real captain (not a sheep), who points out that Van Diemen’s Land is more than half the size of England, and that Sussex could fit into one of the corners (Hill, 1952, p. 43). The reality of the Georgetown settlement where “A cold drizzle of rain was falling … a little cluster of houses, a low range of hills covered with dense forests of drab-looking trees” (Hill, 1952, pp. 43-44) is a dreary contrast to the nearby “Tamar and all its beauty” (Hill, 1952, p. 46). Hill’s references to location and landscape don’t reflect deep meaning or experience for the reader.

Hearsay versus Experience: What Jim Learns about Indigenous People

Jim’s forays into sailing, whaling and adventuring enable him to make contact with exemplars of pioneering men who established Van Diemen’s Land as a colony, though the role of the Hentys in these exploits is constantly privileged. There is no acknowledgement that the Hentys’ success was due to the labours of those who worked for them and whose names became forgotten in the course of history. The lesser heard voice of his mother is a reminder of where women fit in this enterprise. Mrs Hall is eventually heard half way through the novel, in Chapter IX, which is devoted to recreating a place “Just like home”, with animals, people and the familiar comforts of tea, toast and porridge. Mrs Hall in particular is keen to reinvent her social contacts:

> "To think I'll be seeing the dear Mistress again! Twill be just like the good old times at home!" Straight away she began "setting the house to rights", as she called it in a grim determination to satisfy Mrs. Henty that the Halls, at least, had not fallen into slipshod Colonial ways" (Hill, 1952, p. 60).

As the social hierarchy of the old country is quickly reinstated, class, race and gender become intertwined. Having been introduced to the subject of Aboriginal inhabitants as exotic, strange and simple, and therefore primitive, Jim learns about their savageness from significant adults. The attitudes of his stay-at-home Mum and the more worldly Captain Liddell corroborate. From Captain Liddell, who tells of his encounters with the Maoris, Jim receives some crude lessons in diplomacy:

> their faces and bodies were covered with tattooing so that they looked very fierce and war-like. He had found them friendly enough and used to say that, provided you were careful to do nothing likely to offend their religious beliefs, they would do you no harm … When you are in a strange country, try to learn the customs of that country and don't just force your ideas on the people there. There's a lot to be larned from others, and never leave a place without doing everything to ensure that you'll be welcomed back if ever you want to return (Hill, 1952, p. 74).

This extended reportage of Captain Liddell's advice ensures that this didacticism is clearly received by the readers. The lesson of tolerance towards the Maoris is couched in paternalism: be careful not to offend their religious beliefs; don't force your ideas on the inhabitants of "strange" countries; instead try to learn their customs. The advice of "never leave a place without doing everything to ensure that you'll be welcomed back if ever you want to return" is intriguingly ambiguous, for Captain Liddell's tolerance is permeated by superior-inferior relationships. Later in the story, Jim receives some mixed messages regarding prospective encounters with Aborigines, whose savageness is contrasted to the "fierce and war-like" Maoris whose culture was sophisticated enough to incorporate "religious beliefs". These rash stereotypes are designed to position Aboriginal people as lower on the evolutionary ladder than Maoris, due to their apparent lack of religious beliefs and social organisation.

Allowed to leave school, to go to sea and now sporting a tattoo, Jim adamantly advises Judy that "Girls can't be tattooed unless they're Maoris". In his transformation from "new chum" to a "proper colonial" Jim leaves his twin sister far behind in life experience (Hill, 1952, p. 77). Judy is thereafter restrained in an extended childhood and forced to continue at school. Delegated to look after the weakly lambs, as "she adored everything small and young" (Hill, 1952, p. 101), Judy is exposed to only one role model, her mother, diligent protector of the social status quo. Unsophisticated and less worldly than her thirteen year old son, Mrs Hall is a naïve obsequious conduit for gossip and ignorance. Nevertheless, she has a powerful role in disseminating her perceptions, including that of John Batman as another pioneering hero, "kind" and "understanding of their wild ways", therefore capable of taming the black "savages":

> Thank goodness, is what I say, that we have brave men like Mr John Batman. I don't believe he's afraid of anything, and they do say that even the blacks, savages as they are, wouldn't harm a hair of his head, he's tht kind to 'em and so understanding of their wild ways. It's a pity there are not more like him" (Hill, 1952, p. 80).

Mrs Hall's nurturing and educative role ensures that whatever hearsay she picks up about Indigenous people is transmitted as enduring stereotypes to her own children. Hill's inclusion of this reference to Batman validates the attitudes of his fictional characters towards Aboriginal people whilst reinforcing the benign intentions of Batman and his ilk. Historically, Batman "the founder of Melbourne" was an energetic participant in the Black Wars in Tasmania and an instigator of massacre and genocide. Even Governor George Arthur, whilst acknowledging Batman's sympathy for the Aborigines, suggested that he "had much slaughter to account for" (Campbell, 1987, p. 32). However, Hill's resolve is to embellish Australian colonial history with heroes who subjugate the savages for the benefit of all, especially white colonisers and their descendants.

Historical characters and events are manipulated to ensure that what Jim learns about Indigenous people affirms his innate sense of superiority and security as a successful coloniser. Set at the height of the settler conflict with Aborigines, Hill's novel alludes to the 1834 massacre that took place at the Convincing Ground, Portland Bay, across the Bass Strait in Victoria, when members of the Gunditjmara people feasting on a beached whale were attacked and killed by whalers intent on protecting their commercial interests:

> There was a time once, when fuss the sealers come. They were ahead o' the whalers, so I'm told, and there was trouble to begin. Had a pitched battle so

> they did on a strip o' beach I can show ye that's called The Convincing Ground to this day; but nowadays they welcome us (Hill, 1952, pp. 93-94).

Edward Henty's role in this event is ambiguous; as the first permanent settler in Victoria, he is reportedly the first person to have documented the incident several years after its occurrence (see Clark, 1995, pp. 17-22). The mention of this incident, (which Hill wrongly attributes to sealers' involvement) is a strategic attempt by Hill to validate the role of the Hentys in their dispossession of the Aboriginal people, who are never referred to by their tribal name. The novel is, after all, a glorification of the exploits of the adventurous Hentys as successful pioneer colonisers for the benefit of an audience, who in the 1950s was receptive to a sanitised version of colonial history.

Edward Henty's project erases Indigenous ownership of the land known as The Convincing Ground, hence Jim learns of the dramatic battle but not of the consequential dispossession suffered by the Aborigines. Jim's seafaring adventures finally take him to Portland Bay with Edward Henty, where their ship is met by skipper Bill Dutton, a whaling hero, who welcomes them as "yours are the first white faces I've seen for many weary days" (Hill, 1952, p. 89). Living alone, as a frontier pioneer in a rough and dangerous industry, Bill Dutton has his own wildness. His first advice is that the Aborigines are untrustworthy. "No good a-leaving all this ear for the blacks to walk off with, so I stay here keeping it all ship-shape and ready to go!" (Hill, 1952, p. 90).

Here begins a long passage of denigration of the local Aboriginal people, inferred to incorporate all "blacks", in which Bill Dutton presents a caricature of Aborigines. There is an assumed shared entertainment at their barbaric practices which positions white child readers as amused and superior observers to the frenzied celebrations of sated savages:

> Thye'll do alright, I can tell ye, in the whaling season. They feast on whale meat 'til their bingys – as they call their stomachs – are tighter 'n drums! That's a sight ye ought to see. They'll feast, an' put on one of corrobery dances - mother naked, wi' their bodies daubed wi' chalk a' clay and stuck all over wi' down an' feathers! Dance all night! Yowling and leaping an' carrying on wuss than all the whalers y'ever see! An' *they* have their wild parties too, when the ile barrels is filled and the grog's a-flowing free! (Hill, 1952, pp. 93-94).

Bill Dutton’s deployment of Aboriginal nouns (“bingy” and “corobery”), which as Bradford comments “inscribes both difference and inferiority” (Bradford, 2001, p. 101), immediately demonstrates his superiority and intelligence in his encounters with the Aborigines. The contrast between black and white wildness thus enables polarised stereotypes of primitive and advanced cultures. Whereas the whalers’ wildness is imposed upon them by virtue of their prolonged isolation in the cause of material progress, and their alcoholic release in celebration “wild parties when the ile barrel is filled and the grog’s a-flowing free!” the Aborigines’ wildness is inherently savage. Bill Dutton is an unseen observer to the corroborees in which the Aborigines participate. His vivid descriptions of their celebrations, of naked bodies daubed with chalk, clay and stuck with feathers, and dances in the wilderness are integral to Jim’s own construction of Indigeneity. Bill Dutton’s ultimate message is that “No, I’m not scared of the blacks! Treat ‘em right-they’ll treat you right” (Hill, 1952, pp. 93-94). Then he attempts to mediate his own denigrating paternalistic view by saying “they’ll do me no harm becos I do them none, d’ye see?”

This unknown wildness, internalised by Jim, is fundamental to his Tasmanian experience and consolidated in his mother’s anxiety. Mrs Hall is keen to get back to civilisation:

> “Now, Will!” Mum spoke a little sharply and there was a note of anxiety in her voice. “as if I’d let you go to such wild place as that. Among all those savages! Dear knows it’s bad enough here; but to go there! To that I’d never agree!”
> “But, Mum, Jim says the blacks are quite tame” says Judy (Hill, 1952, p. 98).

Jim’s mother is a dynamic propagator of the imagined dangers posed by untamed Aborigines. However, none of the characters depicted in the story have any personal or direct contact with Aboriginal people, who metaphorically are represented as silhouettes in the distance. Bill Dutton’s voyeuristic view is the closest anyone gets to witnessing their presence on the landscape. All that Jim learns about the Indigenous inhabitants of the land that he, too, is in the process of colonising is gleaned through the hearsay of adults. As the naïve raconteur, Jim reiterates the adult tropes of Aborigines as an invisible menace to white prosperity, thereby exonerating him from the responsibility for those perceptions.

Conclusion: Rewards and Results for the Young Coloniser

Hill's stereotypes are integral to the social heritage that he unquestioningly endows upon his readers, which sees characters rewarded for conforming to the expectations of race, gender and class. William Hall, the former yeoman farmer, receives his "promised reward and were established in the new country" (Hill, 1952, p. 117). Mum's dream recreates the parlour and afternoon teas of her previous life as she sits on her rocking chair and picks up her knitting again (Hill, 1952, p. 118). Captain Tuffens is also acknowledged in her important role of populating the land with her merino offspring.

Told from the boy's point of view, action and deeds are privileged over contemplation or emotional interaction. Prescriptive roles of class and gender ensure that female characters are marginalised. While Jim goes off on his seafaring adventures and becomes a man at thirteen, Judy is offered no choices and is required to stay at school. Indeed, school is seen as feminising, because teachers for younger children are women. Judy is schooled for the home and hearth. Her mother is the constant role model, whereas Jim gets the opportunity to escape, become independent and, to an extent, develop an independent point of view, which gives him some authority as narrator. He can make choices about his lifestyle, whether it be that of a rootless seafarer, or a loyal landlubber. By choosing to become a farmer, after his manly seafaring experience, Jim is thus (Hill implies), a leader, an ideal Australian citizen.

In Jim's absence, Judy has been identified as the nurturer of Captain Tuffens and her offspring, an implicit preparation for her adult role. Judy's relatively protracted childhood ensures her innocence, and, symbolically, the innocence of all Australian children in the young country. Childhood innocence and experience is a foil to the not so innocent task of colonising the new land. Both children are shaped by their new home as exemplary (new) Australians, products of the bush and a rural environment, an ethos which was well espoused by children's literature of the 1950s (see Niall, 1984).

Hill's promotion of learning history "without realising it" is a vehicle for the promotion of role models of adventurous, hardworking, upwardly-mobile colonisers.

Simultaneously this ethos of prosperity is embedded in socialised class and gender roles. Hill's characters inculcate the message of loyalty, first to one's employer, and secondly, to one's spouse, as well as the rewards of a work ethic of steadfastness and honesty. Hill's intention to provide children with knowledge of Australian history emulates "the nineteenth century historical tale [that was] a suitable vehicle for Victorian didacticism" (Hourihan, 1987, p. 163). His subliminal message to the reader is that despite the different time setting, these attitudes still hold fast and that nothing much has changed since the Hentys first set foot in the country.

Jim's appropriation of the stereotypes and prejudices of his adult mentors is a vicarious model which is explicitly directed at reader identification, as an alternative perspective is never presented. Hill offers no real insight into the historical and cultural circumstances of settler conflict. Indeed the exotic and challenging natural environment is overlooked or ignored. Jim's anecdotes are set against a benign backdrop which doesn't admit to the presence of the variety of native fauna that would have abounded in 1829 and that provided bountiful food for the hungry settlers and Indigenous people (see Boyce, 2008, p. 4). Apart from a mention of kangaroos and wallabies, Tasmania was home to an enormous number of spiders, snakes, thylacines, Tasmanian devils, quolls, possums and echidnas. Such exotica are excluded from the novel. The really exotic challenge is the sea, as presented to the landlubber. Hill's writing offers no sense of specific place which would enrich the pioneer setting, or any specific knowledge of any Aboriginal people mentioned in the story. As an author Hill offers no awareness of the effects of colonization on Aboriginal culture. Indeed, Indigeneity is exploited as a means of positioning the assumed white reader as superior.

Mainland and Tasmanian Aborigines are never identified or differentiated. Frequently referred to as 'savages', 'thieves', 'primitive' and, because they use spears, potential murderers: all indicators of a perspective evident in original settler literature for junior readers of the previous century. Seen from a distance, talked about, and never closely observed; no interactions with Indigenous people are recorded or described in the novel, as Jim the narrator never sees any Aborigines. Set in the 1830s, at the height of the conflict between British white coloniser settlers and the first inhabitants, only the white perspective is presented. Readers are encouraged to feel disdainful amusement and pity at the pathetic, ludicrous demonstrations of celebration and resistance of Aboriginal people who are caricatured as infantile savages.

Yet, despite their marginalised, invisible position in the novel, Aborigines are integral to the plot and theme of the novel. Firstly, as exotica to establish a truly Australian flavour to the novel, then as a menacing back-drop to the dangerous project of colonisation, so that any men who have direct contact with the blacks are elevated as "experts" and "heroes" (for example, Bill Dutton and the real John Batman, who are exemplified as dynamic colonisers who work hard for the good of all). Dutton's advice that "they'll do me no harm becos I'll do them none" (Hill, 1952, p. 94) places the onus of settler-indigenous conflict on "them" not "me" or "us". Dutton's and Batman's interactions with Indigenous people ensure that the Aborigines are perceived as inferior and invisible to Jim, thereby rationalising the dispossession and annihilation of traditional communities who lie in the wake of colonial expansion.

Through *Southward Ho with the Hentys* Hill plays an active part in his demeaning of the Aborigine and his justification of prejudice for the young reader. Its agency as popular school literature and its recognition by the Children's Book Council of Australia Awards reflects the conservative, white supremacist ideologies that were unquestioningly promoted in children's literature of the era, facilitating the perpetuation of colonialist racist ideology to a new generation. Readers of *Southward Ho with the Hentys* are positioned to see Aboriginal people as invisible and defeated by the inevitable forces of colonisation.

In the 1960s this view was challenged as the Indigenous perspective is taken up by white writers. How successful this was will be discussed in the next chapters. Nan Chauncy in particular reflects a modern and empathetic approach to the subject of Tasmanian Indigeneity as she attempts to represent their perspective through the genre of a time slip novel for younger readers.

Chapter 4

Ideology in the Historical Fiction of Nan Chauncy's *Tangara* (1960)

Introduction: Telling the Truth about Genocide in Tasmania

In the 1960s racial prejudice was an uncomfortable topic for children's novelists in Australia, let alone Tasmania. However, Nan Chauncy was one of the few Tasmanian writers for children to engage with Indigenous characters and perspectives. In *Tangara* (1960) and *Mathinna's People* (1967), she deals with the unpalatable truth of the history of genocide in Tasmania for child readers.

The novels *Tangara* and *Mathinna's People* by Nan Chauncy and Beth Roberts' *Manganinnie* (1979) selected for discussion in this and the following chapters all claim to be based on true stories. Hence the settings include geographical and historical detail. As historical fiction, they are rooted in a particular place and time, of pre-colonial (*Mathinna's People*) and colonial (*Tangara* and *Manganinnie*) Tasmania. The subject matter, themes and socio-cultural values of these works were certainly determined by commonly available knowledge at the time of writing and publication. Contemporary political policy, especially that which informed or reflected attitudes towards Australian Indigenous peoples, offers ideological perspectives which are implicitly incorporated into these works of fiction for younger readers.

Chauncy's early publications engaged with Indigeneity in terms of total loss. Her first published novel, *They Found a Cave* (1948), depicts contemporary stereotyped attitudes towards Aborigines through an adventure in which children escape from the tyranny of adult bullying and set up camp in a cave; symbolically, taking over the cave home of the extinct Tasmanian Aborigines. The clichéd subplot sees them being financially rewarded by "men of science" for their discovery, that is, the appropriation of the skeleton of a Tasmanian Aboriginal. In *Tiger in the Bush* (1957) Chauncy's discussion of the demise of the Tasmanian tiger and its consequent extinction is an allegory of what she interpreted as an extinct species, the Tasmanian Aboriginal people. Both novels demonstrate little knowledge of the history and culture of Tasmanian Aborigines that she explores, more empathetically and more controversially, in *Tangara* and *Mathinna's People*.

As a writer, her work developed from family based stories of immigrant life and bush adventures to historical fiction of increased psychological depth, literary qualities for which, in 1961, she was the first Australian to win the Hans Christian Anderson Diploma of Merit (Eastman, 1993, p. 408). Chauncy's books representing the Tasmanian Aborigines certainly earnt her an international reputation as a children's writer. Chauncy was credited with changing the direction of children's fiction in Australia. Her realistic pictures of childhood and complex characters, the sympathetic presentation of the Aborigine, and her reawakening of commitment to the environment were concerns which other writers later took up (Stone, 1995, p. 329).

This chapter will trace the ways in which Chauncy negotiates the ideological boundaries of representing Indigeneity both through the historical sources she used, and the pressures and constraints of the time and place in which she was writing. Chauncy's time-slip fantasy, *Tangara*, broke new ground in its depiction of a modern girl's friendship with an Aboriginal girl. Saxby attributes the verisimilitude of her settings and stories to the fact that she wrote of what she had experienced personally, of "The Tasmania she knew intimately and about which she felt passionately" (Saxby, 1997, p. 99). Moreover,

> Her books were, perhaps, the first fruits of the academic movement, encouraged by librarians and educators, that helped make writing for children in this country a serious art … one of the first of a wave of writers who were to give Australian children's literature a worldwide reputation for quality (Saxby, 1997, p. 99).

Patricia Wrightson regards Chauncy as "the first Australian writer of serious and *contemporary* novels for children" in that she was the first writer who "freed her characters from any duty to set examples, thereby taking the movement "towards freedom and truth and exploration into the Australian environment" (Wrightson, 1970, p. 30). Chauncy chose specifically Australian themes and situations, thereby developing her own voice and vision. As a writer, she contributed to the movement for new realism in children's literature, modifying the bush tradition, by moving on from the nostalgia and class ridden society of Mary Grant Bruce's popular pastoral adventures, written from 1910 to 1942. As post-war optimism and an evolving national identity influenced writings for adults and children, Chauncy was an active participant in the "renaissance in Australian children's literature" (Niall, 1988, p. 550).

Chauncy's books have a strong autobiographical flavour and a timeless quality which reflects the chosen lifestyle of her family. Her older brother, Kay Masterman, states that "Almost every aspect of her life appears in some form in the books" (Masterman, 1975). There is a complexity and nuance to all Chauncy's works that are not seen in the other works discussed in this study. The poetic quality of her work, gleaned through the depiction of her settings, is tangible. In *Tangara*, Chauncy melds the history of childhood reminiscence with fantasy. Despite its shortcomings with regards to the characterisation of the Aboriginal protagonist, Merrina, its potential message of reconciliation with Indigenous peoples was ahead of its time. The friendship between Lexie and Merrina is spontaneous and credible, enabling today's readers to identify Chauncy's authorial intentions.

Time and Place

Whereas Jane Ada Fletcher's and Fitzmaurice Hill's novels of the 1950s accept a colonialist ideology of progress, Chauncy's *Tangara* offers a more open-ended critique of colonisation, through a more modernist representation of character and family relationships. Chauncy's child characters in this novel, particularly Lexie as the main protagonist, are trying to make sense of their world, to formulate their own values and ideals, whilst acknowledging the behaviours and interactions of past generations. In *Tangara*, the genre of historical fiction enables the child protagonist and the reader to move from the familiar to a new place or time and expose what has become normalized or "invisible" (Garfield, 1988, p. 41). However, an inevitable consequence of representing "history" as narrative is that "there can be no narrative that is free from point of view and teleological purpose" (that is the impulse to present events in terms of structures of cause and effect) (Stephens, 1992, p. 205). Further, there are no "facts" without interpretations, and writers' interpretations are essentially morally grounded.

Stephens (1992) argues that actual settings implicate attitude and ideology; that the function of a setting in fiction is to convey atmosphere, attitudes and values. Writers of historical fiction use it as part of the process of signification. Setting is more than mere background, but it is an element that constitutes to making a character act in a particular way (Stephens, 1992, p. 209). In particular, the frontier setting of Tasmania works towards what Stephens explains as offering a situation in which behaviour normal for a modern reader no longer pertains: “Frontier landscape overtly expresses both an extension of the subjectivity of those who choose to inhabit it, and a primary object which must be opposed or come to terms with” (Stephens, 1992, p. 209).

Chauncy’s novels for children, set explicitly in the Tasmanian landscape, are closely akin to Stephens’ “frontier” and are rooted in a particular place and time. The ideology of Chauncy’s novels is implicitly embedded in her appreciation and representation of landscape. Her historical fiction invites historical judgements, and for a work of its time, *Tangara* represents an innovative quest; to create a historical fantasy novel which imagines a past that, up to the time of Chauncy’s writing, had been only documented for a limited (academic adult) audience. Chauncy knew that her readers were yet to be informed of the historical truths which she exposed, hence they entered into an area in which there was little knowledge. Her Tasmanian frontier settings enable readers to escape to a terrain and a history that at once is exotic and challenging, but assuredly safe territory for her non-Indigenous characters. Historical fiction has the capacity to illuminate the present through the past and provide insights into human nature (see Hourihan, 1987). Foster suggests that *Tangara* was one book that “led the way towards a new literature that allowed for equal treatment in the present and at least an understanding if not an overt acknowledgement of past wrongs” (Foster, Finnis and Nimon, 2005, p. 40).

Though a generation younger than Jane Ada Fletcher, Chauncy was also influenced by the same Victorian historical sources that Fletcher had accessed ten years earlier. This meant that she was also influenced by pervasive attitudes such as doomed race theory. However, whereas Fletcher’s writing is implicated in the past and her work is imbued with a sense of continuity, Chauncy’s writing promotes a different attitude towards the past which incorporates a sense of dislocation. Unlike Fletcher and Hill, Chauncy had lived abroad and travelled and read widely. The realism of her writing reflects a more contemporary view of literature and of children. Subsequently, in *Tangara*, Chauncy’s social realism of family life and community demonstrates how ideologies and attitudes are embedded and passed on or rejected by the younger generations. Her time-slip fantasy reflects the stirrings of a conscience that goes somewhere towards disturbing “the great Australian silence” and “the cult of forgetfulness” (Stanner, 1968, p. 25). This chapter explores the tension between her use of outmoded ideological perspecitives and her innovative literary approach.

Sense of Place

Chauncy’s sense of place communicates an intimate knowledge of the landscape and geographical terrain of her settings, inspired by what lay outside her own back door. Chauncy claims that “Most of my twelve books for children are based on this astonishing new life made at an impressionable age” (Eastman, unpublished notes for *Nan Chauncy, a Life*). Writing in the late eighties, Brenda Niall suggests that Chauncy’s sense of place in her novels made a significant contribution to the growth of regionalism in Australian literature generally. Her novels took a strongly autobiographical direction whereby “the social context is almost as important as the central figure” (Niall, 1988, p. 557).

As a child of twelve, Nan Chauncy emigrated in 1912 from rural Kent to Tasmania with her family. Despite the difficulties this transition caused the family (dislocation and lowered socio-economic status being the chief ones), Chauncy explored the countryside around Hobart as an avid bushwalker. As a young woman she returned to Europe, where she trained as a Girl Guide leader and taught English at a Girl Guide School in Denmark (Eastman, 1993, p.408). On her return to Tasmania in 1938, she met and married Anton, a Jewish refugee. They lived at Chauncy Vale, near the village of Bagdad, north of Hobart.

The Chauncy household remained isolated from the local village of Bagdad, from the capital of Hobart, from mainland Australia and, to an extent, from a global perspective. Chauncy’s intimate knowledge of setting and landscape extended to family structures and relationships which she communicated through her fiction for children. Yet, her writings do seem to reflect an anxiety towards the outside world, towards what she sees as the modernity of urbanisation and consumer society. Niall suggests that Chauncy’s personal quest to maintain her own pastoral vision was “to stop the world and get off” (Niall, 1984, p. 230). Indeed, a discourse which runs through Chauncy’s early publications is that there is no place like home, provided that it is in a rural or bush setting, “evoking secqurity and a sense of belonging”, whilst providing readers with “an environment that will expand the horizons of both city and rural workers” (Saxby, 1997, p. 97). Chauncy’s distinctive background ensured that she remained an outsider even while she becomes rooted to the land, and this adds to that picture of layers between us and her Indigenous characters.

Rejecting the modernity of a consumerist society, Chauncy’s novels were coloured by her anxiety for the future of the environment. For Chauncy, distance from the city was safety and security, not deprivation. For her “family unity is guaranteed by the shared work of a not-too-prosperous farm; change is suspect and urban ways are not only dreary, but morally destructive” (Niall, 1988, p. 553). As a writer, she interpreted her own past in what she wrote for her child audiences. She was always the Girl Guide, making the best of difficult situations, still seeing the Australian bush as unique, to be valued and preserved. Stylistically, Chauncy’s writing is now considered to be somewhat convoluted and didactic. Of all her novels, *Tangara* is the most accessible, though some readers would be alienated by its extensive descriptions of what Chauncy views as the untameable Tasmanian wilderness.

The year after it was published, *Tangara* was winner of the 1961 Children’s Book Council of Australia Book of the Year Award. Margaret Dunkle believes “This book marks a turning point in children’s literature, the first non-racist story about Aboriginal/white friendship, the first about Tasmanians, the first to tell of the massacres that repeatedly occurred” (Dunkle, 1993, p. 24). Yet, despite this status Chauncy’s novel is fraught with contradictions. Though, in 1960, her message of reconciliation with Indigenous peoples was ahead of its time, in her characterisation of Indigenous people and the exposition of its theme, she adopted a paternalistic attitude that was very reflective of the attitudes of mainstream Australia and of contemporary political policy. Her work is intriguing for its compelling ambivalence towards Indigeneity, a view reinforced by the British illustrator, Brian Wildsmith, whose black Indian ink drawings operate as impressions of a dream or traumatic memory, a reiteration of Chauncy’s ambivalence and ambiguity in screening readers from the awful truths implied in her narrative.

Historical Perspective in *Tangara*

Chauncy's acknowledged sources in *Tangara* "to the very few who recorded facts about the lost Tasmanian race, notably Ling Roth and James Bonwick" (Chauncy, 1960, Acknowledgements), were commonly used in children's and popular writing until the late twentieth century, despite the availability of more recent publications. Chauncy's acknowledgements also include Jane Ada Fletcher, who died in 1956. Fletcher's use of Roth's (1899) and Bonwick's (1870, 1884) nineteenth-century histories informed her view of Tasmanian Aborigines. Whilst Chauncy acknowledges the role that white settlers played in the destruction of Tasmanian Aboriginal society, in both *Tangara* and *Mathinna's People* she perpetuates the nineteenth-century mythology of extinction.

Tangara moves between two planes; the real world of nine year old Lexie's present, and the fantasy of the past, at the height of frontier conflict, where she encounters Merrina, an Aboriginal girl. Lexie is given the shell necklace of her great-great-aunt Rita, which is the significant object that breaks the tyranny of time and allows her access into Merrina's time space. Whilst staying at her elderly carers' home in the school holidays, a place which is familiar and safe, but not as confined as her own home, lonely Lexie manipulates the geriatric dog, Uncle Podger, into a walk every afternoon to enable her to play at Merrina's place, Blacks' Gully. The friendship is kindled in the school holidays and endures throughout several years. There are two climactic events in the book. The first is Lexie's and Merrina's first-hand witness of the massacre of Merrina's people. The second is Lexie's rescue of her older brother, Kent, who is injured in a storm in the Blacks' Gully and is himself confronted by the vision of Merrina. With the sibling roles reversed, Kent acknowledges Lexie's friendship with Merrina as well as her empathy and knowledge of the hidden history of massacre as experienced by Tasmanian Aborigines.

The time-slip fantasy genre is useful in *Tangara* to bring a white girl from the novel's present, the 1960s, into contact with an Aboriginal girl from the period of early contact with white settler, and the ensuing decimation of her people. The geographical locations mentioned suggest that Chauncy's story could be based on the Aborigines of the North Midlands tribe, of which Lyndall Ryan estimates that “at least 300 were probably killed outright by the settlers between 1820 and 1830” (Ryan, 2012, p. 19). Thematically, the novel explores the contiguity of the present with the past. Hence, whatever has happened in the past has significant impact on the present. However, part of Chauncy’s ambivalence is that whilst the book is informed with a sense of outrage at the atrocities committed on the Tasmanian Aboriginal people, we can also see Chauncy’s lack of clarity in depicting her characters acknowledgement of the role that their forebears and their community played in their construction of the past.

Whilst Lexie has the naiveté of a child, her older brother Kent is closer to the adults and holds a conventional view of history and his role in it, embracing his identity as the son of a landowner and prospective landowner himself (presuming that the pattern of his family history is to be followed). In the opening pages of the novel, as he approaches the oldest bridge in Tasmania at Ross, Kent is highly appreciative of the flora and fauna that he observes on his journey home for the school holidays. “Kent loved his home: he was proud that its history went back to the days when Tasmania was known as Van Diemen’s Land” (Chauncy, 1960, p. 8). Implicitly, Kent is a benefactor of his colonial ancestry and a participant in his family’s sustained economic prosperity. His younger sister, Lexie, is too young to be useful on the farm and deemed not in need of a formal education. Having neither a mother nor opportunity to make friends she is expected to rely on her “imagination” and animals as playmates (Chauncy, 1960, p. 5). Lexie’s capacity for using her imagination to develop a different perspective of history, one that remains mostly hidden from adults and other children, and the evolution of her deeper knowledge and empathy with the local Indigenous population, is integral to the thematic development of the novel.

The history of Lexie’s great-great-grandfather, John Pavemont’s settlement in Van Diemen’s Land, using convict labour is discussed by adults within Kent’s earshot but not shared with Lexie:

> ‘And the blackfellows? Wasn’t the old homestead raided at the time of the early settlers by the blacks?’
> “No, the natives never troubled Wanderon. It’s rather strange, Mrs Callan, but they didn’t- although there were plenty of them about at the time. Shepherds took their lives in their hands and even a man ploughing had to carry a gun, they say, but Wanderon had no hostile visits. Perhaps

> because old John Pavemont never grudged them an occasional feed, since he'd taken their hunting grounds on the plain (Chauncy, 1960, pp. 8-9).

Lexie's father, Mr Pavemont acknowledges his great grandfather's role in the dispossession of the local Aborigines, but the possibility of his personal complicity in any violence is quickly expunged. Whereas old John Pavemont is seen to choose the path of peaceful co-existence on lands that he had appropriated, "the blacks" in other frontier encounters are held to be the instigators of raids and hostility, where shepherds and farmers were prepared for self defence.

The genesis of Lexie's role in the narrative is supplied by Mr Pavemont. Again, directly addressing his comments to the adults in his audience:

> he laughed, 'there's another story. They say his little daughter made friends with a small native girl of her own age and could talk their language. So, for her sake, because the two children played together the place was spared' (Chauncy, 1960, p. 8).

Unknowingly, Mr Pavemont reveals his limited knowledge of what really happened in the past, as well as his lack of understanding of his young daughter, both of which are exploited by Chauncy as the psychological motivation for Lexie's role in the narrative. Though adults appear to have control, the import of this comment suggests that frontier contact in this case was essentially determined by the two children, John Pavemont's little daughter, Lexie's great-great-aunt Rita, and the "small native girl", who are themselves both negotiating a place in the new (colonial) society. Making friends and talking their language involves reciprocity and sharing that is so fundamental to the Aboriginal community that Lexie gets to know. Crossing boundaries for the children means learning new skills; in essence, both defecting from their traditional upbringing. Chauncy's appreciation of knowledge as power for both adults and children works towards a nuanced narrative through characters that are psychologically credible and complex. The gradual disclosure of this hidden history is controlled throughout the novel by the conversation between the adult characters and Kent, who is deemed old enough to be allowed to participate and thereby confirm something of what he might already know. Hence we learn about a fungus that is referred to as "blackfellow bread" (Chauncy, 1960, p. 17) and more importantly, "a native flint" (Chauncy, 1960, p. 18) for scraping animal skins that the blacks used in

Blacks' Gully close to Kent and Lexie's family property. Kent's father, Mr Pavemont, presents an apparently authoritative ethnographic view of this local history:

> "When the first whites came, they found these last samples of ancient Palaeolithic man friendly and gentle – just a race of food gatherers, nothing more. Nothing hostile about them; in fact smiling and well mannered. Wasn't it Baudin who described them as full of fun and "of a fine intelligence". And they certainly had a great sense of dignity. The poor wretches probably mistook the first white men they saw for gods or spirits" (Chauncy, 1960, p. 19).

Mrs Callan adds "And the whites mistook them for cannibals like some of the Australian tribes, or at least barbarous savages, didn't they Mr Pavemont?" (Chauncy, 1960, p. 19). Mr Pavemont's delivery of anthropology as history contains some complex ideological constructs. His representation of the Tasmanian Aborigines as noble savages and his reference to them as "these last samples of ancient Palaeolithic man – just a race of food gatherers" (Chauncy, 1960, p. 19) with its connotations of intellectual and cultural inferiority are juxtaposed against the view that they were "smiling ... well mannered" and intelligent. Mr Pavemont's stereotype of Tasmanian Aborigines ensures a distance that enables him to comfortably consolidate his position as patriarch and benefactor of land which was originally appropriated from local Indigenous people. Though his own family was never directly involved in any violence, his colonial predecessors' perceptions of them as "cannibals" or "barbarous savages", simultaneously invites speculation as to the cause of their demise and a denial of responsibility. It is the range of ideological positions, official and unofficial, which underlies Chauncy's ambivalence towards her Indigenous subjects in *Tangara*.

One of the narrative devices that Chauncy uses in *Tangara* is that of setting up the territory for ownership of information. There is tension in what adults know and will reveal about the truth of local history; of what they choose not to reveal, what the children know and learn, and what the children choose to keep as secret knowledge from their parents. The knowledge that Lexie acquires is more practical and hands on than the history related by adults, as she learns about Merrina's family, food and customs as well as snippets of her language. Merrina teaches her to throw stones to kill birds, a vital role for young girls to support the family food supply: "You must throw all the time, every day, throw at anything that moves. Or ... how will you kill things when you are big? How will you get birds for the hungry fathers? "(Chauncy, 1960, p. 89).

Lexie's deeper knowledge of the local Aboriginal people gained through a day-to-day, domestic level is contrasted to that of her father. Lexie's father has no personal insight into Aboriginal people. He repeats what he believes and "knows", that is, what is common knowledge for adults of his time and place, the white construction of local history. But his perspective is never undermined by his daughter, nor by Chauncy, as narrator.

Mr Pavemont is the discursive device through which Chauncy relates the historical background to *Tangara*'s storyline. In doing so he also communicates the "official" story of the demise of the Tasmanian Indigenous peoples, through the event he relates and the language he uses. Terms such as "blackfellows" "blacks", "the natives", "the Tasmanian blacks", "Tasmanian abos" (Chauncy, 1960, p. 55), "old blacks" and "the tribe" construct their identity through a number of labels, which extends to Merrina, "the little native girl" (Chauncy, 1960, p. 21). The generation gap embraces different types of "knowledge" as reflected in language use. The casually racist language of the adults is a reflection of their own entrapment in their own culture, as contrasted to Lexie's use of Merrrina's Aboriginal language. Kent straddles this space, for he has adopted some adult views of the people he calls the "Tasmanian abo's"[22] (Chauncy, 1960, p. 121), but ultimately he commits to keeping Lexie's secret. In contrast, Lexie refers to members of Merrina's family as "the fathers", "the mothers" and "little lowunnas", thereby adopting Merrina's language usage, denoting roles and identity within the extended family group.

Chauncy's omission or avoidance of referring to the original inhabitants of Tasmania as "Indigenous people", "Aboriginal Tasmanians" and "Aborigines", with capital letters or uncapitalised, typifies the usage of popular literature of the era in which she was writing (for example, Donald Barr, Frank Dalby Davison and Ion L. Idriess). This reinforces her construction of otherness with regards to the Tasmanian Aborigines. As far as she was concerned, there were no more Tasmanian Aborigines living, therefore they were people of the past and now extinct, as she originally proposed in her first novel, *They Found a Cave* (Chauncy, 1948, p. 90).

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[22] Throughout *They Found a Cave* (1948), Chauncy's characters refer to "abo's", abbreviated, uncapitalised and with an inverted comma.

Apart from not bestowing accurate identities to the Tasmanian Aborigines depicted in *Tangara,* there is a reluctance to provide accurate dates for the events that took place. Lexie's affinity with her great-great-aunt Rita offers a vague time span of four generations, which takes her back to about 1830. Rita and Merrina had been friends during the last days of Merrina's people, who were almost extinct by the time they were driven into the wild gullies of the Tiers mountains. Wearing Rita's shell necklace gives Lexie free passage into the time plane of Rita's childhood, and she rekindles Rita's friendship with the little Aboriginal girl, who is aged about eight and of similar age as the little Mathinna discussed at the beginning of the novel. Mathinna's plight is also juxtaposed against that of Truganinni (Chauncy, 1960, p. 20). Chauncy has thereby informed or reminded her readers of the tragedy of what popular history assumed at the time to be the last of the Tasmanian Aboriginal people.

Similarly, Lexie and Merrina witness the massacre of Merrina's people by bushrangers, thereby reliving psychically her great-great-aunt's experiences. As was Rita, Lexie is traumatised and unable to communicate what she experienced to her family. However, the girls' friendship stands the test of time when, a few years later, when Lexie is fourteen, Kent is injured in a storm and Merrina leads Lexie to his rescue. At this point Kent appreciates Lexie's immediate knowledge of the massacre which took place in their local area. It also confirms the official history that adults are willing to release to children, a history which mitigates settler violence, such as the following information which invites Lexie to become the focaliser for the rest of the story:

> "The one I've always been so sorry for" said Mrs Callan "was the little girl Mathinna. You remember Lady Franklin adopted her and she became the pet of government house? They used to dress her in scarlet and take her driving in the Governor's carriage and loved her little ways. They hated to leave her behind when they left, but the doctors said the climate would kill her. Of course their friends all promised to look after her- it was tragic!" (Chauncy, 1960, p. 20).

Lexie's innocence as to the tragic fate of Mathinna is defended by her father who refuses to finish the story; "father looked at Lexie and shook his head. 'Not before her' the look said" (Chauncy, 1960, p. 20). After some brief speculation as to whether there could be any "hiding in the bush up there now", Mr Pavemont mentions that "the last supposed to have died [was] Queen Truganina in 1876" (Chauncy, 1960, p. 20).

Chauncy also absolves her readers of any complicity of intergenerational association in the massacre of any Tasmanian Aborigines by employing bushrangers, men who are already criminalised, to do the job. Lexie's carer, Andy, offers a more concrete version of the local history of "Black Man's Gully":

> "they lived here when they were driven from the plains, and no one knew exactly whereabouts until a couple of escaped convicts – bushrangers found their camp by chance … They were lost and probably starving, and the tribe had killed a kangaroo and were roasting it, so – you can guess the rest" (Chauncy, 1960, p. 54).

Historically it is true that murders and massacres were committed by bushrangers, but local communities also formed vigilante groups as "Colonists couldn't be trusted to leave the Aborigines alone" (Ryan, 2009). Though she appropriates contemporary attitudes and ideology with regards to her subject, Chauncy does leave some space for her readers to interrogate the silences and interruptions of what is revealed and what lies hidden.

The paradoxes of Chauncy's work are manifold - her sympathy for the Tasmanian Aborigines is undercut by her view that they are both extinct and "the last samples of ancient Palaeolithic man" (Chauncy, 1960, p. 19). At the same time, however, her work has been credited with "changing the direction of Australian books" (Lees and Macintyre, 1993, p. 92) through her realistic depiction of character and landscape, and most importantly, "her attempt to represent Tasmanian Aboriginal People with sympathy and dignity" (Lees and Macintyre, 1993, p. 92). This point of view is confirmed by the University of Queensland Press' decision to republish *Tangara* in 2007, which acknowledges the novel's potential well beyond the 1960s. More recently, Belle Alderman has suggested that in *Tangara*, Chauncy "was at the forefront of authors writing about Aborigines at the time" (Alderman, 2009, p. 797), a view which is shared by Christopher Bantick as this novel "marks her enduring influence on Australian children's literature" (Bantick, 2007, p. 9). John Foster recognises Chauncy's innovative approach to historical fantasy in *Tangara*, as it was "one book that led the way towards a new literature that allowed for equal treatment in the present and at least an understanding if not an overt acknowledgement of past wrongs" (Foster, 2005, p. 40).

The Subversive Elements of *Tangara*

Such paradoxes in Chauncy's writing are evident in the subversive elements of the novel. *Tangara* is subversive in three ways. Firstly, it challenges the traditional values of the era in which it was published. At the time Tangara was written, Aboriginal people continued to be subject to policies of assimilation and dispossession, as well as marginalised and invisible in many Australian communities. Government policies such as The White Australia Policy and removal of Aboriginal children from their families continued until the early 1970s. There is no evidence in her writings that Chauncy was aware of these policies and their devastating impact on Aboriginal people. The second subversive element of the novel lies in Chauncy's authorial intentions that are directed towards a humanist philosophy. The third subversive element is found in her construction of childness, as she also subverts the notion of childness as innocence and therefore undermines adult power and social relations.

Tangara exploits the situational device of the child's time away from adults as a medium for the alteration of the laws of nature. Lexie's playtime and play space provides a setting for the fantasy story. The narrative strongly suggests that the temporary emotional and physical independence of the child from the world of adults, grants him/her the freedom to make his/her own judgements, and to change others' points of view, particularly when the child is convinced that he or she knows that they are right. One of the elements which made this novel an enduring and interesting read is the empowerment of child characters to question the cultural values of their own society, implicitly to consider the human rights of those who are culturally different. However, it can be argued that many of today's young readers participate in a reading culture that questions the accepted and the familiar, which was not necessarily the case in Australia in 1960 when the book was first published.

Chauncy's use of time warp allows the main protagonist Lexie to be transported to a wilderness and frontier setting where she forms a real friendship, embracing trust and love, with a person of her own age group who is culturally very different. Lexie's friendship with an Aboriginal child is in itself subversive, as it transgresses racial as well as class boundaries prescribed by contemporary adult society. Lexie's loneliness is salved by her friendship with Merrina. What she learns first hand from Merrina's family and her contact with females, mothers and babies, is very significant to the development of her empathetic understanding of another way of life. Most importantly, it is also more fun than the masculist household which excludes her from feeling needed, useful and loved.

The second subversive element lies in the empowerment that Lexie's playtime with Merrina offers, that is a space away from adults and adult roles, which grants her the freedom to make her own judgements, and eventually to influence her older brother. Integral to her friendship with Merrina is the desire to communicate with her in her own tribal Aboriginal language. Aunt Rita had apparently learnt the language; therefore, an accepted part of the fantasy space is Lexie's ability to communicate across time and across culture. Chauncy inserts a range of commonly used words into the girls' conversations in a way that renders the language use as natural and functional, hence a viable form of communication. Merrina even gives Lexie an Aboriginal name. Merrina calls Lexie "Weetah", a reincarnation of Merrina's original friendship and mispronunciation of great-great-aunt Rita's name.[23] Another snippet of Mr Pavemont's official knowledge is that "In their language "merrina" meant a shell" (Chauncy, 1960, p. 22).[24]

Lexie's psychological motivation and character construction are convincingly sustained in the novel. However, Merrina's characterisation lacks the same depth. Chauncy represents her as "other" throughout the novel, through an insistence on her blackness which reveals a further ambivalence in her work. As Lexie penetrates "the black cleft" (Chauncy, 1960, p. 35), the place thought by some to be the home of the last living Aborigines, and elsewhere referred to as the Blacks' Gully, she catches her first glimpse of Merrina; "A little face peeping at her timidly with a shy smile, a face no bigger than her own but as brown as chocolate, with a wide nose, red lips, and white gleaming teeth" (Chauncy, 1960, p. 34). Chauncy's imagined Tasmanian

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[23] Weetah is also the name of an Aboriginal girl in Fletcher's *Little Brown Piccaninnies of Tasmania* (1950).

[24] "Mathinna" is also purported to mean "shell" because the girl Mathinna arrived at Government House wearing only a shell necklace.

Aboriginal incorporates the stereotyped black physiognomy of Merrina as the object of Lexie's, and the reader's, gaze. We are constantly reminded of Merrina's skin pigment and nakedness as opposed to Lexie's whiteness (otherwise known as "Snowy" to her family), her yellow dress and "dazzling hair like well polished brass" (Chauncy, 1979, p. 84). Lexie's conformity to the aesthetics of whiteness and respectability are reinforced through Wildsmith's illustrations which show her dressed in a twee little dress, even when she has ridden her horse, climbed down a deep gully and rescued her older brother in a storm (Chauncy, 1960, pp. 174-175). In the text, Lexie's state of dress is juxtaposed to Merrina's nakedness. At one stage, Lexie is encouraged to show her skin, therefore her real-ness, and her whiteness, by unzipping her dress, but she never actually exposes much flesh. Chauncy makes sure of that, as this reference to Lexie's clothing demonstrates:

> The showmaster [an Aboriginal elder] next made her take off her skin. Obediently, Lexie sat on the hard stone floor and removed her shoes. They were examined with wonder and passed from hand to hand … There were screams and gasps of horror as she slowly stripped off the socks and showed the white beneath, some mothers quickly covering their babies' eyes with a hand, to shield them from so shocking a sight … but when it came to undoing the front of her dress, Lexie rebelled, saying she was tired of being examined (Chauncy, 1960, pp. 95-96).[25]

Skin pigment is used as the distinguishing marker of otherness. At times, the depiction of Merrina comes dangerously close to the noble savage stereotype, as frequent mention of her "brown skin" and her "giggling" are used to reinforce her Aboriginality. Merrina is a comic foil to Lexie's introverted personality, a performer, as she "kicked her legs forward comically, strutting like an emu" (Chauncy, 1960, p. 61), and later becomes "a small brown wriggling animal of no account" (Chauncy, 1960, p. 81).

In many ways, Merrina is depicted as a strong person, knowledgeable in tribal wisdom as appropriate for her age, and, as far as the elders are concerned, she adheres strictly to that tribal law. However, she does transgress her elders' instructions in going through the rock to play with Lexie (Chauncy, 1960. p. 75). The restrictions of tribal law also place boundaries on the fantasy setting. Chauncy's evocation of reality within the fantasy setting shows Lexie and Merrina exploring their cross-cultural communication skills, and demonstrating an acceptance of each other’s differences, firstly, in body smells: “Lexie wondered that she didn’t mind her own smell, powerful with the greasy stuff plastered on her curly hair and body – especially rank just now from green bark and squashed ants after climbing the tree” (Chauncy, 1960. p. 73).

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[25] Removal of clothing by whites, mostly sailors, ordered to do so in front of incredulous Aboriginal people is a recurring reference in early coloniser experience, including Abel Tasman who ordered one of his sailors to undress to prove he was a man, therefore not a ghost.

Another indicator of cultural difference is food, a matter in which Lexie, who represents the cultural majority, is more tolerant and adventurous. Hence Merrina’s violent reaction to the sweet biscuit, “Merrina looked very doubtful: she held it cautiously as if afraid it would bite, tasted with the tip of her tongue, made a face of utter loathing and flung the biscuit far away” (Chauncy, 1960, p. 73), is more dramatic than Lexie’s to the witchetty grubs:

> How could Lexie spit it out with those kind eyes watching her? Rather than disappoint Merrina, she shut her eyes and pretended it was medicine - gulping it down quickly and even managing a feeble smile when it was safely gone … Strangely enough it wasn’t bad, it was rather like almonds, a sweet nuttiness: what Lexie minded was eating it raw – alive (Chauncy, 1960, p. 82).

Lexie is sensitive to Merrina’s feelings, and for the sake of friendship will try something new. She is comfortable with a certain level of risk taking, away from controlling adults, in the bush environment. In these scenes Lexie’s attitudes are represented as intelligent and rational, whilst Merrina’s behaviour is more spontaneous and playful, and forever childlike. Merrina’s family are depicted as exotic, primitive and pagan:

> There were fathers everywhere; some looked kind but some were very ugly with broad noses and frizzy red beards. Some had hair dangling in corkscrews plastered with red clay, and the teeth of animals stuck in the woolly fuzz. One old one was sitting quite close; he wore a bone with teeth dangling round his neck – the teeth were like his own (Chauncy, 1960, p. 105).

Chauncy sets up binary oppositions for her Indigenous and white characters, yet, what Lexie learns first hand from contact with females, Aboriginal mothers and babies, is very significant to the development of her empathetic understanding of another way of life. Lexie’s friendship with Merrina is also subversive, as it challenges official ideology, but so does her psychic experience of the massacre. Lexie’s terror and grief are transmitted to the reader as are her emotive reactions to any mention of the

Tasmanian Aborigines. However, Chauncy's representation of Tasmanian Indigeneity does at times resort to reductionist stereotypes and two dimensional characterisation.

In contrast, Lexie's characterisation in consolidated through her relationship with the land. Enticed away from the boring security of home by the lush and unpredictable Tasmanian bush, she and her brother have acquired skills that enable them to feel comfortable and survive in the wilderness. Lexie, only temporarily frightened of the storm, maintains her confidence in the bush. The storm is a catalyst for change in timeframe and relationships, particularly for Lexie with Merrina and Kent. At the end of the book it is the sibling relationship which is concrete and secure in their shared secret. Ironically, the bush is a safe place for these non-Indigenous children, a haven where they can safely develop as individuals, away from adult control.

Tangara is a penetrating novel which invites more than one reading. Chauncy is less ideologically bound to her historical sources than she is with her later publication, *Mathinna's People* (1967). The family and rural setting of *Tangara*, however, does demonstrate the restraints that small communities place on allowing skeletons to come out of the closet. Child readers are invited to identify with child characters, particularly with Lexie, and therefore to participate in Lexie's evolving consciousness. The real time of the events depicted takes place over five years, from when Lexie is nine years old, therefore a child, to a fourteen year old, a time when many children finished school and were considered to be almost adult. Lexie proves herself to be capable, practical, as well as empathetic, and therefore the equal of her brother Kent. Long before adults realise it, Lexie has lost her childness and her innocence. As she gradually becomes exposed to the politics, attitudes and behaviours of the past, Lexie learns to negotiate adult silences and to critique what passes for local knowledge. But she never learns to interrogate or openly confront the silences which adults maintain as a means of controlling the dissemination of truth, of adults striving to maintain children's innocence and attempting to keep them ignorant of the appalling truths of local massacres.

The subversiveness of *Tangara* interrogates and undermines the perceptions of the individual, of a socio-economic group, and a socio-historical context. Chauncy exploits the medium of fantasy to alter perspectives, to change attitudes and to challenge authority structures. Implicitly Chauncy's Lexie will now always be wiser and have greater empathy than the adults in her life. She will pass this on to those who become close to her, her brother and, hypothetically, perhaps her own children. Such fantasy is empowering to the reader, if only on a subliminal level at first, in presenting alternative role models, alternative means of questioning and confronting, and in evaluating experience and value systems for the developing child.

Strategies of Silence and Subversion in Adult Versions of History

Tangara offers credible insight into the imbrications of authority structures. Chauncy's adult characters variously employ strategies of silence as a powerful means of control, of maintaining roles and status in a community, as exemplified in Mr Pavemont's release or suppression of information that he deems appropriate for children. However, Chauncy also delivers another subversive message, which is to reassure children that it is to their advantage to conceal their fantasy adventures and, implicitly, a significant aspect of their lives from their parents. With regards to "that last terrible experience", Lexie's witness of the massacre, Kent eventually decides that "No, Dad could not be told, or a search party would be sent out. Fair go, hadn't they been interfered with enough? Anyhow he had promised, and that was that" (Chauncy, 1960, pp. 121, 122). Significantly, the promise which Kent gives to protect Lexie's privacy is his Scout's honour; "if he gave promise, he would keep it: he was a Scout and his word meant a lot to him" (Chauncy, 1960, p. 120). The Scouting ethos for Kent enables his moral conscience and emotional independence. It represents a potentially liberating code of behaviour which he has learnt outside the family home.

Tangara offers a setting where, for a limited time, adults are irrelevant, unable to control or dominate, or interfere with the child's enjoyment of their own freedom, both physical and psychological; of a psychic space where curiosity, exploration and even danger can lead to greater insights and more robust character development than that afforded by the status quo. At the outset of the narrative Lexie is too young to be of any real use on the farm and too "innocent" to be sent to school. Her childness and her gender are an entrapment, preventing her from participating in life beyond the home. Through the time slip device Lexie has one foot in the fantasy land of Merrina's time space and her traditional Tasmanian Aboriginal community. Therefore she is privy to ideas and experience of which her elders are not aware. Her moments of independence away from her adult carers are seen to be the most fun and fulfilling. As she grows towards adolescence Lexie's self awareness and her social conscience are enabled. Psychologically, she is liberated through her exploits into the rainforest and bush setting of Blacks' Gully.

Lexie and, ultimately, her older brother Kent have greater access to the information and insight which is denied to the adults. This is a typical means of empowerment of child protagonists in the fantasy genre and Chauncy uses it to make a strongly ideological point about white coloniser-settler treatment of the Tasmanian Aborigines. Thus, Lexie gains first hand information on the destruction of the local Aboriginal people, and is permanently moved by their plight. The adults are touched by it, but reasonably incurious and somewhat accepting. Indeed, the adults strive to protect the children from the unsavoury knowledge of the white people's role, their forefathers' participation in history, and its genocidal consequences. Adults' unfinished stories, comprising that which should remain unspoken in front of little girls like Lexie, set up a communication barrier: "father shook his head." "Not before her" the look said" (Chauncy, 1960, p. 20). Referring to convict "brutes" and their use of muskets and the fate of Mathinna, "you can guess the rest" (Chauncy, 1960, p. 54), Mr Pavemont ensures that neither generation provokes, questions nor antagonises his control of available information.

But eventually this knowledge rests with the children, for them to use as they wish, and such knowledge could be a form of empowerment. Implicitly, Lexie and Kent's experience of life leads them to question and essentially undermine the accepted and the familiar with regards to adult ideologies. However, as this knowledge is never shared between child and adult it remains rooted in Lexie's childness, as part of her flight of fancy into the historical past as she is prevented from taking agency in overtly exposing what she and Kent know as a truth.

Lexie's play space with Merrina, subject to the subversion of the natural laws of time, offers her a locale for personal freedom, thereby enabling her perspective (and the reader's) to be expanded, without losing sight of the reality of other people's more conventional life experience and attitudes. The other subversive message is to reassure children of the advantages of concealing their fantasy adventures, as significant aspects of their lives, from their parents. When Lexie confesses to Kent what she has witnessed, it becomes apparent that he knows a lot more than he reveals. Kent's reflection also underscores the difference between what children know and what adults will talk about:

> Yet he knew, if he told, they would not be left in peace. They would be dragged away as before – *with the best intentions* (my emphasis) – to some place where they could be fed and watched and studied by men who had taken their ancient land. Never again would they hunt like their forefathers or see the places and things they loved. The scientists would even grab their bones – hadn't they promised Truganini her grave should not be disturbed, and wasn't her skeleton soon hung in the Tasmanian Museum for all to gape at? It was still there, somewhere, as far as he knew (Chauncy, 1960, p. 122).

Kent's reflection is a reminder of a previous conversation regarding the remote possibility of Tasmanian Aborigines "hiding in the bush up there now" (Chauncy, 1960, p. 20). He also realises that attitudes towards them have not changed, that if living they would still be considered as the childlike exotic other, to be "dragged away … with the best intentions" (Chauncy, 1960, p. 122). This knowledge differentiates Kent from the collusive older generations, particularly with respect to the whites' "scientific" treatment of Tasmanian Aboriginal remains. Truganinni's skeleton in the Tasmanian Museum "for all to gape at" raises the issue of the reality of contemporary attitudes towards Indigeneity and a willingness to accept the defilement of a person's skeleton for the sake of science or as an object of voyeurism in a museum. Kent's speculation that "The scientists would even grab their bones" is a challenging confrontation of the past and historical treatment of Tasmanian Aboriginality which suggests that little has changed regarding white people's respect for their culture and remains. This perspective represents a radical shift in conscience and ideology for Chauncy who's first publication *They Found a Cave* depicts the protagonist Nig, as being financially rewarded for having "found the bones of a Blackfellow. A dinkum Tasmanian abo" (Chauncy, 1948, p. 168).

Kent's reflections are never shared with Lexie. However, Lexie is a catalyst for older brother Kent's evolving conscience. Not yet an adult, he gets caught in an electrical storm and experiences Lexie's timeslip:

> You know what you told me? It's still here, round these cliffs – I've seen it, Snowy! The cruelty of the white to the "inferior" black – inferior because

> he has nothing to protect himself with against a bullet except a sharp stick! Oh, it’s pitiful, how they were treated (Chauncy, 1960, p. 163).

Lexie and Kent never reveal to anyone what they know and how they know it. Hence, adult knowledge is never undermined, openly contested or corrected. Chauncy collaborates with her child readers to keep a secret and encourages them to do the same.

Both Kent and Lexie remain silent with regards to their new-found awareness of, and conscience about, the ways in which Aboriginal people were treated in Tasmania and their continuing treatment by the white population. Clearly, by raising the subject for her readers, Chauncy has engaged with it. Yet her child characters never achieve agency, hence they too participate in the lament for their passing. Their silence at this point could be interpreted as a way of maintaining the status quo of adult ideologies and hierarchies, and therefore security of home, property and land ownership. However, this silence is integral to Chuncy’s ambivalence as she recognises the problematic issue of collective guilt in which even non-violent settlers (and Pavemont ancestors) collaborated in an ethos of dispossession and marginalisation of Indigenous people. Chauncy’s use of subversion simultaneously challenges adult constructions of the child. Adults in the novel strive to maintain the innocence of children, by attempting to keep them ignorant of the appalling truths of human behaviour and their own community history. Chauncy’s fantasy confronts and disturbs the intergenerational silences that have existed in Lexie’s family for over a century. Through her as the focaliser, young readers can appreciate something of the truth of widespread genocide, and the cultural destruction that Australia’s Indigenous people suffered at the hands of white colonisers in their quest for land acquisition.

In *Tangara* Chauncy refers to events in Australian history, attitudes of early white settlers and destruction, without overt didacticism. She attempts to deal with what she believes to be the unpalatable truth, that the Tasmanian Aborigines have been exterminated by white settlers. Her novel was written at a time when, in a small community, it was still possible to trace this guilt through previous generations of Tasmania’s relatively permanent community, a time when the non-Indigenous community believed that Truganinni represented the last of her tribe. Great-great-aunt Rita’s “broken heart” and subsequent “decline” is offered as atonement for this, as explained by Lexie’s father: “They say Rita broke her heart about the natives, and what happened to them in the end, after Robinson rounded them up. Shouldn’t be surprised, if she’d got to know them. Good people, shockingly treated” (Chauncy, 1960, p. 179).

Mr Pavemont maintains silence which consolidates the hidden histories of previous generations of his family whereby his descendants, colonists of Van Diemen’s Land, accepted murder but were aware that it could not be discussed openly. As the custodian of this white coloniser version of history, Mr Pavemont has the last word on the subject on which Lexie, the protagonist, is voiceless, yet has experienced at a deeply personal level. Lexie is extremely aware that adults inhabit a world of silence. Through local knowledge and oral histories she becomes exposed to the politics of the past, whilst gaining an empathetic first hand view of history where Aborigines are dispossessed and murdered, and custodians of stories are killed off. Gradually she comes to appreciate that her own family is implicated in the land grab that enabled colonisers to settle and indefinitely possess the land.

Lexie’s friendship with Merrina is the catalyst for her evolving individual social and political conscience. The subversive message of this time warp fantasy, in the form of a revaluation of attitudes, and an exposure of previously undisclosed information for many readers, operates in the private rather than the public sphere. This is a recurring motif in the fantasy genre for it is the children, in their own private sphere, who are empowered with information who make the choice to conceal experience and acquired knowledge from their elders (see Lurie, 1990, p. 9). It is subtle affirmation that adults are not always right. Very often they are well intentioned (or at least, they believe themselves to be well intentioned), but they are unavoidably wrong. That is, their ideology is “flawed” and constructed to support their own power, status or position in society.

Chauncy’s collaboration with her child readers towards keeping secrets and hiding the truth underpins her ambivalence with regards to her authorial purpose. Ultimately, what does this secrecy achieve? For, finally, in the storm, when a large gum tree falls on the “black cleft” of the Black’s Gully, the story of the massacre of Merrina’s people is forever enclosed in silence. The final sentences of the novel sees Merrina, squatting “her thin arms reaching up imploringly … alone and calling to her dead” (Chauncy, 1979, p. 180). It is the recurring motif of Truganinni or Mathinna. This is the consolidation of Chauncy’s importation of doomed race theory into her novel. For Lexie, the focaliser of the narrative who invites reader identification, Merrina is the last living Tasmanian Aborigine.

Conclusion: Silence Ensures Ambivalence

In *Tangara,* Nan Chauncy has carefully trodden what she sees as the path of least resistance in exploring and exposing this history of genocide. At the time of its first publication such information was only just beginning to become publicly available and most school history books were treating the decimation of the Tasmanian Aboriginal race and culture as a natural “inevitability” of culture contact.

Chauncy’s ambivalence towards Indigeneity is reflected in the paternalism which filters through her narrative choices. The story is told from Lexie’s point of view. Hence, no other perspective is possible because, in *Tangara*, all the Aboriginal people have died out, thereby giving dominance to the non-Indigenous point of view. Yet, Lexie’s sparse dialogue belies her evolving status and conscience as a teenager, as Chauncy the narrator speaks *for her,* tells about her thoughts and actions. There is no chance that anyone other than the reader will get to know what she is thinking and what she knows since the men, especially Mr Pavemont, have the last word on the subject. As the owners of history, property and social power, they are the presenters of the “facts” regarding all the Tasmanian Aboriginal people. However, as Lexie’s older brother, Kent straddles both adult and child silences. Chauncy’s ambivalence therefore extends to the voice that she gives to her young female protagonist who never overtly challenges or admits to the dominant racist attitudes of her father and her community. As a writer, Chauncy does not invite an alternative reading to the dominant attitudes towards either gender or race.

In this novel, Chauncy’s sensitivity towards Tasmanian Indigeneity has evolved from the bland stereotypes and clichéd plot of her first novel, *They Found a Cave* (1948), to a perspective which is understood by some non-Indigenous readers as a potential message of reconciliation. Her annotation to the title, *Tangara* “Let us set off again” is a nebulous proposal to revisit place and time as well as contemporary attitudes in which her frontier setting enables child characters to come to terms with the truths of local and embedded history that is generally suppressed. In their negotiation of adult silence, the time-slip device allows child protagonists to have greater access to information and insight which is denied to adults. Hence the children's secret knowledge offers an alternative construction of history to that which is hierarchical, male and non-Indigenous. Chauncy's innovative approach to historical fantasy reveals the possibility that learning history on different levels can enhance knowledge and empathy as well as deep emotional understanding. The emotional tone of Chauncy's narrative is reiterated in Wildsmith's illustrations. Splashes and clouds of black ink evoke the drama of pivotal events; as for example, in Chapter 13 "Cruel White Faces" where illustration on the left hand page depicts the convicts holding rifles, on the rock ledge, looking down into the deep abyss of black (Chauncy, 1960, p. 108). Taking his cue from Chauncy's narrative, Wildsmith's black clouds and swirls suggest an explosion:

> Then everything happened at once. The heavy skies opened and hailstones rattled and bounced on the stone with a noise like shots. The hail changed to rain, but the sound of shots went on, with pitiful screams from children, and wails, and cries from people running this way and that to find an escape, knowing they were trapped (Chauncy, 1960, p. 109).

Rather than offering an interpretation of landscape and character, they operate as impressions of a dream or traumatic memory, a reiteration of Chauncy's thematic intention to privilege emotional understanding of human experience.

As historical fiction for children, *Tangara* pursues a means of seeing how the present is impacted upon by the past. The novel investigates how much children should know about this contested past, setting up a discord between the preservation of childhood innocence and the exploration of historical truth. Chauncy uses the time-slip fantasy to depict the awful truth of massacre and dispossession, yet she distances the ownership of history or participation in the historical events alluded to in the novel. Her exposure of the past includes implicit and explicit references to land usage and land ownership which is consolidated in her non-Indigenous characters' "sense of belonging" to the bush (Saxby, 1997, p. 97).

The narrative in Tangara remains haunted by the palimpsest of the Pavemont property's situation on Aboriginal ground. The family history of land and home ownership, the respectable house with "white posts [that] supported an elegantly curved veranda" (Chauncy, 1960, p.10), are reminders that Aboriginal ground that has been appropriated, erased from sight, but not from consciousness. Yet the conflict of settlement is carefully accommodated in the adults' version of history. However, the novel refuses to lay the past to rest, through its lack of closure, psychologically, for both Lexie and Kent. For the younger generation, their sense of belonging in a settler colony is informed by their "postcolonial sensibility exposed through trauma, memory and intellectual mourning" (O'Reilly, 2010, p. 122). The relationship between Lexie and Merrina is a poignant motif of what could have been, of irrevocable lost opportunity.

Chauncy's writing is both radical and conservative in that it simultaneously challenges and reinforces dominant ideologies. Her moral perspective is suggested by Mr Pavemont's seemingly throwaway comment "It makes you sick to remember how they were treated by the early settlers – not all, but most of them" (Chauncy, 1960, p. 20). Implicitly addressing "you" the reader, Chaucy asks them to "remember" and engage with this uncomfortable, underexplored, evasive history.

Chauncy's historical sources from the 1870s influenced her promotion of the Tasmanian Aborigine as innocent noble savage doomed to die. In 1960 historical information on the Tasmanian Aborigines was very limited (see Ryan, 2012, p. xxii), and in this sense Chauncy recycles assumptions and beliefs that were firmly embedded in the national consciousness. Consequently, in *Tangara* she has appropriated their nineteenth-century stereotypes and prescribed roles of Indigenous people, which are imported visually through Wildsmith's illustrations. Hence, her representation ensures that through Lexie (ultimately disempowered and bound to silence) the reader is left with the impression of the inevitability of extinction of Tasmanian Indigenous people, the loss of which reinforces the invisibility of contemporary Tasmanian Aboriginality.

In *Tangara*, Chauncy's depth of characterisation and depiction of relationships, achieved through concisely constructed dialogue, reflects a psychological credibility and social realism that has engaged readers for several generations. Yet, ideologically, her ambivalence towards her subject is constructed around silence and suppression. As a woman writer of her particular time and place she is very sure of her position regarding educating children, but she vacillates when it comes to challenging prevailing adult community views. Chauncy's ambivalence elides the opportunity for her readers to make links with the historical past to the social realities of the present, since ultimately the novel reinforces the status quo of social and racial hierarchy. Several years later, in *Mathinna's People*, Chauncy revisits the subject of Tasmanian Indigeneity with another story for young readers that laments their inevitable extinction.

Chapter 5

‘Sorrow for the Child of a Doomed Race’: Nan Chauncy’s *Mathinna’s People* (1967)

‘Inevitability’ in Chauncy’s Historical Fiction

Moving from historical fiction which embraces fantasy in *Tangara* (1960) to historical fiction in *Mathinna’s People* (1967), Nan Chauncy continues her engagement with the history of the genocide of the Tasmanian Aborigines. Fuelled by ideas whilst writing *Tangara*, Chauncy further demonstrates her desire to interpret “official” versions of history in *Mathinna’s People*. In this novel she explores the objective facts that are internalised and unquestioned by white ownership of history whilst she endeavours to represent history through the perspective of Tasmanian Aboriginal characters.

Written to “express the remorse of the white people for their treatment of Mathinna’s people, and their sorrow for the child of a doomed race” (Chauncy, 1967, p. 8), *Mathinna’s People* is far more condemning of the white treatment of Tasmanian Aborigines than is *Tangara*. Told from the Aboriginal perspective, the novel tells the story of Wyrum, the young chief of the Poynduc people, and his response to the Dutch explorers in 1642. The main story which follows is that of his descendant, Towterer, and his resistance to George Augustus Robinson’s colonising ambitions. The title *Mathinna’s People* is inspired by the plight of Mathinna, Towterer’s daughter, who is more widely remembered for her brief “adoption” by Lady Franklin, the wife of Governor John Franklin. The novel represents evidence of Chauncy’s deep reflection on the subject and her increased confidence as a storyteller, but is marred by archaic language, the structural complexity of multiple focal characters, as well as her own confusion over the magnitude of the history that she is attempting to represent.

Preceded by an expository introduction, “The Key in the Lock”, *Mathinna’s People* is comprised of nineteen chapters, an *Envoy* and a *Glossary*. The introductory chapter acknowledges the arrival of curious Europeans whose initial presence is transient, but whose colonising interests are made apparent to the reader. A sparsely sketched map of Tasmania indicates some significant locations in the story, including the birthplace of Towterer and his wife at Port Hibbs on the west coast, but omitting the locations of

Wyrum’s and Towterer’s traditional lands. However, the map does reflect the scale of displacement and dispossession that Towterer, chief of the Lowreene people, and his people were to suffer at the hands of the colonisers. Their final removal to the windswept Flinders Island off the northeast coast of Tasmania was a radical contrast to the densely wooded climate of their birthplace.

As validation of the authenticity of her historical interpretation, Chauncy’s text includes fragments of Tasmanian Aboriginal language (some of which is not included in the glossary). The use of *num* for “white devils” and their “magic sticks” (firearms) throughout the novel reinforces the Aboriginal voice of her narrative, as well as the naiveté of their perceptions of the colonisers’ intentions. However, at times, Chauncy’s employment of Aboriginal language sanitises the violence, the truth of massacre and effectively depersonalises the perpetrators.

Though, at the outset of the novel, Chauncy sees Robinson as “a courageous and sincerely religious man” (Chauncy, 1967, p. 6), it is clear that, as Foster and Finnis argue:

> Chauncy’s novels have no white saviours of these black people. There are whites who are sympathetic to the plight of the Aborigines, but those with the power to help misuse it, like the white conciliator, Mr Robinson, who gained the Aborigines’ trust, only to betray it (Foster and Finnis, 1995, p. 42).

Robinson’s persona dominates throughout the novel, as Chauncy reproduces his ideological paradigms, repeating his “friendly” conciliatory attitude towards a doomed race whose dispossession he engineered “for their own good”. However, Chauncy’s sorrow and lament for the lost race as the subject of her story progresses through a change of heart to an understanding of the roles and culpabilities of those who purported to protect the Tasmanian Aborigines. Initially Chauncy perceives Robinson and his superiors, Governor Sir John and Lady Franklin, as well meaning and sympathetic. However, she holds to account their actions as those in power, and interrogates the motives of these colonial heroes, eventually finding their behaviour as flawed and self-seeking.

Chauncy’s motives are quite transparent; to impart to her readers through her characters’ stories a sense of the tragedy of what she sees as the “inevitable” disintegration of Aboriginal culture following white settlement. The opening of the book makes this clear, as “They have vanished now from the earth” (Chauncy, 1967. p. 1). Chauncy’s euphemistic “vanished” has the tone of melancholy, but is employed as an apparently neutral term which suggests the enigma of disappearance, thereby avoiding the contentions of explanation. Chauncy’s language attributes no cause or blame, but the inevitability of their demise as a consequence of culture contact is assured since Mathinna’s people are essentialised as “Stone Age men, a primitive race discovered by early explorers” (Chauncy, 1967, p. 1).

“Inevitability” was the common discourse for the viewing of history in the era in which Chauncy wrote *Mathinna’s People*. The prediction of inevitable extinction fuelled the belief that “At a popular level, the Aboriginal death toll that was consequent upon their dispossession could be conveniently explained away as an inevitability of nature or of the Divine plan” (McGregor, 1998, p. 17). Inevitability enabled both writers and readers to be absolved of the complicity of political and social ideologies, thereby apportioning no blame to individuals or particular groups.

Historians Lyndall Ryan (2012) and John Boyce (2008) consider the forced removal of the western nations, which included Towterer’s people, as an act of ethnic cleansing that constituted genocide. Boyce states that “The sense of inevitability about what occurred to the Aborigines that still pervades Tasmanian history is a distortion of the historical record. It disguises the fact that the colonial government made a policy *choice*” (Boyce, 2008, p. 296). Though Chauncy never uses the word “genocide”, her representation of the “step-by-step approach of tragedy” (Wrightson, 1970, p. 31) acknowledges her understanding of the role that forced removal played in the “extinction” of a distinct Indigenous race.

Maurice Saxby comments that Chauncy’s novel is “a formal elegy to the passing of the aborigines … a dance of grief … a lament for the insensibility of our forefathers” (Saxby, 1971, pp. 200-221). His poetic vision of a “dance of grief” reinforces Chauncy’s ideological perspective of the inevitability of the tragic demise of all Tasmanian Aborigines. Saxby’s engagement with the melancholy of the era reflects how deeply entrenched these misrepresentations were.

Two decades after Saxby's response, Margaret Dunkle appreciates that *Mathinna's People* was written "from the Aboriginal point of view; no one had attempted such a thing before" (Dunkle, 1993, p. 24). Whilst she recognised its historical inaccuracies, Dunkle suggests that "There was little to work with at the time, save George Robinson's own journal". However, Dunkle also sees the novel as a "lament … a long overdue acknowledgement of stupidity and evil". Lees and MacIntyre comment on Chauncy's historicism when they state that "Much of the detail of Aboriginal life which Chauncy provides is now considered to be inaccurate, but the mistreatment of the Tasmanian people by whites is a historical fact" (Lees and MacIntyre, 1993, p. 291).

Shortly after Chauncy's death in 1970, Patricia Wrightson described *Mathinna's People* as "her most serious, most difficult, her best sustained and most important book." Wrightson also described Chauncy as "a writer of real influence", taking on the challenge of:

> The effort of stepping out of one's own racial personality into another as different as the Australian Aboriginal is a tremendous one to make, even briefly … [T]he vision she gained of Tasmania unmarred … the theme, with its inevitable, step-by-step approach of tragedy … lifted her to an extra height of perception and portrayal" (Wrightson, 1970, p. 31).

Mathinna's People is unquestionably Chauncy's "most serious" and "most difficult" book (Wrightson, 1970, p. 31) as she explores the impact of those held up to be Tasmania's colonial heroes, particularly that of Robinson and, to a lesser degree, Lady Franklin as "protectors" of what they perceived to be a doomed race. However, Chauncy's ideological interpretations of the history she wishes to depict, combined with incongruous structure and archaic language use that alienates her Indigenous characters, makes this book a complex narrative that secures her ambivalence towards the communication of her subject.

Solutions to the 'Aboriginal Problem', 'For their own Good'

For its time Chauncy's theme is a brave topic to be embraced by a writer of fiction for children, one that had not yet been thoroughly acknowledged or exposed in adult literature. While the histories of Australian Indigenous people began to be recognised in the 1980s on mainland Australia, in Tasmanian communities these histories and those of white settler participants still remained firmly hidden from view.

In 1967, the year of the publication of *Mathinna's People,* through an Australia wide referendum, Aboriginal people were recognised as "equal" citizens and included in the census. Though on mainland Australia it was apparent that the pessimistic forecast of the Aboriginal population was not in a state of demise, Chauncy's view of the Tasmanians as having "vanished now from the earth" (Chauncy, 1967, p. 1) is at odds with the reality of several thousand people who identified as Tasmanian Aborigines in the census of that year.

The conviction that Tasmanian Aborigines were extinct was transferred to mainland Aborigines as being in decline through "a view that the aboriginals barely exist, flitting lightly over a landscape that they do not possess" (Brantliger, 2003, p. 121). Those whose presence was visible comprised "the Aboriginal Problem", the solution of which was assimilation into white society, formalised in the Policy of Assimilation which advocated the genocidal practice of removing Aboriginal children from their families.[26] It is likely that Chauncy, like many Australians at the time, knew nothing of this continued practice. For example, my own school history exercise book, dated 1969-1970, has a section rationalising the removal of Aboriginal children to white foster homes and institutions, which I dutifully copied from the blackboard: "The Problem of The Aborigines", the concluding paragraph of which reads "It is difficult to assimilate members of a backward race who cling to past ways of life. Children must be saved from becoming victims of their parents' background" (Bromley, 1970). The popular appropriation of doomed race theory was "more than anything else … a manifestation of ultimate pessimism in Aboriginal abilities" (McGregor, 1998, p. 18), an ideological perspective which served to marginalise and exclude Aborigines from participation in mainstream Australian society.

As a fiction writer Chauncy appropriates contemporary ideologies regarding Tasmanian Aborigines. She acknowledges Robinson's "diaries ... are almost the only records made while the race still lived; they are the source of nearly all the information in this story" (Chauncy, 1967, p. 6), which she accessed through N. J. B. Plomley's 1966 *Friendly Mission*: *The Tasmanian Journals and Papers of George Augustus Robinson* 1829-1834. Plomley's volume of over 1000 pages is a challenging read for anyone and Chauncy was not a historian. Robinson was very conscious of the potential public readership of his journals as well as their role in the construction of history and his own persona. Plomley's publication of Robinson's journals made accessible "the complex and culpable character at the heart of the tragedy" (Pybus, 1988, p. 48). However, Chauncy's personal contact with Plomley and her application of his works undoubtedly informed her view, as "Plomley continued throughout his life to argue that Tasmanian Aborigines were extinct: angrily rejecting assertions by their descendants of continuing culture" (Lehman, 2010, quoting his personal communication with Julie Gough). The publication of *Friendly Mission* enabled greater global circulation of local Tasmanian historical information, including the claim that in the 1820s most colonists were "extirpationists at heart" (Plomley, 1966, p. 350). Johnston and Rolls suggest that *Friendly Mission*

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[26] The definition in the 1948 *UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide* includes 'forcibly transferring children of the group to another group' committed 'with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such'. It was ratified by Australia in 1949.

> stirs in readers emotions that are difficult to analyse: guilt, curiosity, anger, resistance, engagement, fascination. It provides evidence, which is self-evidently partial and not necessarily reliable, about a foundational period not only in the Australian colonies, but indeed in the nineteenth–century British Empire (Johnston and Rolls, 2008, p. 21).

Chauncy's use of Robinson's writings enables her detailed depiction of the past daily life and culture of the Aborigines. Initially, in *Mathinna's People*, Chauncy takes Robinson's own words at face value and does not critique his motives of evangelisation and "domestication" for his "friendly" natives. She completely overlooks his "religious" conviction and mercenary interests; Robinson succeeded in extracting a bounty of one thousand pounds for the capture of Towterer's west coast tribe from the colonial government (Rae-Ellis, 1981, pp. 64-65). Yet, her acknowledgement in *Tangara* of the writings of H. Ling Roth and James Bonwick as some of "the very few who recorded facts about the lost Tasmanian race" (Chauncy, 1960, Acknowledgements) suggests that she does pick up their incisive arguments that Robinson's attempts to civilize and convert the Aborigines to Christianity actually killed the last Tasmanians (see Chapter Two; Bonwick, 1884, p. 256; Roth, 1899, p. 5). Indeed, the tone and structure of *Mathinna's People* evokes Bonwick's affecting narrative:

> They had fought for the soil and were vanquished. They had lost fathers, brothers and sons in war. Their mothers, wives and daughters, harassed by continued alarms, worn by perpetual marches, enfeebled by want and disease, had sunk down one by one to die in the forest, leaving but a miserable remnant. Their children had been sacrificed to the cruel exaction of patriotism, and had perished of cold, hunger and fatigue (Bonwick, 1870, p. 226).

Chauncy's initial impression of Robinson's benign intention to "persuade them [the Tasmanian Aborigines] for their own good, to give themselves up" (Chauncy, 1967, p. 6), paraphrases Robinson's own words, as he had "the satisfaction of knowing their removal is for their own good" (Plomley, 2008, p. 762). "For their own good" also reflected the contemporary view which held that the Tasmanian Aborigines and their culture were unsupportable and deviant, thereby positioning any resistors as criminals fighting to maintain their freedom. However, Chauncy gradually undermines this popular perception through her depiction of the exhaustion and despair of Towterer and his people while attempting to elude Robinson's entrapment. As far as Chauncy was concerned, the decimation of the Tasmanian Aboriginal race and culture was an "inevitable" outcome of culture contact and ensuing settler violence. At the end of Chauncy's novel, Robinson emerges as an evasive liar who succeeds in totally demoralising Towterer and all of his people. Moreover, whilst she sees Robinson as the culpable agent who engineered the forced removal of the west coast tribes, she never openly acknowledges the important link between his (officially sanctioned) dispossession of the Tasmanian Aborigines and what she believed to be their total extinction.

Chauncy's novel acts as a form of historiography, based on historical sources which are themselves "partial and not necessarily reliable" (Johnston and Rolls, 2008, p. 21). Having understood Robinson's humanitarian assimilationist agenda of saving and redeeming the Tasmanian Aborigines by converting them to Christianity and pressuring them to adapt to European norms of civilisation (see Lester, 2008, p. 42), her appreciation of Robinson's role wavers as she demonstrates how the Indigenous perspective was not taken into account. Chauncy shows that Towterer and his people had no desire to be assimilated as she exposes the paternalistic attitude of knowing what was best for the Tasmanian Aborigines as a colonised people.

Real History: ‘The Uprooting and Betrayal’ of Towterer’s People

The story of Mathinna is, essentially, a device for readers to engage with the more complex and detailed story of Towterer, her father. The meaning of the novel rests not in the “legends” of Mathinna, but in Robinson’s role in the genocidal process of dispossession, “uprooting” and destruction of the Tasmanian Aborigines.

Robinson’s conciliation was achieved through his “friendly” engagement of a group of “tame” or “domesticated” Aborigines from Bruny Island in Tasmania’s southeast, which included Truganinni, Wooraddy and eventually Mannalargenna, chief of the Ben Lomond tribe. Robinson made a promise to Mannalargenna that if they captured the Big River Tribe, “they would be allowed to remain in their respective districts” (Robinson, as quoted by Boyce, 2010, p. 88). However, since Robinson was committed to removing all Aboriginal people from Van Diemen’s Land, he had no intention of honouring this promise. As a chief of one of the South West nations of the colonial period, “Towterer led the resistance to the removal from its country in the 1830s” (Ryan, 2012, p. 39) and played a pivotal role in Tasmanian Aborigines’ confrontations with the British (Ryan, 2012, p. 12). At the time, Towterer’s band comprised “several intact families with children” (Ryan, 2012, p. 214).

There was evident animosity towards Towterer and his people from Wooraddy, of whom Robinson wrote “Again he urges me to capture them. It is a most difficult undertaking and very hard to preserve peace among them” (Plomley, 2008, p. 171). Robinson’s journal entry of 21 May 1833 rationalised his use of firearms and duplicity against the west coast tribe, of having “the satisfaction of knowing their removal was for their own good” (Plomley, 2008, p. 762). As Robinson’s intentions and his increasing use of firearms gradually became known, relationships with his “tame” Aborigines began to erode.

Towterer’s Lowreene people of the west coast were the last tribal people of mainland Tasmania. Despite Governor Arthur’s reservations that they would pine away if taken from their country, Robinson pursued this ultimate act of dispossession as his "crowning glory" (Pybus, 1988, p. 51). Robinson first encountered Towterer in March 1830, near Port Davey in southwest Tasmania. He observed that Towterer, aged about thirty, was physically robust, tall, "stout" and "well proportioned" (Plomley, 2008, p. 163). Vigilant and suspicious regarding Robinson's cache of arms, after five days of camping and travel with the Conciliator, Towterer and his band eluded capture by slipping away during the night.

Eventually, in May 1833, Robinson ruthlessly expelled at gunpoint the "healthy, viable community living successfully in rugged territory where successive Europeans had not gained a foothold" (Pybus, 2008. p. 1). In their ensuing escape, the baby daughter of Towterer and Wongerneep was abducted by Wooraddy (or possibly inadvertently left behind). However it was Wooraddy who was seen triumphantly carrying the child on his shoulders, leading twelve Port Davey people through the streets of Hobart (Rae-Ellis, 1996, p. 94). The child, Djuke, became Robinson's bargaining point. Consequently, Towterer, his wife Wongerneep and what remained of their tribe were betrayed by Robinson and tricked into captivity (Pybus, 2008, p. 51). Robinson organised for Djuke to be sent to the Orphan School in Hobart, where she died two years later in 1835. By this time her parents had been exiled to Flinders Island, where in the same year they had a second daughter, whom they named Mary, later to be renamed Mathinna.

Robinson, who was wont to give all his protégés ludicrous names, renamed Towterer King Romeo, thereby completely stripping him of his personal as well as cultural identity. Towterer died a broken man on 30 September 1837; the settlement doctor, according to Robinson, stated that he "died a victim to his own obstinacy" (Plomley, 1987, p. 481). The next day, as an attentive observant of the post mortem, Robinson commented that the body of "Romeo or TOWTERER … an old acquaintance of mine" was decapitated (Plomley, 1987, p. 481). It is highly likely that Robinson engineered this decapitation, as, soon afterwards Towterer's grave was "looted and his remains were sold to collectors, possibly in England or Europe" (Ryan, 2010, p. 101).

Real History: Mathinna and the Franklins

Towterer's death left his wife and child even more vulnerable to the depredations and the duplicitous intentions of Robinson. In 1838,

> Sir John Franklin and his intrepid wife visited Flinder's Island … when Robinson undertook to supply the couple with skulls for their collection. Always a keen observer of autopsies, Robinson had been systematically obtaining skulls by decapitating corpses and boiling down the flesh … His own collection included the head of Pevay's brother, who had grown up in his service, Pendowterer, and several others … He was pleased to send Lady Franklin and her private secretary one skull apiece (Pybus, 1991, p. 147).[27]

As well as supplying the required skulls, Robinson promptly gratified Lady Franklin's request "to get a black boy for her", Adolphus, an orphan of about ten, in January 1839 (Pybus, 1991, p. 147).[28] Robinson ordered that Mary, like her older sister before her, and all the other children be removed from their families and community, to live with the catechist Robert Clark (Pybus, 1991, p. 144). Early in 1840 Robinson took Mary, changed her name to the more exotic "Mathinna", and presented her as a gift to Lady Franklin, who wrote that "our little native girl" was the only Aboriginal allowed to remain on mainland Tasmania "though it will be a long time before she becomes quite civilised" (entry, Lady Franklin's journal, as quoted in Pybus, 2008, p. 1). However, Mathinna's residence with the Franklins was short lived since in 1843 the Franklins were ordered back to England and advised to leave Mathinna behind, for fear that she would perish in the English climate. As a prestigious and nostalgic memento Lady Franklin commissioned Thomas Bock to paint Mathinna's portrait.

Like his contemporaries, Bock's paintings and sketches were executed in the "desire for ethnographic records, prompted by the belief that the Tasmanian Aboriginals would soon be extinct" (Bonyhardy, 1987, p. 22).[29] Lady Franklin's motives were a combination of ethnographic intentions and a desire to present Mathinna as an example of a “domesticated” native. When Mathinna sat for this portrait, the childless middle-aged Lady Franklin already knew that she had to find another home, to dispose of her so-called protégé. Perhaps Mathinna herself might have even known this at the time.

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[27] Robinson continued to trade in Aboriginal skulls until his death in 1866. Upon his death his collection of skulls and water colours of The Tasmanian Aboriginal people formed part of his estate (see Plomley, 1965).

[28] By the summer of 1839/40 Adolphus was "running wild in the town whenever he could, associating with the most depraved and corrupt, and preferring the most miserable quarters of town". However, at the age of fourteen he was taken on as a cabin boy on one of the colonial vessels (Plomley, 1968, p. 50).

[29] From October 1831 to September 1835, Bock painted fourteen portraits of Tasmanian Aborigines for Robinson for inclusion in a book which Robinson was proposing to write (see Plomley, 1991, p. 35).

By the time Lady Franklin “adopted” (or stole) Mathinna, the notion of the inevitable extinction of the Tasmanian Aborigines was firmly entrenched. Lady Franklin’s subsequent abandonment of Mathinna’s to the horrors of the children’s orphanage in Hobart may have been justified by a colonial attitude which advocated that Aboriginal children be sent to Orphan Asylums, “where, mixing with a numerous population of white children, they will gradually imbibe their ideas, manner and customs too” (Cunningham and Macmillan 1966/1827, p. 25). Aged sixteen when she left the orphanage, Mathinna had not achieved Lady Franklin’s expectations of becoming “quite civilised”. Not long afterwards she fell victim to the predations of the male dominated convict settler society.

Bock’s portrait of *Mathinna* was on permanent display in the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery in Hobart from May 1951 until the 1980s.[30] *Mathinna’s People* omits reference to Bock’s portrait, yet, according to Chauncy’s biographer, Bernice Eastman, the portrait was definitely an inspiration to her (Eastman, unpublished notes) and is emulated in Victor Ambrus’ ghostly sketch of Mathinna as an iconic reference in the novel (Chauncy, 1967, *frontispiece* and p. 159). As one of the first to draw literary inspiration from Bock’s portrait, Chauncy has seen the poignancy and the vulnerability of the innocent black girl child as an iconic representation of the last of her race.

Lady Franklin’s journal quotes a letter which Mathinna wrote to her father, her mother’s second husband: “I am a good little girl … I do love my father … I have got a doll and shift and a petticoat … I have got sore feet and shoes and stockings … I am very glad”. N. J. B. Plomley provided a copy of this letter to Chauncy, which she quotes in her sentimental *Envoy* at the end of her novel (Chauncy, 1967, p. 160).

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[30] Lady Franklin took the portrait with her to England, but Bock made a second copy of the portrait which remained in Hobart.

Chauncy’s Legendary Mathinna

In *Mathinna’s People*, all major characters actually lived, with the exception of Wyrum. Whilst Chauncy assumes that the reader is yet to be informed of the historical “truth” of the tragic demise of the Tasmanian Aborigines, she also reminds readers that hers is a rewritten version of events. However, her representation of Mathinna is fraught with confusion. Chauncy’s biographer, Berenice Eastman, states that “Evidently Chauncy realised that there was not enough substance in her research to write a novel about Mathinna. Heeding her publisher’s advice … Nan moved the pitifully brief story of Mathinna, as known, into a mere prologue and final *Envoy*” (Eastman, d.u., p. 76). Eastman’s comments explain the structural anomalies of the novel in which the three focal characters are depicted through disconnected and stylistically diverse narratives.

Chauncy offers an interpretation of the consequences of colonisation on individual Tasmanian Aborigines that invites reader empathy. As a writer of historical fiction, Chauncy is “stretching her imaginative capacity to understand others” (Davison, 2000, p. 268), specifically with the fate of the Tasmanian Aborigines, through her representation of Towterer’s and Mathinna’s stories.

The first expository chapter, “The Key in the Lock”, attempts to unlock the history surrounding the mythology of Mathinna and her people. However, Chauncy’s confused collation of what she claims are the legends surrounding Mathinna undermine her authorial intentions, predicated by “the remorse … and their sorrow” of the white people that she extends to her readers (Chauncy, 1967, p. 8). Chauncy’s ambivalence extends to Sir John and Lady Franklin, who are presented as a kindly couple who had the best interests for those who were left of “the ancient race”, showing “their sympathy with those who were left of the ancient race in many practical ways, giving employment to more than one youth at Government House, and receiving at different times two orphan children” (Chauncy, 1967, p. 6).

Before she was abandoned by her mistress, Mathinna played an iconic role in the promotion of Lady Franklin’s philanthropic causes. According to Chauncy’s “legends”:

> [Mathinna] was said to arrive at Government House naked, carrying the dowry of a king's daughter - a shell necklace, a rush basket, a kangaroo skin, and a pet possum. Lady Franklin was said to have adopted her, then to have cast her heartlessly aside when she returned to England (Chauncy, 1967, p. 7).

Mathinna's adoption, the exhibition of her as "the belle of the balls at Government House" and her abandonment (all of which are historically acknowledged) are subsequently dismissed by Chauncy as "legends [that] are not true":

> Though the legends are not true, they do express the remorse of the white people for their treatment of Mathinna's people, and their sorrow for this child of a doomed race, educated for their world who was yet refused a place in it. But no legend is more terrible or heartbreaking than the actual uprooting and betrayal of her people (Chauncy, 1967, p. 8).

Chauncy's alternate assertions and denials of documented anecdotes regarding Mathinna reflect an examination of history as a narrative, constructed through a process of selection and exclusion, which builds a representation. However, this instability also reveals the difficulties Chauncy faces in translating this historical information for younger readers. Her ambivalence lies in negotiating the problematic overlap between her own evolving awareness of historical complicity and her uncertainty in managing that guilt, textually.

At this point, it is not clear what direction her story will take. It is not obvious as to whether the story will be about Mathinna, "the child of a doomed race", or "the actual uprooting and betrayal of her people". The title of the novel strongly suggests that Mathinna will play a leading role as focaliser of the story, yet this ultimately is not the case.

Chauncy's confused construction of Mathinna constitutes her as an object "of study and white benevolence" (Bradford, 2001, p. 124), in which Mathinna is romanticised and, unconsciously, sexualised as she draws attention to her naked body, later clothed in a red dress, briefly transformed into a little black princess. Chauncy's fairy tale of the legendary Mathinna is revisited in the last paragraphs of her enigmatic and expository *Envoy*, which juxtaposes Mathinna's lack of "happiness" in "her brief life - a tragic one ending in squalor and despair", with a vision of her as she "runs happily down the steps of old Government House to the waiting carriage, dressed in her dainty red dress, ready for the delights of driving through the streets of Hobart Town in the

Governor's carriage" (Chauncy, 1967, p. 160). Chauncy's fantasy reincarnation of Mathinna running free "with her sister Djuke over the long beaches of the west, and hide where the white men cannot find her" (Chauncy, 1967, p. 160) is an inference that resonates of her previous allusion to Mathinna's unmentionable fate in *Tangara* (see Chauncy, 1960, p. 20).

'True and Tragic' Events

In *Mathinna's People* Chauncy pursues her "move towards freedom and truth and exploration" (Wrightson, 1970, p. 30) already evidenced in *Tangara*. The first page of the introductory chapter of *Mathinna's People* invites readers to "turn the key of reading in the lock of the following pages" in which she promises that her story "will have no secrets from you. The events are true, and tragic. There is no 'happy ending'" (Chauncy, 1967, p. 1). Her tone for her young readers at this point is formal and didactic. As the omniscient adult narrator she is well aware of the tragedy of the "ending" of her story, but, in 1967, her young readers including Tasmanians were most likely to be unfamiliar with Towterer's individual story.

Chauncy's narrative in "The Key in the Lock" assumes the role of the omniscient historian. Like other contemporary publications on the subject of the Tasmanian Aborigines and their way of life, Chauncy's text ascribes the Aborigines' failure to survive to their own technological backwardness. Chauncy informs the reader that "Mathinna's people were really Stone Age men" who, after crossing the land bridge that separated them from the mainland, were "left like stranded whales when the tide goes out", as their boat making technology, "rafts made of rolled bark … were frail things, too weak to cross" back to the mainland (Chauncy, 1967 p. 1). Hence they "developed more tardily" having "no friendly neighbour to teach them to put a handle to the stone axe, no enemy" to facilitate 'improved' technology (Chauncy, 1967, p. 1). Her clichéd expression, "stranded whales" contributes to her construction of them as passive, unthinking, helpless and lacking in a more sophisticated technology which would ensure their future as a race capable of survival and assimilation.

The young chief Wyrum is an unobserved witness to the arrival of the strangers and the planting of the Dutch flag on Tasmanian soil. After this "a hundred and thirty undisturbed years were to roll by like summer waves" (Chauncy, 1967, p. 3) before the "laughing, brown Loonty children" (Chauncy, 1967, p. 4) make contact with the Frenchman, Marion Du Fresne, to examine the "wonder" of his ships:

> The French in particular – indeed all the early explorers – tried to understand and make friends with the natives they encountered. Unhappily they did not know either the language or the customs of this race, and gave great offence through misunderstanding (Chauncy, 1967, p. 4).

The alleged offence of this first culture contact is unexplained, other than they "gave great offence through misunderstanding" the "customs of this race" (Chauncy, 1967. p. 4). The shift from the active to the passive voice annihilates any blame for misbehaviour or misadventure: "Spears were thrown – and French muskets replied" (Chauncy, 1967. p. 4). Muskets have their own voice and so "The ships sailed on, leaving a man of the Loonty dead on the beach; and a great dread of men with pale skins and their deadly 'magic sticks' was born" (Chauncy, 1967, p. 4).

Chauncy's exposition offers a deficit model of cultural and technological evolution in which Tasmanian Aborigines are blamed for their own failure, as technologically they were not robust enough to improve and adapt to their own environment, an echo of her mentor's (Fletcher) ideology. Ideologically preceding the more complex story of Towterer's dispossession, readers are positioned to read the whole novel as one of doom and tragedy. The Tasmanian Aborigines' maladaptation is reinforced by an authorial assumption of their world view. With regards to their isolation "of course, they came to believe themselves the only people in the world, and their island – about the size of Ceylon – the entire earth" (Chauncy, 1967 p. 1). The inclusion of Ceylon as a reference point assumes specific cultural literacy on the part of readers and a visual understanding of the scope of the British Empire. The comment, however, reinforces superior white general knowledge over Tasmanian Aboriginal parochialism.

Depicting and Managing Frontier Contact

Chauncy's depiction of Tasmanian Aborigines as an ancient society subjected to devastating change incorporates a representation of their lifestyle and spiritual beliefs. As the starvation of the white colonisers impacts on the Aboriginal population, she explains their dispossession:

> It was the native people who now starved. Their game was shot ruthlessly, the ground they had cleared so carefully to attract game for hunting was taken for farms, and they were forced away. On the beaches their women were captured by sealers and taken away to club and skin seals for their profit. Even their children were snatched by settlers, and brought up to work for them as little better than slaves (Chauncy, 1967, p. 5).

The relationship between “their children … snatched by settlers” and Robinson’s abduction of both of Towterer’s daughters, firstly Djuke, then Mathinna on behalf of Lady Franklin, is an important motif in the novel. Mathinna was “snatched” and first sent to Robert Clark the catechist, then passed on to Lady Franklin. However, Chauncy’s allusions to the tragic consequences of early black and white relations, “little better than slaves”, euphemise the murderous intentions of a frontier mentality which included sexual exploitation and physical abuse. Chauncy states that Governor Arthur has no control beyond the settled areas. “The once friendly natives of the east were now driven to revenge”. Their reprisals resulted in them being regarded “not as men but as dangerous snakes to be killed whenever seen” so that “Soon, only a remnant of the race remained” (Chauncy, 1967, p. 5), a reference to the most violent period in Tasmania’s history, the first thirty years of white settlement in which Tasmanian Aborigines were the subjects of massacre and major dispossession.

Governor Arthur’s afterthought of saving the remnants of this genocidal process by peaceful means, through the strategy of The Black Line, is for Chauncy “a complete failure – it became a joke, for the natives walked quietly away between the soldiers and armed settlers during the night” (Chauncy, 1967, p. 6). Chauncy’s parroting of Robinson’s own words: “He was a courageous and sincerely religious man … whose duty it was to persuade them for their own good, to give themselves up” confirms the role that his “friendly natives” came to play, that “without them he would never have succeeded in capturing and removing all the ‘wild’ to Flinders’ Island” (Chauncy, 1967, p. 6), a theme that she explores through Towterer’s story.

In acknowledging the role of colonisers in the officially condoned destruction of Tasmanian Aborigines, Chauncy appropriates the colonial discourse of “courage” “religious” and “duty”, Robinson’s evangelical interpretation of the “white man’s burden”. His paternalistic relationship with Aborigines, who are polarised into “wild” and “friendly natives”, is naturalised into her text.

Wyrum, Ancient Noble Savage

For the dialogue of her pre-contact Aboriginal characters, Chauncy elects a code of language which attempts "to construct the literary illusion of an older discourse" (Stephens, 1992, p. 237). Implicitly, this discourse resounds of noble savage ideology, in which their use of English is "reshaped" (Stephens, 1992, p. 237) to suggest the language of a noble people who were made extinct in the time frame of the novel. Consequently, the linguistic complexities of this novel make it difficult for reader identification with characters. This is particularly true of the focal character of Wyrum, an ancient noble savage depicted through archaic, invented language structures and animalistic imagery.

Chauncy's visualisation of the coloured other is stereotyped through drawing attention to Wyrum's skin, hair, teeth and nakedness. Introduced as he "scratched his gleaming brown skin", he "was vain of his hair" (Chauncy, 1967, p. 10) and "his smiling mouth showed strong white teeth" (Chauncy, 1967, p. 11); "Apart from a cloak of kangaroo skin he wore no clothing, and needed none" (Chauncy, 1967, p. 10). However, for Chauncy "gleaming brown skin" and "strong white teeth" are indicators of healthy robust people. Happy in his wild state, his primitiveness is reinforced, as "Wyrum's broad nostrils drew in many scents", "His nostrils flared" (Chauncy, 1967, pp. 11, 15) when he senses the first arrival of the white men.

The young chief Wyrum communicates with his late father who "had coughed his life away and left the Tribe" (Chauncy, 1967, p. 11). Wyrum's spiritual beliefs are represented through his interactions with his spirit rock, his *parllerde,* which gives him insight and inspiration. His dialogue denotes that these events are happening in the distant past, "Now do I go to the *parllerde*" (Chauncy, 1967, p. 12). His language is consistently artificial as, when he helps Loonty people escaping from sealers, "I welcome you to fire and food!" (Chauncy, 1967, p. 17). Cautious and diplomatic as a negotiator, he is also quick to lose his temper with his own kind: "An old woman, growing too bold, was heard to say the strangers were demons as well as barbarians. Wyrum flung his waddy - it caught her a crack on the side of her head that silenced her" (Chauncy, 1967, p. 23).

Wyrum's sighting of the Dutch ship, "A whale? … a gigantic butterfly" (Chauncy, 1967, p. 35) becomes immortalised in a *korobarra*, that interprets history for several generations of the Poynduc People. Hence, when three generations later, Dayna, "laughing girl of the Loonty" sights Wyrum's "whale" (Chauncy, 1967, p. 51), her people understand the malevolent intentions of the intruders, the *num*. But the Loonty soon fall victim to the power of the "magic sticks" of "the white devils" (Chauncy, 1976, p. 79), who take over the empty lands, under the principle of *terra nullius*. The collaborative role of settlers who evidently felt justified in their behaviour is muffled through the naive perspective of the colonised.

The Uprooting and Betrayal of Towterer's People

Chauncy's subsequent telling of Towterer's story explores the thematically complex interactions between several characters, through Towterer's gradual realisation of the impact of white colonisation on the Tasmanian Aborigines. The dense detail of the story is supported by a shift in perspective which privileges Towterer's response to what he recognises as betrayal by Robinson and Woorrady.

Initially, Chauncy depicts Towterer's west coast tribe as isolated from encroaching white colonisation, leading an idyllic life. "No one was more happy than Towterer when he was small" (Chauncy, 1967, p. 84). "The story tells how Towterer grew up in the bush, grew like a young sapling in the sunshine; he owned nothing – not even clothes" but, importantly, "He never went hungry" (Chauncy, 1967, p. 5). Throughout the novel, Towterer is endowed with a totemic identification with the trees, which is symbolised in the "uprooting" which he and his people experience. His determination to protect his tribal lands is presaged in his youthful courage of driving away the *num* with stones and spears from Toogee territory. Towterer's understanding of his own impending uprooting is fuelled by his witnessing of the environmental devastation wrought by the *num*'s "magic sticks", axes and guns, a foreshadowing of the destruction of his people.

Maintaining the archaic discourse that supports Wyrum, the character of Towterer introduces a new moral commitment which reflects his engagement with environmental and humanistic concerns. Towterer witnesses the betrayal of the *num* as they "touched the trees … lovingly", then "The sharp teeth bit deep, the tree moaned. When it could suffer no more, the tree screamed and shuddered and fell down" (Chauncy, 1967, p. 91). Uprooted from their land, Towterer and his people's journey of realisation of the destruction of his own and other tribes enables a depiction of kinship relationships, spirituality and social interaction that are all irrevocably disrupted by their dispossession. Towterer's lost naiveté precipitates his defiance of his dying father, the chief's orders; " 'Do not fight the *num!*' Towterer listened with dismay: not fight the evil *num*? Not take revenge? Was he a coward?" (Chauncy, 1967, p. 93).

In *Mathinna's People* Towterer's courageous resistance to Robinson's promise of a safe haven upholds his people's attachment to their land. Towterer's opposition, "Why should we leave our own country … to run away from our *parllerde* cliffs and the land of our Old Ones?" extracts some crucial information: "This *num* is more powerful than our Old Ones … This *num* has magic sticks and axes" (Chauncy, 1967, pp. 100-101). Towterer's realisation of Robinson's power to attract and dominate Tasmanian Aborigines is confirmed by what he learns of Woorrady. In the politics of betrayal, Woorrady's collaboration with 'Meester' Robinson, with Trugernanna, his *lore*, as translator and intermediary is guilefully disempowering to Towterer.

Chauncy's narrative acknowledges the significance of place for Towterer and his people, of his emotional and spiritual attachment to his homeland. The massacre of his people and the wanton destruction of their village and the surrounding environment that supports their food supply position them as fugitives. The pivotal chapter 15, "Hunted in Their Own Land", depicts the psychological complexities of frontier confrontation for Towterer, as well as the ensuing exhaustion and demoralisation of the vestiges of his people as they attempt to avoid capture or being killed.

Towterer's perspective of Robinson and Woorrady becomes predominant in the narrative. Accompanied by "white devils", Robinson becomes "Chief of all the white devils" (Chauncy, 1967, p. 127). Towterer's contempt for Robinson's dependence on his friendly natives, "Their Chief cannot swim! … See, he sits on it [the *ningher* raft] alone; the women swim with it across the water" (Chauncy, 1967, p. 120), is transferred to Woorrady, who Towterer sees as “fat” and arrogant (Chauncy, 1967, p. 123). Remarking on “the secret sneers of Woorrady and his people” (Chauncy, 1967, p. 129) reinforces Towterer’s mistrust of Robinson’s promises that if they go with him they will be saved from the violence.

Apart from his long term animosity with the Toogee, Woorrady’s motives for his collaboration with Robinson are unclear in the novel. However, his reiteration of Robinson as a “friend” invites the interpretation that Woorrady appreciated Robinson’s “protection” from further violence. Chauncy’s characterisation of Woorrady ensures that he does not demonstrate the same loyalty to his people and land that Towterer does. Towterer’s resistance lies in his traditional and spiritual attachment to his land, of being able “to visit the *parllerde* cliffs of our Old Ones” (Chauncy, 1967, p. 131), which Robinson recognises in one of his empty promises: “The Toogee shall return later to visit their own bush again” (Chauncy, 1967, p. 131). Despite the defections of people close to him and Woorrady’s claim that Robinson’s cache of “magic sticks” that make him “powerful … but he will not kill you. He wishes to be your friend” (Chauncy, 1967, p. 123), Towterer remains unswayed.

Chauncy’s characterisation of Towterer invites a close critique of Robinson’s rationalisation of protection of the Aborigines whilst securing the unimpeded progress of the settlers, whose own behaviours are never explicated. The destruction of Towterer’s immediate family group is seen as pivotal to Robinson’s successful capture of the last of the west coast Tasmanian Aborigines. Towterer’s resistance is finally quashed when Woorrady, assisted by Mannalargenna, attempts to take him hostage, and little Djuke is abducted in the melée. After “Woorrady had taken their child, too, and all their people” (Chauncy, 1967, p. 138), Towterer is positioned in an unwinnable situation, forced to leave his injured mother behind to die alone, as he attempts to reclaim his daughter. Robinson’s treacherous proposal to Towterer: “She waits for you at Wybalenna, on the Island where no bad men can come. Do you wish to join your child?” (Chauncy, 1967, p. 139)[31], secures the final undermining of Towterer’s family integrity. The “uprooting and betrayal” of Towterer is thereby consolidated.

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[31] This is one of Chauncy’s “historical inaccuracies”, as Djuke was sent to the Queen’s Orphan school.

Dispossessed and exiled to “this stinking place”, Wybalenna, on Flinders Island, the ultimate demoralisation and decline of Towterer and his people is depicted through Chauncy’s reiterated archaic and formalised language: “The days were passed in long misery; the days walked by more slowly than an old tree growing” (Chauncy, 1967, p. 142). Towterer’s totemic relationship with trees is reiterated in this passage:

> The tree they sat on might well weep! Few were the trees in this place, and this had been a good friend shading them from the heat of Sun – till the white men took life away with the cruel axe. None remained now before the line of huts that Meester Robeenson looked at so proudly, and called ‘cottage’. He did not like trees (Chauncy, 1967, p. 151).

The fate of the trees personifies Towterer’s state of health, his virility as a progenitor and tribal leader that ensures the continuity and capacity to look after the interests of his people. Inferentially, Robinson’s dislike of trees underpins his ignorance and disregard of the spiritual and physical well being of his captives. Robinson’s elusiveness regarding his promise to Towterer that he and his people could return to his *parllerde* and sacred places is seen as instrumental to Towterer’s complete breakdown.

Chauncy depicts Woorrady enjoying the privilege of spearing sheep at Wybalenna while others are starving. Whereas Woorrady remains unrepentant and is rewarded for his bellwether role in capturing the Toogee (and others), Chauncy suggests that Trugernanna realised the import of her close relationship with Robinson; “She looked frightened as she hurried on, and her eyes were sorrowful” (Chauncy, 1967, p. 147). For Chauncy, Trugernanna is another victim of Robinson’s betrayal of exile on Wybalenna as she also experiences the ultimate loss of cultural identity brought about by Robinson’s renaming of all his captive Aborigines. As Trugernanna becomes “Lallah Rookh”, Towterer is renamed “Romeo” and forced to refer to Robinson as “zur”. Robinson’s renaming simultaneously lampoons Towterer’s sexuality and his status as chief. Towterer wonders that “Can a name that is not his own please any man?” (Chauncy, 1967, p. 155). Such is Chauncy’s ironic iteration of Shakespeare’s character, Romeo, who was doomed to die, in Towterer’s questioning of the worth and the durability of his own name:

> What’s in a name? That which we call a rose / By any other name would smell as sweet (*Romeo and Juliet*, Act 11, Scene ii, Lines 1-2).

Chauncy's theme of "uprooting and betrayal" in *Mathinna's People* is imbued with a sense of impending doom and devastation. In her depiction of colonial history, Chauncy seems to be looking for heroes. However, in acknowledging the culpability of the colonisers, Robinson's "lies" remain unexplained and Lady Franklin loses her status as surrogate mother. As representatives of government authorities both these characters clearly fail in their self appointed roles as "protectors". Towterer's intransigence ennobles him, and he also fails as a protector of his people, but as Saxby suggests, the novel's "difficulty probably lies in the fact that many readers cannot accept a whole race in the character of a hero" (Saxby, 1971, p. 48).

A close reading of *Mathinna's People* reveals Chauncy's insight into the ethics of coloniser behaviours, as she depicts traitors, collaborators, bystanders and resistance. Although in the 1960s writers and historians were not fully conscious of the concept of genocide as it pertains to Aboriginal people in Australia (see Tatz, 1999), Chauncy's novel opens up new territory in children's fiction for this discussion. Moreover, for its time, Chauncy's "sorrow for the child of a doomed race" is a significant acknowledgement of societal guilt in the formation and maintenance of a settler colony that pervades the psyche of race conflict. As Colin Tatz suggests, "Acknowledgement is also an expression of regret, remorse, sorrow, a sense of shame – and not necessarily personal guilt" (Tatz, 1999, p. 43).

Conclusion: Reframing Mathinna and Her People

> "A favourite picture, reframed, becomes a new picture, and we remember what it was that first attracted us" (Garfield, 1988, p. 741).

In lamenting her sorrow for the child of a doomed race, Chauncy's ideological position underpins a desire to promote or inform a change of attitude in the reader regarding the demise of a race of people. However, there are some obvious shortcomings in her eulogy for Mathinna and her people as Chauncy proceeds to tell the story of Mathinna, "the last one of the west coast tribes. Not long after she died the race had vanished like a puffed-out candle, the last of them being Trugernanna, a faithful friend of Mr. Robinson, the Conciliator" (Chauncy. 1967, p. 7).[32] Whereas

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[32] Mathinna died in 1856. Truganinni died twenty years later.

Chauncy's historicism is constrained by her Victorian sources, namely Bonwick and Robinson's own journals, which were detailed historical studies of their day, these works were becoming superseded by more modern interpretations of colonial history which acknowledged the contemporary presence of Tasmanian Aborigines. However, the novel does reflect Chauncy's questioning of the attitudes of those who exemplify colonial heroes towards a race which was perceived as inevitably doomed to extinction, as she incorporates a view of Robinson's role in their final demise. Moreover, Chauncy's depiction of the dispossession, exile and cultural devastation as a "step-by-step approach" of what amounts to genocide, avoids or neutralises the officially condoned violence and atrocities which were integral to the success of the complete annihilation of what she perceived as a whole race of people. Ultimately, her clichéd conclusion reflects her ambivalence towards her theme, as she draws her readers back into a sentimentalised flashback to the imagined idyllic freedom of Mathinna and her sister, Djuke, in their eternity running over "the long beaches of the west", reiterating the evocation that only in death was Towterer "free" and able to be reunited with his people. Consequently, Chauncy's image of Mathinna is reframed in a childist discourse that undermines the importance of her theme.

Chauncy's task in *Mathinna's People* sets out to elicit "sorrow for a doomed race", yet, for her, the subject matter proves extremely difficult as she faces the facts of power and responsibility in this convoluted narrative. However, as historical fiction, this is a brave attempt to fill a gap, as is her motivation to expose a harsh reality to younger readers, thereby rendering "dehumanizing events" accessible to her readers (see Giancolo, 1981). Undoubtedly, Chauncy unlocks a gate to historical truth, one that opens up possibilities for imagination and empathy. As she deconstructs the inevitability which is set up by her expository introduction, "The Key in the Lock", she clearly positions the blame for the total destruction of the Tasmanian Aborigines on Robinson. However, Chauncy's silence regarding settler and official culpability in this history does open up questions for the reader.

"For their own good" is a paternalistic rationale which underpins the ideological perspectives of colonisation, but it is also a message which children often hear. Reading between the lines, Chauncy's implicit meaning invites children to re-think the clichéd ethnocentric attitudes of their elders. She also questions the notion of accepting history at face value, as she opens up the question of intention. Initially seen as “disappearance”, Chauncy’s confidence in what she understands as the total loss of a race of people becomes paramount as her understanding of genocide is seen from the perspective of Aborigines on the frontiers of colonisation. Her representation of the genocidal process alludes to massacre and dispossession, as well as destruction of home, environment and food supply, cultural desecration, and kidnapping of Aboriginal people in Tasmania. As a way of destroying a community or an ethnic group, child stealing is a particularly compelling strategy in the novel, for neither Djuke nor Mathinna survives to become parents.

Chauncy is the first writer of Australian children’s literature to represent the impact of colonisation from the perspective of the Tasmanian Aborigines. Since its publication in 1967, no other children’s writer from Tasmania has attempted to understand the genocidal process that Chauncy explores in *Mathinna’s People.*

Mathinna’s People as historical fiction made direct and explicit use of historical sources to suggest that the forced removal of Tasmanian Aborigines from their home lands was directly responsible for their total demise. Chauncy’s view of their total extinction was unequivocal. The next chapter in this study explores the notion of the last Tasmanian Aborigine(s) struggling to survive the dispossession and genocide of their people. Harnessing the lost child motif in Australian colonial fiction, Beth Roberts’s *Manganinnie* (1979) and Pat Peatfield Price’s *The Hills of the Black Cockatoo* (1981) are also written as elegies for a doomed race.

Chapter 6

Lost in the Bush: Beth Roberts's *Manganinnie* (1979) and Pat Peatfield Price's *The Hills of the Black Cockatoo* (1981)

> Nothing is more valuable to us than our children, nothing so irreplaceable, so precious, so beloved. The history of white Australians is marred by children lost in the bush, children spirited away by unknown agents (Bird, 1998, *The Stolen Children and Their Stories*, p. 10).

Introduction: The Lost Child in Colonial Tasmania

Writing in a period of a new nationalism in the late 70s and early 80s, Beth Roberts's and Pat Peatfield Price's exploitations of the lost child motif embraced the Australian landscape as a powerful symbol of cultural identity. The burgeoning environmental movement as well as cultural products of art, literature and film, manifested in the New Wave of Australian Film, endowed a new mythic status to the bush as a locale in which children as well as adults could be lost forever. Roberts's and Price's works demonstrate a shared interest in recuperating what they perceive to be a lost history of a people marginalised by dominant versions of history and whose story needed to be told.

Beth Roberts's *Manganinnie* (1979) depicts the relationship between Manganinnie, of the Big River tribe of central Tasmania, and Joanna, a young white girl. Set during The Black War of 1828-1832 and The Black Line of 1830, the story explores Manganinnie's desperate search for her people. Pat Peatfield Price's *The Hills of the Black Cockatoo* (1981) is set on the east coast of Tasmania in the early 1800s at the time of the first contact between whites and Tasmanian Aborigines. In Price's novel four young Aboriginal children have become lost by being separated from their tribe. Both stories are journeys of survival of the dispossession and genocide of white colonisation in Tasmania as the Aborigines gradually realise that they are the last members of their people.

Published within two years of one another, in 1979 and 1981, both novels can be seen as separate attempts to revive the story of a people who have died out. The works seek not to apportion blame to their exterminators but to reiterate the inevitability of the fate of the Tasmanian Aborigines, by their reinforcement of the doomed race theory for another generation of younger readers. For both these writers the lost child story becomes one of Aboriginal loss.

The narrative of disappearance of both children and Aborigines is a strong thread in Australian history. The vulnerability of children is imbricated with adult responsibility, and indeed with the fulfilment of adult roles and the future of the nation. As historian Karen Torney discusses, “In Australia, the image of lost children was loaded with significance for the future” (Torney, 2005, p. 51). Coloniser settler cultures depicted images of the child as the hope and symbol of a young nation, which is so potently embedded in twentieth-century narratives to the extent that the lost child has become an archetypal figure of white Australia (see Torney, 2005, p. 33).

Roberts’s and Price’s narratives reiterate the colonialist tropes of the previous century through their reflections of their ideological conviction that the Tasmanian Aborigine is a noble savage doomed to die. In their fictional constructions of history, Roberts’s and Price’s representations of the Tasmanian Aborigines as a dying race “to be patronized and paternalized during the final stages of their existence” (Bradford, 2001, p. 43) have a similar purpose to that of their literary predecessors for whom the perception that all Tasmanian Aborigines had “died out”; thereby rendering them less threatening for the settler communities depicted or alluded to in the novels. This approach also enables the Aborigines to be constructed as romantic, tragic figures. Rohan Wilson, author of *The Roving Party* (2011), in his Master of Arts thesis also shares this view when he argues that in *Manganinnie* “the passing of the Aborigines into memory confers some sort of legitimacy onto the settlers as the new possessors of the landscape and the historical memory associated with it” (Wilson, 2009, p. 28). This chapter demonstrates the ways in which both Roberts and Price, as contemporary Tasmanian children’s writers, restore the colonialist ideological perceptions of the previous generation of writers’ assumptions; that once Aboriginal children were removed from their land they would die out altogether.

From the early years of European settlement in Australia, children had become lost in the bush. Yet there is an essential difference between what was perceived as “lost” when it concerned Aboriginal children. White settlers frequently abducted Aboriginal children from their families, for their tracking and hunting skills, for free labour and as surrogate children.[33] Treated as property, they were dehumanized by possession, hunted and captured like animals, as objects “to be acquired and passed around” (Torney, 2005, p. 74). To their families and communities, these children were indeed lost. For Aboriginal people the loss of their children continued to be judicially sanctioned for much of the twentieth century, as members of the Stolen Generations testify (see HREOC, 1997; Bird, 1998), including the eras in which Roberts’s and Price’s novels were published. The loss of these children is devastating, but the symbolic representations of the cumulative loss of children, white and black, in these novels reflect a painful irony.

The lost white child as a narrative motif evolved as a manifestation of European settler anxiety, of their unease with the harsh Australian environment, and fears of Indigenous reprisals over land acquisition and usage. On mainland Australia, lost white children were sometimes recovered, frequently with the aid of black trackers. However, in the colonial Tasmania of Roberts’s and Price’s stories, there are no more black trackers to pursue two year old Joanna, the lost white child in *Manganinnie*; the lost Aboriginal children in *The Hills of the Black Cockatoo* are evidently the last of their tribe, so no one is caring for them nor trying to find them.

In colonial literary culture the lost child narrative depicts not only the children who were lost, but the potential that they held for their families, community and the new nation as it was being constructed around whiteness and white supremacy. Roberts’s and Price’s adoptions of the lost child motif reiterate an image that is so deeply entrenched in “national cultural memory that it has impregnated Australians long after the colonial period” (Torney, 2005, p. 198). Both novels depict Tasmanian Aboriginal culture and society as degenerating and contracting. These lost child narratives are an enduring “part of the anatomies of contemporary Australia” (Pierce, 1999, p. 115) which exploits the motif as a memorial to a disappearing race, whose loss provides a rationale for taking possession of the land. In contemporary Tasmania, and in Roberts’s and Price’s writings, this motif serves to consolidate the perception that there were no more full blood Tasmanian Aborigines, rendering claims to Tasmanian Indigeneity as specious and unsupportable, and thus validating continuing ownership of land and resources by non-Indigenous interests, some of who were descended from the original coloniser settlers. In *Manganinnie,* Roberts's incorporation of the lost child motif is indeed "loaded with significance" for Tasmanian Aborigines who are the subject of her story.

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[33] The case of Lady Jane Franklin, the childless wife of Governor Arthur Franklin, who in 1841 took Mathinna as a surrogate child, is discussed in Chapter 5.

Beth Roberts's 'Admiration for and Fascination with the Original Custodians' of the Land

Beth Roberts's (1924-2001) genealogy as a descendant of Scottish "settlers" who arrived in Tasmania in 1824 informs her understanding of "the original custodians of the land". Raised in a large family on a sheep and cattle property, "Dungove", near Bothwell in the Central Highlands of Tasmania, she was educated by a governess and subsequently attended boarding school. Roberts spent a lot of time in the company of the Dungove shepherds, from whom she heard the stories of the last Tasmanian Aboriginal people who lived in the area. During World War II she worked as a nursing orderly then became an occupational therapist. After raising two children as a single parent, at the age of fifty Roberts began a career as a children's writer (Department of Premier and Cabinet, Tasmania, 2011).

Roberts's local knowledge of the landscape and geography of the Tasmanian setting, gleaned from her own childhood, is evident in her best known work, *Manganinnie* (1979) which also reflects her own reading of some of the available ethnographic studies on the history of Tasmanian Aborigines. As a prequel to *Manganinnie,* Roberts wrote *Magpie Boy* (1989), set in the time of Manganinnie's youth, which tells the story of Manganinnie's nephew, Drenee, who witnesses the first impact of white colonisation on his people. Roberts's final book, *The Broomstick Wedding, a tale of colonial Tasmania* (2000), depicts the gradual transformation of Tasmania from prison colony to a permanent community and its consequential impact on the Indigenous population.[34]

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[34] The uniquely Tasmanian content of Roberts's books ensures an interested local market. In 1987 she started her own publishing company, Rainbow Bay Books, in order to "have control of my own words, the layout and design of the books, and the freedom to market where I chose" (Department of Premier and Cabinet, Tasmania, 2011).

In an era when the hidden histories of Aboriginal people were being revealed, *Manganinnie* had some impact on classroom reading cultures. The first publication of *Manganinnie* in 1979 was quickly followed by John Honey's 1980 film of *Manganinnie*. In his critique of Honey's film, John Maynard ironically suggests that "the Manganinnie story itself is a marvellous piece of European folklore, the legend of the keeper of the flame" (Maynard, 1985, p. 221). Whilst Honey completely changed the point of view of the narrative theme to that of the white child lost in the bush rescued by an Aboriginal person, the film consolidated Roberts's reputation as a children's writer as well as the representation of Tasmanian Aboriginality for both national and international audiences. This was confirmed by the subsequent publication of four new Australian editions (Roberts, 1980, 1988, 1993 and 1999) as well as editions in French (1988), Japanese (1988), German (1994) and Italian (1999). The story of Manganinnie facilitated the perpetuation of the myth of the last Tasmanian Aborigine in both local Australian and global markets. The publicity blurb of the ninth edition in 1999 is supported by an endorsement by Jim Bacon, then Premier of Tasmania, who states that "Beth Roberts has triggered a raw nerve of our social conscience" (back cover, Roberts, 1999).

Roberts's tone, fairytale language and her plot all support this view, as she attempts to recreate the daily life of a people who, because they have all died out, are no longer able to tell their own story. Written in the form of a fable, the novel purports to transcend race, age and a religious or cultural belief system. However, the fable and biblical allusions determine the tone of Roberts's novel which promotes a fatalistic ideology as a vehicle for white guilt.

This "raw nerve of our social conscience" was simultaneously exposed by Honey's film and Tom Haydon's controversial 1978 documentary *The Last Tasmanian,* both of which raised contentious issues about the representation of Tasmanian Aboriginality. As a Tasmanian writer, Roberts appears to have been unaware of the inaccuracies and the consequent outcry regarding Haydon's reiteration of the total extinction of Tasmanian Aborigines. Yet her novel for children reproduces this ideology through a paternalistic discourse which depicts Manganinnie as a noble savage, the last of her race and doomed to die. Haydon's documentary, Honey's film, and Roberts's novel were all produced in a political context of increasing public awareness and activism on the part of Aborigines regarding their survival and continuing presence in Tasmania. Roberts's "fascination for and admiration of the original custodians who had peopled the island before her time" (publicity blurb for the 1999 9th Edition) is a discourse shared by filmmaker and anthropologist alike.

At the time Roberts's wrote *Manganinnie,* there were over 4000 descendants in Tasmania who identified as Tasmanian Aborigines (Bickford, 1979, p. 12). However, the quoted publicity blurb for her 1999 publication disallows any continuity of the heritage of Tasmanian Indigenous people and culture. Moreover, it confers to younger readers the pervasive public belief in the total genocide of Tasmanian Aborigines, thereby supporting the persistent refusal in some areas to acknowledge present day descendants.

The textual and paratextual modifications undertaken by the various Australian publications of Manganinnie (1980, 1988, and especially the 1993 and 1999 editions) reflect their appropriation of the original publication as literature for children for its potential in the more dependable and sustainable school text book market. The front dustcover of the original 1979 hardback publication attempts to entice the reader with the notion that Manganinnie is being sent "something precious to care for and to love" and warning that "tragedy strikes and Manganinnie knows that she must give up that which means most in her life" (Roberts, 1979, dust jacket). The blurb on the first edition is uninvitingly pedantic, but it is the coloured dust jacket and full page black and white illustrations by Joanne Roberts (Beth Roberts's daughter) that identify it as a children's book. The covers of subsequent editions ensure that the lost white child Joanna has more prominent identity. After the release of Honey's film, Sun Books republished the novel as a paperback titled *Manganinnie, A Story of Old Tasmania* (1980) and included many revisions to the text. This revised title indicated more directly the context of the story. Moreover, the still photograph of this edition embraces the concept of Joanna being "Aboriginalised" whilst abducted and in the care of Manganinnie, and hence the name change to "Tonytah" (1979, 1980 and 1988 editions) or "Ballawinnie" (1993 and 1999 editions).

A central theme of *Manganinnie* sees her "desperate" and irrevocable loss as mollified by the hope for the future that Joanna represents. Joanna's loss to her family is but a temporary disappearance. The repeated publication of *Manganinnie* through nine editions locally and internationally is a reflection of the novel's popularity and saleability for two decades. However, a story of the little white girl lost in the Tasmanian bush had been published in the previous century.

The Lost White Child and the Fear of 'Becoming one of Them': Parallels with Mrs W.I. Thrower's (1894) *Younah! A Tasmanian Aboriginal Romance of the Cataract Gorge*

The plot of *Manganinnie* is intriguingly similar to the less well known Tasmanian publication of 1894, Mrs W.I. Thrower's novella *Younah! A Tasmanian Aboriginal Romance of the Cataract Gorge,* depicting a white child abducted and brought up in an Aboriginal tribe. As captivity narratives *Younah!* and *Manganinnie* share similar plot devices. But, significantly, the colonialist ideological perspectives underpinning Thrower's story had an enduring potency that percolates through Roberts's contemporary version of 1979.

Accounts of kidnapping of white Australian children by Aboriginal people were extremely rare (Torney, 2005, p. 123). However, *Manganinnie* resurrects the settler anxiety evoked in *Younah*; "the fear among European Australians of the Aborigines, or worse, of becoming like them" (Pierce, 1999, p. 150). Thrower and Roberts play upon this fear that "children taken into a native community would lose their European identity and completely accept and value the Indigenous culture" (Torney, 2005, p. 198). Thus, the abducted Keitha in *Younah* and Joanna in *Manganinnie*, slip from the security of their civilised Christian homes and transgress the pioneer frontier into the unknown untamed Tasmanian wilderness.

Roberts's *Manganinnie* parallels several other elements of Thrower's lost child narrative, including the roles of Manganinnie and her captive white child as surrogate for her own lost children, and Manganinnie's ultimate return of Joanna to her own people when she realises the imminence of her own death. Thrower's novella is also set against the Black War of 1823 to 1834 in which "several tribes of the natives were known to be in open hostility to every white man" (Thrower, 1894, p. 48) and spans the period of Indigenous incarceration on Flinders Island:

> The Black War ... was ended and the hapless creatures who had once possessed this fair land, driven from one refuge to another, encompassed on all sides by the enemies of their race, were at length captured, - or at least the miserable remnant of them were (Thrower, 1894, p. 54).

In Thrower's story, Keitha, a white girl aged three years, is kidnapped by Eumarrah, son of the chief of the Pialumma tribe, "one of the largest and most formidable of the aboriginal tribes with whom the white settlers of Tasmania had to deal in the early days of colonisation" (Thrower, 1894, p. 4). Eumarrah's abduction of Keitha is spurred by his mother, Makooi, as revenge on white settlers who had previously abducted her only daughter. Throughout the novella Makooi remains a threat to Keitha's welfare, but Eumarrah sees the potential for reconciliation in protecting her from his mother's and other's enmity when he pityingly claims: "Our enemies are all of her colour … and they are all evil. She too will become evil when she becomes a woman, unless we teach her to be the friend of our race. She is not evil yet, though" (Thrower, 1894, pp. 6-7).

Keitha is renamed Younah, receiving special treatment throughout her twelve year sojourn with the Pialumma people. Unlike Tasmanian Aboriginal women and girls, Younah's "long tawny hair" is never cut, and she is given moccasins to protect her delicate feet. Hence, Keitha /Younah never actually "becomes one of them" as she is never totally Indigenised in this story.

The similarities between Thrower's and Roberts's stories lie in the role of the captive white child, though Thrower's story offers a more nuanced understanding of the psychological impact on the victims of frontier conflict. Eumarrah constantly negotiates his mother's smouldering desire for vengeance for her own lost child. Makooi is also the miserable victim of her husband's brutality, but she realises that there might be some value in maintaining the white child in the tribe. Here, she contemplates that "After all, the child could not well escape, and might yet become an instrument in her hands, with either to work further mischief to the detested whites, or to gain some advantage for the race with whom her lot was now cast" (Thrower, 1894, p. 14).

As encroaching white settlement menaces their tribe, Eumarrah, her benign captor (who evidently does not adopt his father's violent attitudes towards women) engineers her escape. After twelve years with the Pialumma, Younah has internalised their fear of whites, which temporarily complicates her reassimilation. However, her safety in the arena of simmering black/white conflict is ensured by Jack Ormond, her new benign captor, who reunites her with her family. Younah becomes Keitha again, receiving an inheritance that enables her to marry Jack.

Thrower's story explains and critiques settler-Indigenous conflict as well as the inhumane treatment of the remaining Tasmanian Aborigines by colonial powers. Younah is apparently kept captive with the intention of making her an intercessor for the Aboriginal people. Her restoration to her own people subsequently restores her whiteness, her social standing and her paternalistic racist attitudes. For Thrower, it is too late to be sympathetic towards the Aborigines, yet the impetus for her narrative hinges on her regret at their destruction. It was a potent message which inspired and influenced Roberts's *Manganinnie.*

In *Manganinnie* the relationship between abducted child, Joanna, and her Indigenous captor is affectionate and enduring for the time they are together. Upon being restored to her family Joanna again becomes an outsider to Indigenous society. The extent to which Joanna retains her insider perspective is ultimately controlled by Roberts's determination to Christianise Manganinnie on her death. In both Thrower's and Roberts's stories the lost abducted white child is restored to her proper place and white presence is reaffirmed. Keitha and Joanna never "become one of them" and their innocence remains intact, for it was never their fault that they were lost.

Manganinnie subverts expectations of a genre of lost child narratives. Instead of the figure of the lost child haunting the narrative, it is Manganinnie, old, frail and lonely who informs the tone of the novel. In despair, sensing her own imminent death, she eventually guides the lost child home. In Roberts's narrative the lost white child story becomes one of Aboriginal loss; and the survival of the lost child is ensured despite the loss of Manganinnie, the Aborigine.

Roberts's Ownership of Manganinnie's Destiny: Paratext and Language

Roberts assumes ownership of Manganinnie's destiny through paratextual and linguistic strategies so that the voice of Manganinnie is silenced. The inclusion of historic facts reinforces that voicelessness. Consisting of twenty three chapters, followed by a map of "Droemerdeene's Land (Van Diemen's Land) 1830" juxtaposed against a list of "Tasmanian Aboriginal Words and Their Meanings", the organisation of this first edition suggests its intentions to appeal to the international market of children's literature.

Joanne Roberts's early illustrations were replaced by a map in subsequent editions of the novel which privileges geographical location above plot, character and visual literacy. The map denotes place names imposed by white settlers, against the territory of the "Big River Tribe" and "Seafood Land Oyster Bay Tribe". The list of Tasmanian Aboriginal words and their meanings in all editions comprises a list of ninety-five nouns, that Roberts claims (Roberts, 1979, p. 118) were taken from N. J. B. Plomley (1976) who sourced them from Robinson's list of Aboriginal words.[35]

The use of the "dead" Tasmanian Aboriginal language throughout this novel could seem like a gesture of respect which values Manganinnie's language, and by association, her identity. Manganinnie never learns English and Joanna, a toddler at the time of her abduction, appears to have acquired no language. Indeed, neither character ever speaks in the novel; all thoughts and actions are presented through Roberts's third person omniscient narrative. However, Roberts's appropriation of Robinson's glossary legitimises the meanings which he ascribed to the scraps of language that he recorded in his notebooks, as well as demonstrating the authenticity of her sources, which are still considered to be an important primary source of its time. Given that "glossaries are common paratextual elements in nineteenth and early twentieth-century scientific reportage of collections of folklore" (O'Conor, 2010, p. 12), Roberts's direct use of Robinson's "knowledge" thereby assimilates the coloniser's ideology into her own work. As a means of interpreting the book, the glossary promotes authorial credibility, suggesting that the character of Manganinnie is firmly rooted in real history. But, as in nineteenth and early twentieth century anthropological and historical accounts, the glossary objectifies Indigenous knowledge systems and works towards setting up the writer as an expert "translator and observer of Indigenous peoples" (O'Conor, 2010, p.12). Roberts's use of Robinson's sparse list of nouns objectifies the knowledge system of Manganinnie's people, thereby positioning her as culturally other (see O'Conor, 2010).

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[35] Plomley writes that Robinson's lists of Tasmanian Aboriginal words were not systematically ordered, that Robinson "did not make any contribution to the study of the grammar of the language because his knowledge of English grammar was negligible" (Plomley, 1976, p. 4).

Roberts's text makes use of this glossary in a very contrived manner, by introducing the Aboriginal noun, followed by its translation. Stylistically, this device is quite cumbersome, often resulting in very long sentences of explanation and dissertation. The use of snippets of language authenticates her narrative and give authority to Roberts's writing.

The first Macmillan edition of 1979 italicises Manganinnie's own language, as an indicator that it is a foreign language which needs translation. The storyline is enhanced in the 1993 and subsequent editions by inclusion of iconic references to Tasmanian colonial history, for example the arrival of Tasman's ships as seen by Manganinnie's mother (Roberts, 1993, p. 16). A new chapter, "The Man with the Funny Cap" refers to Robinson's Black Line. Roberts's representation of Manganinnie's language use is consistent across all editions, using a cumbersome sentence structure which reinforces her otherness. Seven significant places in the novel use the Aboriginal place names, but in most cases, place names are superseded by European names of the locations. By the time Manganinnie is on the run, total dispossession has taken place and a symbolic appropriation of her people's land, through renaming, has taken place. Hence, Manganinnie gets water from Bark Hut Creek and traverses the terrains of Bothwell, Dungrove and Joe's Marsh.

Roberts's use of Aboriginal words and their translation presents a demanding text, through which Manganinnie's own thoughts are represented in naïve staccato sentences. Roberts's strategy of silencing Manganinnie's personal voice is similarly disempowering to her character. As her protagonist cannot speak for herself, Roberts's omniscient third person narration interprets all interactions and thoughts that she imagines for Manganinnie, some of which are crudely inaccurate. Manganinnie is represented as incapable of reasoning and rationalising cause and effect regarding the impact of colonialism on her personal survival, and hence she is incapable of understanding history as a European construct. Roberts suggests that Manganinnie knows no English, yet her observations show her familiarity with houses, fences, dogs and other indicators of white colonisation. Manganinnie's confusion of information with imaginings ensures that her knowledge is encoded in Roberts's own symbolic language through which she promotes her personal world view. Roberts's Aboriginalism positions her as knowledgeable expert with the authority to represent Manganinnie's Aboriginality.

Roberts's construction of Manganinnie's Aboriginality depicts her as a tragic and helpless victim of colonialism. As the last of her race, the novel admits to no cultural continuity for Tasmanian Aborigines. The writer's narrative tone addresses the reader in a way that supports Roberts's project of speaking on behalf of Manganinnie and her people (see Bradford, 2001, p. 110). In constructing the story around various motifs that echo the style and mood of its colonial predecessor, *Younah*, Roberts assumes an Aboriginalist discourse. Moreover, her exploitation of another Aboriginalist trope reinforces this strategy. Manganinnie is not just any member of her tribe, she is presented as "an oracle of wisdom", through which Joanna and the reader will learn of the legends and stories, the customs and way of life of her people. Ultimately the loss of the noble savage spiritual leader enhances the pathos of the construction of Manganinnie's character and her Indigenous identity. However, Roberts's presentation of the loss of Manganinnie's tribal role as transmitter of spiritual and cultural knowledge suggests a redemptive function on Roberts's part, which is to interpret Manganinnie's death as a personal sacrifice of a lost mythology through which whites may recuperate their own lost spirituality, that of Christianity.

Manganinnie as Noble Savage

Manganinnie, as the sole survivor of the Big River tribe exterminated by the Black Drive of 1830, is precipitated into unfamiliar territory to escape the fate of her tribe. "Somehow they [her People] had completely vanished in the mist. Now for the first time in her long life she was alone and knew real terror" (Roberts, 1979, p. 7). "Well known as a good planner and teacher of little children" Manganinnie is forced to take on a man's role of organising "her own safety and food and warmth" (Roberts, 1979,

p. 9). Her survival as an individual is in jeopardy, but Manganinnie's perceptions of the white man, who she thinks are "lawless" (Roberts, 1979, p. 6) and inept, give her some confidence to begin the search for her family. After one year of solitude, she has every reason to give up her struggle for survival, but the novel proceeds to overturn this expectation. As she searches for her people, her kidnapping and companionship of Joanna is implicitly rationalised as Manganinnie's reason for living.

Manganinnie's spirituality, her closeness to animals and children all support her construction as noble savage. Inspired by the spiritual guidance of her late husband, Meenapekeema (another oracle of wisdom), she maintains her role as keeper of the fire:

> *Mietar* the fire spirit ... was one of the People's most important spirits. He was a great comfort. He gave warmth and light and cooked their food and kept away *Raegeowropper* the evil spirit of Night. The people carried *Mietar* in a firestick wherever they travelled and to him they sang the sacred Fire Song. They must never let him die for he had been given to them by the Lightening Sprits in the Dreamtime. He was so important that it was the Law that he must be shared by all the tribes, for *Droemerdeene's* people had not been given knowledge of fire-making by friction (Roberts, 1979, p. 10).

In this first edition Roberts promotes the myth that Tasmanian Aborigines were unable to make fire.[36] "*Droemerdeene's* people had not been given knowledge of fire-making by friction" (Roberts, 1979, p. 10). However, this myth is rejected and corrected in the 1993 and subsequent editions:

> He [Mietar] was so important that it was the Law that he must be shared by all the peoples, even hostile tribes, for Droemerdeene's People lived in seasons of snow and rain, and fire was sometimes hard and slow to make from friction, and Mietar was so necessary for survival (Roberts, 1999, p. 4).

Meenapeekameena is the conduit for Manganinnie's spirituality. He was "proud and strong and very clever" but "not clever enough to escape these lawless newcomers"; "He had been shot in the back by a roving stock-keeper and left to die" (Roberts, 1999, p. 6). The novel's preoccupation with death has a didactic purpose. Grieving and disposing of the dead encloses the plot and the social studies lessons that Roberts intends. Manganinnie's deep-rooted culture and customs, her otherness, is confirmed through her behaviour on the death of her husband:

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[36] The Tasmanian Aborigines inability to make fire, an "implausible but persistent hypothesis, is commonly cited as evidence of their "primitiveness" (Boyce, 2010, p. 102). The observation was made by Robinson, who was possibly being manipulated by his "captive" Aborigines at the time (see also Price 1979, p. 23).

> Afterwards Manganinnie cut her own body with a stone knife and rubbed ashes on her face in mourning, and for many days she wept and wailed for her beloved Meenapeekameena. She was given his ashes, as was the custom, after the people had burned his body and sung the ceremonial songs, and she wore them in a small kangaroo-skin pouch suspended around her neck (Roberts, 1999, p. 6).

Joanna's temporary adoption of Manganinnie's culture and belief systems is intended as a symbolic reconciliation between black and white races, as evidenced in the book's structure and the religious inferences of some of the chapter headings; "Beyond the Jordan", "The Stable Door" and "An Answered Prayer". However, by the end of the book, Joanna's status as a white person becomes elevated through her privileged insight and survival as an honorary Aborigine. Roberts's didactic intentions are confirmed in the novel's final scene through five year old Joanna's awe of Reverend James Garrett's "big strong voice", who she thinks, "Perhaps this man was special too" (Roberts, 1999, p. 116). Manganinnie's spiritual beliefs do not survive her death, and Joanna returns to Christianity.

Manganinnie as the Last Tasmanian Aborigine

A recurring theme throughout Roberts's novel is the notion that Manganinnie, and the Tasmanian Aboriginal race, is doomed to die. The spirit of Meenapeekameena tells her to stop looking for her People. "There are none of us left now in the Bush. Many have died but some live on a distant island, and they are all doomed to die without seeing again their tribal lands" (Roberts, 1979, p. 80).

However, it is Roberts's insertion of historical context in her 1993 and subsequent editions which vigorously affirms her narrative as a vehicle for doomed race ideology. In the newly inserted sixth chapter, "The Man with the Funny Cap", Manganinnie watches from a distance as she witnesses Robinson's round up of "twenty-six of the Big River and Oyster Bay People … and fourteen other Aboriginal people who wore clothes like Numma [white man] … there was only one little child" (Roberts, 1999, p. 28). Manganinnie is deterred from greeting her people by Meenapeekameena's supernatural voice that "spoke in her head":

> "It is a trap. The people will die of white man's diseases and longing for their Land. They do not know it, but they are doomed to die. You cannot save them and you cannot join them. Trust me, for I was once your chief and your husband and knew many things, but now from my place in Pyerdreeme the Milky Way I know these things" (Roberts, 1999, p. 28).

Meenapeekameena's prediction that Manganinnie's people are "doomed to die" is a powerful premonition of her own fate. In the interim Manganinnie's survival can only be ensured by her sustenance of a surrogate child.

The "doomed to die" theme is also echoed in the gradual demise of Wopperty Wombat who "can no longer manage without her [Manganinnie]" (Roberts, 1999, p. 36). Wopperty Wombat's injuries are so severe that he is the first creature who is doomed to die (Roberts, 1999, p. 36). Later in the story, a thylacine burns his paws in the bushfire and he too is doomed, "not caring if he lived or died" (Roberts, 1999, p. 33). Similarly, of the wattles burnt in the fire "many of them were doomed to die" (Roberts, 1999, p. 36). Thus the flora and fauna that Manganinnie encounters are also doomed to die.

Roberts's intertextuality reinforces the futility of Manganinnie's hopes for an immediate future in her fusion of literary genres. The plot of *Manganinnie* resembles that of a Bible story, or a European fairy tale of a woman who is childless, her own children having been abducted or murdered. Manganinnie is told by her ancestral spirit, Droemerdeene, that she will be given someone who will provide her with much happiness, but who she must give back in due course:

> My friend, you shall not be lonely any more for I shall send you comfort and strength to carry on. Go home to your cave and when morning dawns a wombat will come to you. Care for him, for he is one of my children and he needs you ... later, when another time is ready, I shall send you something else which will also give you much happiness, but you must give it back again when the time comes for it is not one of us (Roberts, 1999, pp. 22-23).

The cross referencing of Christian and Aboriginal spiritual beliefs and the slow text, charged with unfamiliar vocabulary and inverted sentence structure makes this an extremely didactic narrative as readers are left with the consolidation of a singular world view, that of Christianity. Roberts's construction of Manganinnie's spirituality is intended to demonstrate the commonality of the two disparate belief systems.

Manganinnie's Dromerdeene is morphed into a guardian archangel who predicts that "You will not be found by the white man and you will be shown where there is food. When the time is ready songs of praise will be sung in your honour" (Roberts, 1999, p. 23).

Manganinnie's special gift of closeness to wild animals is incorporated into an ironic fantasy of nurturing and childhood, in a trivial scenario that attempts symbolic recuperation of the lost child. The third chapter "Snow Children" sets up Manganinnie to resume her former role as teacher of little children. The cosy role play which is acted out in this chapter infantilises her as she "tried talking", firstly, to "a family of kokatah the masked owl … but silently they stared back at her with their wide eyes, only making her feel more lonely" (Roberts, 1999, p. 7). In a scene which diminishes the credibility of Roberts's thesis, Manganinnie builds little children out of snow. In this unlikely scenario, sitting in her cave,

> She was almost happy as she sat by *Mietar* [the fire] moulding the little bodies and finding seeds and shells for the eyes and each little mouth. She would teach her little family of *partyenner peekunner* [snow children][37] all the old legends that belonged to Sacred Knowledge and Common Knowledge (Roberts, 1999, p. 13).

Roberts appropriates the Russian fairy tale of *The Snow Child*, in which a childless couple build a child out of snow. The child comes to life but continually eludes their love and protection. The meaning of the fairy tale is located in the thwarted opportunity of childlessness as well as the loss that parents feel when their children move on. Roberts's incorporation of the fairy tale imports other cultural associations, and manipulates its meaning to reinforce the loss that Manganinnie has experienced as well as foreshadowing the inevitable separation and loss that will occur between her and the little lost Joanna. The ludicrous melding of Russian fairy tale with Aboriginal lore smacks of assimilationism. The fusion of Biblical and fairy tale elements further diminishes Manganinnie's former role of spiritual leader.

The conflation of different European folk lore traditions is confusing, referencing nursery stories of foundlings and children constructed out of snow (or wood, as in Carlo Collodi's *Pinocchio,* 1883) to satisfy parental desire. Roberts's story is simultaneously reliant on religious motifs, drawing on cultural expectations in which, as Bettelheim demonstrates, “many Biblical stories are of the same nature as fairy tales. The conscious and unconscious associations which fairy tales evoke in the mind of the listener depend on his general frame of reference and his personal preoccupations” (Bettelheim, 1991, p. 13).

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[37] Here, Roberts subverts Robinson's list of nouns and imposes English grammatical structure. However, the concept of children made of snow is totally un-Aboriginal.

Roberts’s frame of reference also draws on the child centred narrative of the fairy tale which naturalises the resilience and emergence of the child as supreme. Joanna survives through her innate intelligence and sensitivity, but Manganinnie does not. This is another subliminal reinforcement of Darwin’s insight into natural selection and the survival of the most adaptable. Roberts’s intertextual devices embrace an odd melange of literary tropes of the lost child, noble savage and snow children as support for her appropriation and representation of Manganinnie’s spiritual beliefs.

In just one paragraph Manganinnie’s dignity as the transmitter and teacher of culture is reduced to the infantilising role play of a child. Essentially a device for the enactment of the creation story of Droemerdene, the creator spirit, Manganinnie’s storytelling session to the snow children includes reciting the legend of *“Moihernee* who cut the ground and made the rivers and the islands, of *larner* [kangaroo] who made all the lagoons” (Roberts, 1999, p. 14). Teaching legends and customs of food hunting amounts to the law, and the difference between “Sacred Knowledge”, which “came from the Dreamtime”, and “Common Knowledge” which “went back to the time when the sea levels rose and the land became an island” (Roberts, 1999, p. 15). This chapter is a blatantly didactic discourse, a recreation of “history”, which includes Manganinnie’s interpretation of her mother’s story of triggelune [sailing ships]. “How she loved this story of the great white birds who came over the rim of the sea … People looked on their pale faces fearing that the spirit of the dead had returned” (Roberts, 1999, p. 15). “The story of the pale-faced man who swam ashore and planted a dead tree”, is reported as the source of great hilarity as “one of the young men pretended to swim and carry a dead tree and plant it in the ground with brightly coloured parrot feathers tied to the top” (Roberts, 1999, p. 16).

Manganinnie’s perceptions of Europeans, including her remembrance of the arrival of the white man as “the start of so much unhappiness [causing] nothing but pain”

(Roberts, 1999, p. 16) are interspersed with references to the ways in which her immediate family and community died, through disease, shooting, massacre or poisoning by strychnine in the flour. The murder of her son and the abduction of her daughters are reported in this chapter, as are the motives for frontier conflict over sheep stealing and the colonisation of traditional kangaroo hunting lands. The ownership of the narration is perplexing as Manganinnie's perceptions and recounts of her life experience are intersected with the arrival of soldiers, convicts, pioneers and bushrangers, along with their exotic imports of wild dogs, goats, "beautiful new deer" and "new animals which the People did not like for they had no soft pads and toes, but hard bony feet which cut deep into the fragile crust of the Land" (Roberts, 1999, p. 17), leaving the reader to guess to which animal she is referring.

Roberts's mediation of Manganinnie's thoughts is disordered as the text moves from Aboriginal language and concepts to the signifiers of white colonisation. What and how much Manganinnie understands of the changing circumstances of her survival is never clear. It is unlikely that Manganinnie would appreciate the following information, yet the simplistic tone of the narrative implies that she is the owner of these reflections, "There were soldiers and convicts and sometimes whole families who were called Pioneers. Some convicts escaped into the bush and were called bushrangers" (Roberts, 1999, p. 17).

Loss and Redemption in *Manganinnie*

Manganinnie's way of life is irrevocably damaged by the Black Drive, but her abduction of Joanna provides interim solace for her loneliness. The aboriginalising of Joanna and her temporary adoption by Manganinnie offer redemptive qualities for loss. Joanna is seen as a young innocent Christian child who cannot be blamed for the violence and murder meted out by her race. Through the construction of the Joanna-Manganinnie relationship of racial harmony, Roberts downplays the atrocities meted out to the Tasmanian Aborigines. Roberts's exemplar of racial harmony based on shared human values, those of the need for companionship, nurture, love and indeed shelter, elides the power and politicisation of the consequences of settler-Indigenous conflict.

Joanna adopts her new Aboriginal name Ballawinnie[38], and accompanies Manganinnie for three years, abandons her veneer of European clothing, but symbolically never cuts her hair. Redemption occurs for Manganinnie's sin of child stealing because Joanna is restored to her family, who duly give Manganinnie a Christian burial, despite her demonstrated traditional custom of cremation (see Roberts, 1999, pp. 74-75). Joanna is, after all, but a small child and is therefore rendered impotent as an advocate for Manganinnie's spiritual beliefs and customs. In the absence of any other Knowledge, Christianity is superimposed upon Indigenous spirituality.

Roberts's religiosity promotes Manganinnie's spirituality and Christianity as essentially similar and harmonious, yet Christian ritual has the last word; "carrying the soul of Manganinnie away from all pain and loneliness forever; away across the Big River in the Sky to her People waiting for her in the land of the Dreamtime" (Roberts, 1979, p. 107). The Aboriginalist concept of the Dreamtime is problematic, offering a reductionist construction of the "complex of aspects of traditional Aboriginal belief, including mythology, law and history" (Hodge and Mishra, 1990, p. 27). Roberts's mediation of Manganinnie's culture and spirituality is so complete that her role is reduced to that of a puppet, as a vehicle for Roberts's paternalistic colonialist ideology. Roberts's moralistic scope is thereby consolidated, as suggested by Wilson:

> By linking the Aboriginal past with the settler Australian present, Roberts is engaging with extinction discourse on similar terms to the early colonial writers who lamented the vanishing of the Aborigines and believed themselves to be inventing an empty country (Wilson, 2009, p. 28).

The legitimisation of white possession of tribal lands naturalises colonialist intentions for the reader. The novel attempts to raise child consciousness with regards to the collective fate of the Tasmanian Aborigines. Whilst child readers are spared the brutal details of Aboriginal hunting and survival in a challenging environment, they are also permanently quarantined from the violence that is the real cause of Manganinnie's demise**.** At the time it was originally written, the story of *Manganinnie* was a potent expression of Australian society's difficulties with regards to the representation of firstly the culture and spirituality of a group of people who no longer exist, and secondly of the perpetrators of their destruction. Ensuing republications of the novel ensured that this discourse continued to percolate through children's literature throughout the twentieth century.

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[38] In John Honey's film and the subsequent 1980 Sun edition, Joanna's name is changed to Tonytah.

Maurice Saxby's critical appreciation of *Manganinnie* is revealing for his endorsement of Roberts's representation of Indigeneity, in which he states that "Beth Roberts gives the Aborigines dignity and nobility through her characterisation of the central character" (Saxby, 1993, p. 443). Saxby is also comfortable with the resolution of the story which he sees as

> fitting ... that the white girl ... is mysteriously returned to her parents, she should ritually place a double circle of holly berries on the lonely grave and that the Reverend James Garrett should lead the little company in singing "Blessed are the pure in heart". An Aborigine is being accorded her due (Saxby, 1993, p. 443).

Hence, Droemerdene's promise that "songs of praise will be sung in your honour" are realised through this assimilationist discourse (Roberts, 1979. p. 29).

Unlike its predecessor, *Younah*, Roberts' *Manganinnie* avoids an explanation of the causes of racial conflict, dispossession of land, and the contemporary political struggle of Tasmanian Aborigines. Roberts's lost white child is a strategy for depicting the last years of Manganinnie, who, for Roberts, is symbolically the last of her race. Psychologically, the white child who is lost to her family and disappears for a few years is less lost than is Manganinnie, who disappears completely.

Lost Tasmanian Aboriginal Children in Pat Peatfield Price's *The Hills of the Black Cockatoo* (1981)

The initial years of British colonisation in Tasmania were the most violent and destructive to traditional Aboriginal people, as their numbers were decimated from 4000 in 1803 to an estimated 1000 to 2000 in 1828 (see Bickford, 1979). James Bonwick states that the Black War actually started in 1804 with the massacre at Risdon Cove (Bonwick, 1870, p. 32). Price's story of the four Aboriginal children who survived the genocide of their people sees them as lost, and unprotected by adult kinfolk, but not immediately doomed, as is Roberts's Manganinnie whose story is set some twenty years later. Price's representation of the historical setting of her story ensures that the settler violence to which she refers is seen as an isolated event and hence not imminently totally destructive to the Aboriginal population. Price's lost Aboriginal children are restored just long enough to reproduce another generation of Tasmanian Aboriginal people, but her prognosis for their survival as a race is informed by her interpretation of Tasmanian Aboriginality whose cultural authenticity is dependent on their organisation as traditional full blood Tasmanian Aborigines.

The Hills of the Black Cockatoo begins with what is a familiar scene in this genre of historical fiction set in Tasmania, of Indigenous people hiding in the bushes, witnessing the arrival of the Europeans on their shores. Three Aboriginal children are playing and gathering oysters on the beach when they witness two white men arriving in a boat. Hiding overnight in a cave, they manage to survive the massacre of the rest of their tribe. Following what turn out to be horses' hoof prints, they return home to discover their camp deserted, and their grandmother dead from a bullet hole in the back.[39] This incident sets the tone for the rest of the story which depicts the children's journey of survival to the Hills of the Black Cockatoo to finally meet up with another Tasmanian Aboriginal tribe.

Price reiterates similar tropes of noble savagery to Roberts, including incorporating the lost child and lost fire motif as an indicator of Tasmanian Aboriginal insufficiency. The impulse to write children's literature, shared by both writers of the era, is fuelled by Price's interest in writing history as non-fiction for younger readers. Like Roberts, Price recognised the potential of her story for the social science classroom market. They both offer a sanitised view of Australian colonial history, and in both cases there is a discrepancy between what is stated as historical fact and what is depicted in the novel. In her Author's Note, Price explicitly mentions violence and massacre but never depicts it as part of her story.

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[39] Later in Price's novel, "the body of an old man", possibly that of the children's grandfather, is discovered with "a lump of his back missing" (Price, 1981, p. 96). Manganinnie's husband also died from being shot in the back. Perhaps the two writers are suggesting that the Aborigines died as they attempted to escape from their attackers, whose faces they would not have seen at the time of their killing, as opposed to being shot in the front of the body or face.

Pat Peatfield Price: The Ethics of Representation of Indigeneity, Fiction as Atonement

At the time she wrote *The Hills of the Black Cockatoo* in 1981, Pat Peatfield Price had been living for several years on a rural acreage outside Hobart and working as a teacher librarian. As a young woman her peripatetic childhood in Britain had inspired her to seek work and migrate to Australia in 1953. She spent the next fourteen years in various parts of Australia and England before finally settling in Tasmania.

In 1979 Price published *The First Tasmanians,* a history book which quickly became a stalwart in children's libraries around Australia. Two years later in *The Hills of the Black Cockatoo,* Price translated her historical knowledge into children's fiction set "in the early days of settlement when nearly all the Tasmanian Aboriginals were slaughtered" (Price, 1981, back cover). Her novel, *The Hills of the Black Cockatoo,* is important to this study because of her acknowledged expertise as a published historian on the subject of the Tasmanian Aboriginal people. *The First Tasmanians* is still available in libraries. McKenna and Pearce list it as a source for Gary Crew's *The Lost Diamonds of Killiecrankie* (1995) (McKenna and Pearce, 1999, p. 239).

As with other writers who chose the representation of Tasmanian Aborigines as their subject, the issue of what historical information was available to Price needs to be considered, particularly as her own non-fictional work has had a sustained role in the representation of Tasmanian Indigeneity in juvenile and popular literary markets. Much of the anthropological detail that she presents in *The First Tasmanians* is enacted in *The Hills of the Black Cockatoo*. Price's sources for her non-fiction comprise twelve references of nineteenth and twentieth century writers. Many of these titles reflect their doomed race ideologies, including W. L. Crowther's *The Final Phase of the Extinct Tasmanian Race (1847-1876)*, David Davies' *The Last of the Tasmanians* (1973), N. J. B. Plomley's *The Friendly Mission* (1966), H. Ling Roth's *The Aborigines of Tasmania* (1899) and Robert Travers' *The Tasmanians, The Story of a Doomed Race* (1968). Lyndall Ryan's early but significant work, *The Aborigines in Tasmania 1800-1974, and their problems with the Europeans* (1975), completes the scope of Price's research for her school history book. Ryan's affirmation of the continuity of Tasmanian Indigeneity through descendants who escaped and adapted to islands in the Bass Strait is evident in the final paragraph of Price's *The First*

Tasmanians; “The Tasmanian Aborigines had become extinct as a tribal people”, and “There are many more part-Aboriginal Tasmanians now than there were tribal Aborigines and they are found in all walks of life. We shall probably hear more of them as time goes on” (Price, 1979, p. 83).

Price’s novel contains some culturally inaccurate information, which is surprising for a published historian. Specifically, her reference to firemaking and disposal of the dead informs her depiction of Aboriginal culture and spiritual beliefs. It is the lack of accuracy of Price’s historical and anthropological detail in the novel which has drawn attention from critics regarding her lack of historical rigour. *The Hills of the Black Cockatoo* is her only work of fiction, and her work is comparatively unnoticed in criticisms of children’s literature, but Lees and Macintyre in *The Oxford Companion to Children’s Literature* (1993) observe that *In the Hills of the Black Cockatoo* “there continues to be abuse of cultural knowledge. There is no acknowledgement of sources; terms such as ‘part-Aboriginal’, ‘tribe’, stereotyping of appearance, e.g. ‘flashing white teeth’ and racist illustrations abound” (Lees and Macintyre, 1993, p. 9). Margaret Dunkle comments on Price’s insensitivity in her novel; “Although the story is about the genocide of the Tasmanian Aborigines, the impression likely to remain with young readers is the bizarre, repellent and “primitive” practices that are described” (Dunkle, 1995, p. 107).

In *The Hills of the Black Cockatoo*, Price’s representation of Tasmanian Aboriginal culture is typical of writers of the early 1980s whose shared mission was to re-present the history of “the very early days of white settlement” (Price, 1981, Author’s note, viii). Maurice Saxby, in *The Proof of the Puddin’* (1993), notes “Increasingly [from the 1980s] white writers are speaking up on behalf of the Aborigines, often subconsciously attempting to atone for past misdeeds and the guilt of their white literary forebears” (Saxby, 1993, p. 438). Saxby also refers to the criticism of white writers speaking “on behalf of his aboriginal neighbour, or to exploit his cultural heritage – story and art in particular”, countering this with the advice that it is “unrealistic to expect writers to draw only upon their personal culture” and experience (Saxby, 1993, p. 438). What Saxby does not address is the ethical issue of the responsibility of interpreting and representing Indigenous people and their cultures to an audience of readers, which is essentially what Price sets out to do. Saxby’s response to Roberts's *Manganinnie* as an unproblematic image of Tasmanian Indigeneity reflects his own Aboriginalist perspective, and he evades the issue of Price's ideological perspectives regarding the presentation of the historical truth of settler versus Indigenous violence and genocide. Saxby's views are representative of the political climate of the era which saw assimilation as an inevitable end to the extinction of the authentic or full blood Aboriginal people.

Eve Pownall is known for her prize winning *The Australia Book* (1952) which depicts colonisation as an inevitable and essential process towards civilisation, growth and progress. Thirty years later her review of Price's novel reflects a simplistic polarisation of "misfortune" versus "fortune" through her own versions of history for younger readers; "Tracks in the bush alert them to strangers and indicate that great misfortune has befallen their people, whom they will never see again. Fortunately they meet a friendly group with whom they have kinship ties and are accepted by its elders" (Pownall, 1982, p. 47).

By contrast, Dunkle, in *The Australian Book Review*, recognises the Aboriginalist discourse which runs through Price's depiction of Aboriginal children bereft of their people:

> The children in this story are portrayed with little real feeling; it is as though the author herself believes them to be incapable of real emotion or understanding: "She [Tingali] felt that she knew for certain now that her family was dead, but then she consoled herself by thinking that she would have had to leave them sooner or later when she was chosen by some man from another group to be his wife" (Dunkle, 1981, p. 37, citing Price, 1981, p. 108).

The Hills of the Black Cockatoo re-presents Price's history in *The First Tasmanians* (1979), as fiction depicting the demise of a tribal group of Tasmanian Aborigines at the height of frontier conflict. However the exact dates and locations of the conflict are not identified. Her story ensures that the settler-Indigenous conflict is barely re-enacted and there is little scope for the reader to identify with the four bereft Tasmanian Aboriginal children who are trying to piece together the clues of their family's disappearance.

Most of the narrative is presented through Tingali, aged eleven, who, with her brothers Rineka and Koonya, have become separated from their tribe, and must fend for themselves, relying on their own bush knowledge. Coming across the toddler Lowanna, who has been left behind by her family, they witness the landing of the first white men on the beach. Their subsequent discovery of the body of their grandmother is confirmation that their family has been killed by settlers. Price's narrative informs the reader of the customs and traditions of hunting and gender roles. Constantly hungry, their need to survive is sometimes fraught with sibling and gender rivalry, as Tingali is more confident and decisive than her older brother, Rineka, who lacks bush and cultural knowledge.

A pivotal event occurs when two white men kidnap the little Lowanna who is eventually rescued by the boys. The four children finally meet up with distant members of their tribe, and it is implied that they will continue to live with them. Hence, Tingali will be partnered with one of the young men in the tribe, thereby ensuring the immediate continuity of their family group.

The Hills of the Black Cockatoo imports historical and anthropological detail from *The First Tasmanians*. Whilst her sources are unconfirmed, there is also a discontinuity of what is imported into the novel, for example, the mythology surrounding firemaking for Tasmanian Aborigines:

> Fire was very important to the Tasmanian Aboriginal yet we do not know for sure whether they knew how to make it. Some early explorers said they found flints which they thought the natives banged together to get a spark. The spark then lit some dried bark which they blew on until smoke came.
> One early settler told of Aborigines twirling a stick round and round in a hole in a log of wood until smoke came. Some settlers said that the Aborigines rubbed a piece of wood along a slit in a log until smoke came. No one has actually written down that they saw the Aborigines starting a fire, but we know that they were very careful to carry a firestick or a small fire with them when they moved about (Price, 1979, p. 22).

The First Tasmanians reports how Robinson noted that if their fire went out, Tasmanian Aborigines "had to wait until they could beg a firestick from a friendly tribe" (Price, 1979, p. 23). However, Robinson's observations and interpretations were not always thorough or accurate. Price's exploitation of the lost fire motif as a turning point in the plot of *The Hills of the Black Cockatoo* reflects a literary stereotype of insufficient or incompetent Tasmanian Aborigines resorting to stealing fire from the white invaders. Her lost children are noble savages whose Stone Age culture ultimately renders them incapable of adaption to their environment and the inevitable consequences of British invasion.

Betty Greenhatch's black ink illustrations of *The Hills of the Black Cockatoo* reinforce some of Price's inaccuracies. It is difficult to distinguish Tingali from her brothers in the pictures. As is common in illustrations in children's books of this era, Tasmanian Aborigines are wearing loincloths. There is no mention in the visual or verbal text that Tasmanian Aborigines wore possum skins, as a sort of cloak, which could have easily been reproduced in the illustrations, whilst satisfying conventional requirements for covering body parts in children's books. In all drawings the children all bear the same anxious, unhappy, grim expression in their faces and body language. The lack of close-ups reinforces their representations as other to be observed from a distance of space and time, and the pervasive gloom which colours their future.

Price's Indigenous Children, Lost but not yet Doomed

The frontispiece of the novel informs us that "about seventy years" after white settlement "not one full-blood Tasmanian Aborigine was left. They had all been wiped out by white man's brutality, his diseases and by his misguided attempts to civilize them" (Price, 1981, frontispiece). Price's Author's Note foreshadows the context of the novel, offering an explanation for the process of dispossession which forms the background to her story:

> The Europeans banished the Aborigines from their best hunting grounds and from many of the beaches where they gathered shellfish, a staple food. Some white men stole the Aboriginal women to help them hunt seals and kidnapped children to work in their houses. Others slaughtered Aborigines for sport or because they speared their sheep. White men's diseases and their misguided attempts to 'civilize' the natives helped to wipe out many more (Price, 1981, Author's Note, viii).

The Hills of the Black Cockatoo generally avoids the doomed race ideology that is imported by other novels discussed in this study as Price's ideological notion of "survival" is the thematic purpose of the children's journey. Typical of this trope of doomed race in children's literature, mass extinction is intermittently alluded to. Also typical of the conventional structure of much of children's literature, chapters are organised into a circular narrative, whereby the children are reunited with their own kind. The fourteen chapters of the children's journey of survival are organised around a quest, the titles of which are self-declamatory: Trapped, Gone, Mena, Wounded, Possum Hunt, Smoke! The Firestick, A Resting Place, Wallaby Hunt, Kidnapped, Rescued, Reunited, Strangers and A Family Again.

Price's lost children are survivors of massacre and dispossession. As naïve noble savages their innocence is constantly menaced, yet these children are at risk of being lost forever as no one is missing them or looking for them. Unlike the non-Indigenous children of Roberts's and Thrower's stories, they are not "irreplaceable", "precious" or "beloved", as Carmel Bird comments on white children lost in the bush (Bird, 1998, p. 10). Their rescue of the toddler, Lowanna, adds to the challenge of survival without the protection of adult family members. Potentially, these children could disappear forever. Symbolically, these children also face the fact of their being lost and the loss of their family on a deeper level. For Price offers no specific geographic or cultural location of their tribal area. They have no tribal name which would denote traditional ownership of the land, which consequently deprives them of specific cultural identity with the land and their people. Tingali, Lowanna, Rineka and Koonya could be *any* children lost in the Australian bush. As the vestiges of Tasmanian Aborigines they are dispossessed, unnamed, invisible and untraceable as their lack of specific cultural and family identity ensures that they have no history.

Loss of family is tied to loss of cultural continuity, of knowledge, tradition and language. The death of their grandmother confirms the children's total vulnerability to settler depredations. While the story is told from Tingali's point of view, Price's appropriation of an elaborated code of English for her Aboriginal subjects is, at times, ludicrous. When Tingali comes across the body of her grandmother, apparently killed in the massacre which is never overtly mentioned in the story, Tingali "murmurs", "This can't be our dear old grandmother … it can't … it can't … this … corpse lying lifeless as a wallaby waiting to be roasted … it can't be her" (Price, 1981, p. 19).

At its worst, Price's writing is inaccurate and insensitive. Grandmother is dehumanised by this image of "lifeless as a wallaby waiting to be roasted". Tingali's character is further subject to Price's mediation through her representation of her nameless homogenous "tribe". Tingali is the purveyor of information regarding taboos such as eating scale fish (Price, 1981, p. 11) and traditional practices associated with the deceased. Grandmother quickly becomes "the body". The need to dispose of it "before any evil spirits come around" and dealing with the inconveniences of tying up a dead person with rigormortis overrides the emotional impact of the tragedy of her violent murder (Price, 1981, p. 20). Grandmother's death also enables the trope of Tasmanian Aborigines deprived of and unable to make their own fire.

Price's *The First Tasmanians* states that when someone died an enormous fire would be made:

> Then the corpse would be trussed up with the arms and legs flexed and bound against the body. This was then placed on the fire in a sitting position, facing east, until the fire had burnt it all … Some tribes buried the dead in the ground and some placed them in the trunks of hollow trees (Price, 1979, pp. 38, 39).

As the dire circumstances of having no fire impacts on the disposal of grandmother's body all these rituals are discussed by the children. But the body is too stiff to be bound in the traditional way so Rineka carries it "easily between his shoulders" to her final resting place (Price, 1981, p. 24). Instead of cremation, which is her traditional due, they choose the expedient of placing Old Mena in a hollow tree. The depiction of this event is a grotesque inclusion in a novel which otherwise avoids confronting readers with the realities of settler conflict. The violent cause of grandmother's death, "a small hole in the middle of her back" (Price, 1981, p. 19) is overwhelmed by the more graphic description of corpse trussing.

Lack of fire forces the children to eat raw meat caught by Tingali, whose hunting success is resented by Rineka, who "knew that his spearheads were not as sharp as they should be because he had no fire in which to harden them" (Price, 1981, p. 25). Conscious of his impending manhood and his own need to adhere to traditional practices, Rineka as the strongest of the group "could never shame himself" by helping to carry the little Lowanna who is finding the journey too challenging (Price, 1981, p. 32). Rineka's inflexibility and lack of support for others' initiative and efforts to find food underpins his own lack of cultural knowledge. Conscious that his sister has provided most of the meals with her hunting skills, Rineka's motivation for finding fire is to reinstate his "manly pride" (Price, 1981, p. 40). Stealing fire from the invaders elevates Rineka from “chief warrior of the little band” (Price, 1981, p. 40) to “chief hunter of the little group” (Price, 1981, p. 40). As the boys take over the decision making, Tingali is excluded from discussions of strategy and becomes marginalised in the narrative. Symbolically, Rineka as the successful procurer of fire achieves a proxy status as “chief of the tribe” and enjoys the first and choice pieces of the hunt caught earlier (Price, 1981, p. 62). Tingali assumes her traditional role of fetching water, and no longer takes risks or has agency in the narrative.

Price’s Depiction of the Last of their Race

A recurring motif in the works discussed in this chapter is the kidnapping of very young children. In Thrower’s and Roberts’s stories the kidnapping of white children, both girls, serve as intercessors between the two cultures. Price’s Aboriginal toddler is historically closer to the reality of frontier abductions of children, and Lowanna is the only Aborigine in her story to have any close contact with whites. The brief culture contact in Price’s novel enables her representation of white settlers in frontier territory.

Price’s construction of her Indigenous characters as noble savages is dependent upon her language choices. Tingali and her brothers speak in the voice of educated middle class teenagers, in an elaborated code of language. This is in contrast to the language of the clumsy settlers who attempt to kidnap the smallest child. The white male settlers, out hunting for food when they encounter the children, use a vernacular which positions them as working class, and uneducated buffoons. Their banter includes “yer stupid idiot. What yer want to shoot at ‘em for?”, “What we gonna do with the blooming kid now?” (Price, 1981, p. 76). Mick’s and Reuben’s spontaneous abduction of Lowanna is represented as benevolent, demonstrating the benign motives of new colonisers, when they feed her “a great lump of kangaroo flesh, a bigger, juicier piece than she’d ever had before” (Price, 1981, p. 62). Little Lowanna’s delight in the cooked meat reinforces the nurturing intentions of her kidnappers whilst highlighting the children’s incapacity to support her. The men’s initial enthusiasm dissipates as they realise that kidnapping the child was more trouble than it was worth; “We’d look a bit daft walking into Will’s place with a black kid, don’t yer reckon?” (Price, 1981, p. 82), “Dunno, these damn blacks have got some queer ‘abits if you ask me “(Price, 1981, p. 83). In Price’s novel, the only whites to interact with Indigenous people attempt to shoot first and think later, finally seeing them as an unfathomable nuisance.

Hiding in the bushes, listening to Lowannna screaming, Tingali’s anxieties are mediated through Price’s incongruent adultist expression “Oh, why doesn’t the silly child shut up and creep quietly out of the way. I know she’s really only a baby, but she has got to learn to survive” (Price, 1981, p. 76). Lowanna survives the kidnapping because Mick and Reuben drink themselves into a stupor, facilitating her rescue by the two boys.

Price’s noble savagery is ensured by her narrative slippage into stereotypes. Koonya’s exuberance is conveyed through “his massive mouth split into a great grin” (Price, 1981, p. 33), but it is the older Indigenous people in particular who are stereotyped. The journey of survival concludes when Tingali’s group is reunited with distant tribal family members, including their grandfather, Old Wibbia’s nameless sister, who has a “scraggy old body” (Price, 1981, p. 101) and “The old crone’s face was a picture of misery” when she realises that her brother is dead (Price, 1981, p. 89).

The fate of their family is speculative, as the story presents no real evidence of massacre. Generalisations which euphemise the real history of frontier conflict merely allude to violence. Poynganna, the chief explains:

> They built what they call houses on our hunting grounds, and when we would go back there to hunt they would point their spears at us and blow holes in our bodies with them. But worst of all, they have taken away our daughters. They have attacked us as we slept around our fires at night and have dragged away the young women and the girls of the group (Price, 1981, p. 105).

This simplistic description by a naïve raconteur eludes any realistic account of the process of genocide through massacre and dispossession on Tasmanian Aborigines. Poynganna’s warning, “Beware, my children, of these strange white men with the dreadful smell and the deadly spears. They are bringing doom to our people” (Price, 1981, p. 106), ensures an ambivalence to the novel’s conclusion, which is supported by Greenhatch’s final illustration of a disconsolate Tingali, sitting next to a smoking fire, surrounded by the text: “She felt that she knew for certain now that her family was dead, but then she consoled herself by thinking that she would have had to leave them sooner or later when she was chosen by some man from another group to be his wife" (Price, 1981, pp. 107-108). Tingali's journey is an implied rite of passage from innocent girlhood to a more knowing womanhood entailing a more subservient or passive role, as agency is taken from her and passed onto her brothers. But the prospect of being some man's wife is not a particularly optimistic outlook, which Greenhatch's illustration certainly reflects. The children's survival is apparently dependent on their conformity to the roles that are consolidated at the end of their journey, which includes the girls looking forward to providing more children for the tribe. Yet this fragile sense of a future for their community as representatives of the Tasmanian Aboriginal people is undermined by the reader's prior knowledge, supplied by Price, that this happy ending is but a temporary state before extinction or total disappearance.

Price's unnecessarily complex sentences and vocabulary construct what she perceives to be the remnants of Tasmanian Aborigines as noble, whilst yet savage. However, Price is a passive participant in the dissemination of doomed race ideology for children as she leaves her readers with the impression that her characters are the last of their race. The reference in her frontispiece that "not one full-blood Tasmanian Aborigine was left" foreshadows this perception.

The ambiguous conclusion of Price's pathos-laden reflection on the fate of Tasmania's first inhabitants invites an interpretation of Tasmanian Aborigines as technologically insufficient, which contributed to their being irrevocably damaged by dispossession, and consequently unable to withstand the depredations of white colonisation. In the short term, Price's Indigenous child characters are unable to survive by themselves because they cannot make fire. In the longer term the genocide that they have experienced ensures that they cannot survive because their capacity for regeneration has been devastated.

Price, in particular, has an unproblematic view of the noble savage. Her characters' skills of survival are reduced to those of mere animal instinct, a quality of their race rather than the product of intelligence and training, or education gleaned from parents and elders.

Conclusion: Representing Genocide in Tasmania through the Lost Child Motif

Whereas Roberts and Thrower situate their stories as local histories in which Tasmanian Aborigines have specific tribal and family identities, in Price's novel the frontier country is unnamed and geographically undetermined, potentially dangerous and anarchic. In Roberts's and Thrower's works the naming of homelands and tribal affiliations ensures that the Aboriginal children or adults from these areas have a tangible identity, and potentially they are traceable, if not as living subjects, but as genuine representatives of people who actually lived.

All of these writers employ history narratives to teach the facts, as well as to communicate a sense of history as unfinished business. The conclusions of their stories attempt a sense of restored order which wipes out the traumas of occupation and colonisation that has dispossessed all Aborigines depicted. The Tasmanian wilderness is a location where children especially are vulnerable, whether white or savage. However, part of the risk lies in the exploitation of the child as a vehicle for cross cultural relationships, as seen in Younah's temporary guardianship by Eumarrah, Joanna's adoption by Manganinnie, and the brief frontier encounters that Price's Indigenous children experience. Important to all these narratives is the fact that none of the children depicted are lost forever. They all survive undefiled by adult predators, managing to retain their innocence and their essential childness. For all the children, including Joanna who is only five when she is restored to her family, their journey is interpreted as a symbolic coming of age, and a realisation of prospective adult roles in their community. Joanna's adult potential implicitly lies in her capacity as sole witness to the life led by pre-contact Tasmanian Aboriginal people. However, for all these writers, the return of the children to their prospective families enacts acquiescence to dominant white values of class and gender, as well as race. To the contemporary reader, these lost children, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, are symbols for contested futures. Like other early lost child narratives, these stories depict unease about the European presence in Australia, as Pierce points out; "the image of the lost child reveals a persistent insecurity about Australian people's understandings of their location in place, space and time" (Pierce, 1999, p. xiii).

In the late twentieth century, the motif of the lost child still retains its potency. The presence of these children in the impenetrable, untouched Tasmanian landscape still holds the mysteries of their temporary disappearance. Just as Thrower did in 1874, Roberts's and Price's fictional narratives of 1979 and 1981 leave readers with the impression that since Tasmanian Aborigines no longer exist, they as writers must therefore imaginatively recreate their history. These writers assume that there were no remaining Indigenous people who would contest this view. The total loss of a people, as depicted by Thrower and Roberts, provides a rationale for taking possession of their lands. Price's historical fiction supports this ideology by suggesting that total disappearance of the Tasmanian Aboriginals is imminent, which also implicitly consolidates land occupation by white colonisers. For all these writers it is too late to be sympathetic towards the Tasmanian Aborigine, yet they regret their destruction. In the late twentieth century Roberts's and Price's stories of children lost in the bush are written as elegies to a doomed race, silencing the voices of the descendants of those who survived the genocide.

To this point, Tasmanian Aborigines have been depicted in rural environments, inhabiting the historical past. In the following chapter two novels by Nora Dugon, *Lonely Summers* (1988) and *Clare Street* (1991), affirm the contemporary circumstances of Tasmanian Aborigines as urbanised yet marginalised and invisible from mainstream Tasmanian society.

Chapter 7

Self, Identity and Belonging: 'Thousands of Generations Tasmanian' in Nora Dugon's *Lonely Summers* (1988) and *Clare Street* (1990)

> Most families provide growing children with stories of their past that help children gain a sense of self, belonging and a sense of history (*Bringing Them Home*, National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families, 1997, p. 181).

Introduction: Nora Dugon's Representation of Contemporary Tasmanian Aborigines

In contrast to the historical settings of other fiction selected for this study, two novels by Tasmanian writer Nora Dugon, *Lonely Summers* (1988) and *Clare Street* (1990) depict urban Tasmanian communities in a state of change towards the end of the twentieth century. Her realistic novels for young adults are the only novels in this study to examine the ways in which Indigeneity is constructed on a personal level. Dugon's work explores current thematic concerns in their depiction of the underlying racism towards Tasmanian Aborigines and the ways in which non-Indigenous people construct Tasmanian Indigeneity. Dugon's representations of contemporary Tasmanian Aborigines debunk the mythology that there are no longer any Indigenous people living in Tasmania.

Through her protagonist, Kelly Ryan, Dugon's thematic concern in both novels is not just to portray a teenager seeking identity and selfhood, but also the implications of what her Tasmanian Aboriginality means to her personal identity. Kelly's search for identity, to belong as a member of a family, as a member of a community and as a Tasmanian Aborigine, is depicted through her quest of finding the truth of her family heritage and somewhere to live - a home for herself. Home is also the metaphysical space in which she as an individual can realize her identity. However, I argue that this quest is not satisfactorily resolved at the end of the second novel and that throughout *Lonely Summers* and *Clare Street* Dugon's representation of Tasmanian Aboriginal identity operates at a superficial level.

Nora Dugon: Writer of Young Adult Fiction in Tasmania of the 1980s

Nora Dugon (1924-2010) was born in Belfast, Northern Ireland, and at the age of eight emigrated with her family to Australia. Her writing career consisted of short stories published from the 1940s in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, and radio plays for the ABC during the 1970s and 1980s. Settling in Tasmania, Dugon developed a lifelong interest in theatre as well as an interest in the Tasmanian environmental movement, both of which influenced her writing. *Lonely Summers* and *Clare Street* are her only novels. She intended to write a third in the series but this never eventuated (Margaret Dugon, personal communication, October, 2010). Lees and Macintyre, in *The Oxford Companion to Children's Literature*, recognise that "Dugon's work is reflective, paying more attention to emotions and relationships than events, and has a quiet strength" (Lees and Macintyre, 1993, p. 141). However, in the history of Australian children's literature her work thus far has had little impact.

Dugon's characters and the events depicted in her novels have an air of authenticity, based on areas in which she lived and got to know. Dugon worked on *Lonely Summers* from 1985. A reflection of the political context of her themes was stimulated by her friend Kath Walker's discussion of "aboriginal attitudes to celebration of white settlement in 1988. I shouldn't think they have much to celebrate except their own survival" (Nora Dugon, journal entry, 13 July 1985, unpublished).[40] Three months later she asks herself:

> Where did I talk about racism and sexism? ... It must have been in Queensland where people acknowledge such things. In Tasmania no one speaks about them … We discussed sexism and racism as inter-related, having to do with attitudes of inferiority and superiority, stemming from racist-sexist assumptions (Nora Dugon, journal entry, 29 October 1985, unpublished).

Like many women writers of her generation, Dugon was self taught, having had no professional training as a writer. Her daughter tells how her novels were mostly handwritten, and that she "was loath to share her thoughts along the way" (Margaret Dugon, personal communication, 13 September, 2010). Dugon's reticence to expose her works in progress partly explains her fear of deep interrogation of her subject matter. The discrepancy in her personal journal comments regarding Aboriginality and her lack of incisiveness in the thematic development of her novels is supported by her own admission that "I am too cautious about going under the surface, because I don't want to explain too much. The reader must have the freedom of her/his own interpretation" (Nora Dugon, journal entry, 30 May 1985, unpublished). Writing specifically for young adults Dugon suggests that "Kids are looking … to be reassured in their doubts, to know it happens to others – to touch the dark edges of possibilities" (Nora Dugon, journal entry, 27 August 1985, unpublished). However, she adds that "Kids don't buy books", that the market is "supported by librarians and adults" (Nora Dugon, journal entry, 27 August 1985, unpublished).

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[40] Margaret Dugon, Nora Dugon's daughter, sent me excerpts from her mother's journal, after Nora's death in September 2010.

Dugon's understanding of the Young Adult Fiction (YAF) market reveals her conservative, self conscious perspective of her role as a writer. Her two novels never do "touch the dark edge of possibilities". She remains highly conscious of local (Tasmanian) sensitivities and unacknowledged attitudes of racism and sexism. As a writer, Dugon herself is infected by the isolationism and parochialism of her island home, as she admits "In Tasmania no one speaks about them" and she herself dares not penetrate that silence.

However, at the time of her writing there were writers whose adult fiction thematically examined issues of Tasmanian Aboriginality as historicised and politicised. Amongst them are Robert Drewe's *The Savage Crows* (1976), and Indigenous writer Mudrooroo's (also known as Colin Johnson) *Doctor Wooreddy's Prescription for Enduring the Ending of the World* (1983), showing how Aboriginal past and present exist simultaneously. In a climate where writers of adult literature "felt liberated to examine the more recent and more distant scars of Australia's past" (Bennett, 1988, p. 450), non-Indigenous children's writers from mainland Australia were depicting the complexities of the intersecting themes of racial identity and conflict with personal and teenage identity formation. Gary Crew's *The Inner Circle* (1986) and *Strange Objects* (1990) were groundbreaking both stylistically and in their exposition of the deeply embedded racist attitudes in contemporary Australian society.[41] Sally Morgan's autobiographical *My Place* (1987) was a watershed in its exposition of the subjugation of personal identity in an assimilationist racist society, inspiring a whole movement of Indigenous writing of previously hidden personal histories. Dugon's writing seems to be uninfluenced by contemporary publications such as these. Unlike the Aboriginal characters of her mainland contemporaries, Drewe, Mudrooroo, Crew and Morgan, there is little direct advocacy on the part of Dugon's characters. Her comfort zone is that of reassurance rather than exposition and confrontation for her young adult readers. This in itself reflects a lack of deep engagement on her part in the identity formation of her Aboriginal characters.

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[41] Crew's *The Lost Diamonds of Killecrankie* (1995), set in Tasmania, discussed in Chapter 9, takes up a recurring theme in his work, that of white encounters with Indigenous people.

Lonely Summers and *Clare Street* pre-empt the ethos of YAF of the nineties, the era of multiculturalism, "an officially dominant discourse" (Nimon, 2005, p. 41). The search for identity, for family history, of belonging to a family or a community group is a recurring theme in YAF, which commonly resonated in the multicultural ideologies of the 1980s to 1990s. Moreover, the quest for belonging and identity is "one of the most conspicuous themes in settler colonies" (O'Reilly, 2010, p. 110). In *Lonely Summers,* the teenage protagonist Kelly discovers that she is Aboriginal, which leads her to question her mother's motives for abandoning her. Kelly's (unfinished) journey of self discovery enables Dugon's exploration of the intergenerational trauma of racism, dispossession and denial of their existence for Tasmanian Aborigines.

The 1980s show an increased awareness of Aboriginal history and the impact that the past continues to have on the present wellbeing of Indigenous people. Dugon wrote her novels at a time when the promise of land rights for Aborigines was actively thwarted in Tasmania. The social and political agendas of Dugon's two novels are restricted to the acknowledgement of the contemporary reality of Tasmanian Aborigines. Her writing, however, makes sparse reference to "Aboriginal" as a noun or an adjective used by characters to describe and define themselves or their Indigenous friends. Additionally, none of the Indigenous characters are identified with a specific geographic area. At the time of publication of these novels, many Australians, including Tasmanians, still considered Tasmanian Aborigines to be extinct. Dugon's novels depict these racist assumptions which prevailed well into the 1990s in Australian society. For Tasmanian Aborigines this meant that issues of land, heritage, identity as well as home and welfare were unrecognised.

Interested in environmental and political movements of the eighties, Dugon attended meetings and discussions of the Tasmanian land rights movement well into the nineties.[42] Writing during the time of the Tasmanian State Government's outright dismissal of the concept of land rights (Shoemaker, 1989, p. 118), her novels are uninformed by these experiences. In the year of publication of *Lonely Summers* (1988), Australia celebrated the Bicentennial of the British "settlement", or invasion as it was perceived by Indigenous people. Dugon's novel briefly raises the issue of land rights but her treatment eludes its political reality and significance for her Tasmanian Aboriginal characters. Despite her thematic exploration of Indigenous identity, there is little direct advocacy by Aboriginal characters in her novels. Moreover, her treatment of her subject offers little insight into the intergenerational trauma for contemporary Tasmanian Aborigines who are undeniably affected by the displacement and dispossession of colonialism. The symbolism of the Bicentennial for Aboriginal people has totally eluded her.

Nevertheless, Dugon's treatment reveals a sense of zeitgeist in her depiction of relationships between friends and family members. The lack of real insight into any Aboriginal character and the lack of characters who demonstrate real open mindedness regarding Indigeneity, who are willing to learn about that culture, are quite reflective of a genuine Australian apathy or denial. Dugon does not satisfactorily intimate any choices or potential psychological evolution in Kelly, which consolidates that denial. Kelly's voice is obscured by Dugon's narrative and as a character she lacks depth and credibility. Her role in the story is essentially that of Dugon's puppet, to be manipulated towards an idea; Kelly exists to enact Dugon's concept of otherness as it applies to Tasmanian Aborigines.

Lyndall Ryan explains how Tasmania denied identity to its Aboriginal descendants for longer than any other colony or state, "partly because there were not supposed to be any Tasmanian Aborigines left alive after 1876" and partly due to its attempts to erase the stigma of its convict history from living memory (Ryan, 1996, p. 259). Tasmanian Aboriginal activist Michael Mansell deplores the fact that "We are the only race of people on earth, who have to daily justify our existence" (O'Regan, 1984,

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[42] Telephone conversation with Nora Dugon, 9 April, 2010.

p. 4). For Tasmanian Aborigines, land rights was the significant issue which drew attention to the long history of official denial of their contemporary reality in Tasmanian society.

When Dugon's first novel was published, the problem of children and teenagers living on the streets in Australia was gaining increasing attention. Realistic fiction of the 1980s and 1990s for young adults often depicted the bleakness and violence of child abuse as a consequence of non-attachment and abandonment. Yet, Dugon's Kelly and the urban environments of Launceston and Hobart enjoy an innocence that other YAF depicting children living on the streets does not. Dugon's psychological and social settings of Tasmania preserve it as space apart from the mainland, sufficiently isolated from the corruption of organised crime and societal breakdown.

Sense of Self Identity and History in *Lonely Summers* and *Clare Street*

The protagonist of Dugon's novels struggles to establish her self identity across two distinct cultures. The exploration of Kelly Ryan's Indigeneity drives the plots in both novels. Firstly, in *Lonely Summers* through her relationship with her absentee mother, then in *Clare Street* through her romantic relationship with Nicholas Watson who is non-Indigenous.

At the outset of *Lonely Summers*, sixteen year old Kelly is a marginalised teenager, homeless and parentless; she is in a potentially dangerous space between legal childhood and legal adulthood. Historically, although she does not know this yet, as a Tasmanian Aborigine she is also dispossessed and disinherited. Realistically, the long term neglect and abandonment that she has suffered at the hands of her mother, who left her with another single mother unrelated to her own family, should have impacted on Kelly's self esteem and ability to form attachments to people. Moreover, the behaviours of Kelly and her peers are never self-destructive; issues pertaining to sexuality are never discussed or explored. Kelly and her friends are unencumbered by the need to attend school, which could provide support and structure to their lives. Potential issues of intergenerational poverty and unemployment facing Dugon's teenage characters are never explored. Despite these hard times Kelly's self possession and resilience remain consistent, but psychologically unrealistic; as a teenage protagonist she is not well-rounded. Kelly's untarnished innocence is unbelievable, a reflection of Dugon's unwillingness to confront these issues. Dugon's two novels are puzzling in their disingenuousness and disconnection from psychological realism.

However, the novels do explore the repercussions of the effects of Kelly's early separation from her primary carers who were her mother and her grandmother. Dugon demonstrates that Kelly's lack of parental affection has been an impediment to her ability to attain cultural identity, and experience being part of a family. Kelly has essentially been deprived of the stories of her past that foster "a sense of self, belonging and history" (HREOC, 1997, p. 181).

In *Lonely Summers,* having spent her childhood being taken by her mother from communes and squats, Kelly is finally abandoned by her mother in Launceston. Homeless, Kelly moves in with Mrs Kneebone during a period of change which is sweeping through the neighbourhood, at a time when the quiet inner-city suburb is becoming threatened by petty criminals and real estate developers, which is how she meets her paternal Grandfather Ryan for the first time. When Mrs Kneebone is burgled, Kelly fears that she will be blamed and so runs away. Finding herself on a vaguely familiar road, she follows her childhood memory of her Gramma's house and meets her Aboriginal grandmother. In getting to know her Tasmanian Aboriginal family, Kelly learns of her mother's shame and inability to accept her own Aboriginality. After her early childhood experience of bereavement and abandonment, meeting her grandfather and finding her Aboriginal maternal grandmother, Kelly discovers that she is not so alone after all.

In *Clare Street,* Kelly is befriended by the middle-class non-Indigenous Watson family, including Nicholas with whom she develops a relationship. As Kelly negotiates the peer pressure of dating and friendships, Chloe Watson's behaviour indicates her ignorance and insensitivity towards Indigenous people and culture. Kelly's relationship with Nicholas is shattered when Gramma pays a surprise visit and he sees that she is Aboriginal. Through her involvement with Nicholas, Kelly's experience of rejection and denial of her heritage on a deeply personal level resonates of her own mother's childhood.

Clare Street manages a deeper exploration of racist attitudes across the community through Kelly's involvement with Nicholas and his family, as well as her interactions with her own extended family. However, Kelly's developing relationships with her paternal Irish grandfather Ryan and her Tasmanian Aboriginal grandmother Gramma, along with her extended family, are integral to Kelly's evolving personal and Aboriginal identity. In both novels, the ramifications of cultural inheritance and race relations underpin key interactions depicted, but they particularly explain the behaviours and psychological motivations of Kelly's mother Peg.

The Launceston setting of *Lonely Summers* gives the impression that the characters are based on real people living in real streets that are locatable, as the sites of credible storylines. In *Lonely Summers* and *Clare Street* the particular settings of inner city life that are undergoing change are integral to the plot in that "they both explain and accommodate the narratives that take place" (Finnis, 2005, p. 51). These urban settings are significant in the construction of Kelly's identity, to her sense of belonging to a community and to a family, and to her sense of self. However, with regards to Kelly's Indigenous family, they are given no surname, and the rural location of their family home is unnamed. These strategies of omission dismiss the significance of place and home in the construction of Kelly's self identity as a Tasmanian Aborigine. Consequently, Kelly's journey towards finding out who she is and where she comes from, so that ultimately she can know where she belongs[43], is unresolved and unconvincing.

Additionally, Dugon's inclusion of the multiple perspectives of characters that make up her fictional community results in her losing sight of her protagonist and her motivation. At the end of the two novels Kelly's future is uncertain but not bleak. Dugon does not satisfactorily indicate any choices or potential psychological evolution in Kelly, whose sense of who she is, how she fits into the world and where she is going lacks coherence. Ultimately Kelly demonstrates no sense of her own personal worth of being Aboriginal, as she doesn't ever find out who she is and what her history is. The psycho-historical dimension of Kelly’s identity is never fully and accurately explored. However, Dugon’s novels are contemporary and realistic in their depiction of family relationships. All the families depicted have their moments of dysfunctionality, whereby individuals, both young and old, are disengaged, or feel rejected and that they don’t belong. By extension this “unbelongingness” extends to their place in the community for the young people who are mobile enough to move on, either from Launceston to the more cosmopolitan Hobart or the mainland, when their issues are unresolved or become intolerable.

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[43] Tessie Cowen, a direct descendant of Tanganutura, the mother of Fanny Cochrane Smith, states "I think it is important to know who you are and where you come from – then you sort of know where you belong" (Friend, 1992, p. 4).

In Dugon’s novels no family is perfect but, ultimately, none of their imperfections are irreconcilable. Kelly manages two intercultural spaces: through her experiences the reader can see that Aboriginal families and non-Aboriginal families have a lot of issues in common, specifically in how they raise children, deal with teenagers and support young parents, and how they look after their old people. However, Kelly’s Indigenous family organisation, whereby Gramma has a pivotal role in nurturing her family, demonstrates a blend of Aboriginal and Anglo-Celtic family arrangements, in which adult relatives, uncles and aunts and grandparents, all have parental responsibilities and authority. The dynamics of Kelly’s Aboriginal family suggest admirable continuity and survival through the generations, despite enduring continual exclusion from “the domninant competitive society of whites” (Friend, 1992, p. xi). However, this is not the case in the non-Indigenous families depicted in the novels. A subplot depicts Allie, the woman to whom Peg abandoned Kelly, dealing with the vicissitudes of poverty and single parenting, and the emotional isolation that unemployment can bring. Older people, as well as Kelly herself, are reassessing the prospect of living alone for the rest of their lives. Dugon’s exploration of the psychological impact of family relationships is realistic and objective. Her writing is not didactic, but her authorial voice which endorses tolerance and acceptance of cultural difference does become intrusive at times.

The two novels move towards unpacking the hidden or disguised prejudices of white people towards Indigenous Australians. They also demonstrate the positive benefits of intergenerational relationships and interactions. Whilst older people play a nurturing role in providing stability for younger characters, most young people in Dugon’s novels attempt to deconstruct and dismiss the stereotypes and marginalisations enacted mostly by the older generations. Typical of children who have experienced long term disadvantage, Kelly occasionally takes on the reversed parent role for her elders. Dugon's narrative simultaneously embraces issues of sexism, ageism and racism for teenage readers.

The conclusions of both *Lonely Summers* and *Clare Street* are open ended. Dugon's attempt at disentangling postcolonial stereotypes and Indigenous culture and identity do intimate the complexity of identity construction for Tasmanian Aborigines. Her novels show how non-Indigenous concepts of authenticity, full blood, miscegenation and displacement are unconsciously or consciously appropriated by Tasmanian Aborigines themselves. Whilst her works offer a pro-Aboriginal point of view, her authorial voice is not obviously that of the omniscient narrator, or of the outsider to her story. She is more like an empathetic neighbour who is experiencing and observing the subtle changes that are taking place in the community that she depicts. However, she limits the voices of her Indigenous characters, Gramma and Uncle Gary, to a few pages of unresolved and unacknowledged discourse. Moreover, as this discourse is not taken up by Kelly, who is obviously the catalyst and the audience for this declaration, the historical and social parameters of Tasmanian Aboriginal identity (Uncle Gary's "thousands of generations Tasmanian") are never articulated (Dugon, 1988, p. 135).

Lonely Summers (1988): Intergenerational Identity and History

> "I think it's important to know who you are and where you came from – then you know where you belong": Tessie Cowen, Tasmanian Aborigine (in Friend, 1992, p. 4).

At the outset of *Lonely Summers,* Kelly knows almost nothing of her family connections, her biological and cultural heritage, of where she came from and who she really is. Kelly camps out, and buys clothes from the charity shop, which is how she meets Mrs Kneebone. The "uncertainties" (Dugon, 1988, p. 1) of the lives of middle-aged Mrs Kneebone and young Kelly are reiterated thematically throughout the two novels. Indeed, Kelly's lack of material possessions and stable home are never depicted as abject poverty, but rather a romanticised disassociation from a conventional way of life.

Her chance meeting with Mrs Kneebone gives Kelly a landing pad for a while. Mrs Kneebone is somewhat naïve, but her generosity towards Kelly is spontaneous and sincere. Kelly senses that Mrs Kneebone needs some protection against the exploitation of petty thieves and opportunistic property developers that are starting to move into their area. Set against the Franklin River dam projects and peace rallies, the lifestyle for some of the characters is fossilised in the hippie past, embracing a desire to preserve the environment and a pace of life for future generations. However, fearful of change, be it social, political or environmental, none of them initiate change on a personal level. Environment is juxtaposed against the introduction to Aboriginality which is raised by one of Dugon's many transient undeveloped characters, Katie, "a very young woman who had arrived with a child in a back-pack, which she left on the floor" (Dugon, 1988, p. 39):

> "And what about Aboriginal land rights?" she asked.
> But nobody knew of any Aborigines living in Clare Street with any claim to any land there, so they didn't bother with that question.
> "Natter, natter, natter" Kelly mumbled to herself (Dugon, 1988, pp. 39-40).

As the only mention of land rights, like other concerns of "environment" and "peace" raised in the storyline, Dugon raises the subject but never pursues it. The meaning and the impact of these issues on individual characters is never explained. Indeed, it is the only one of two specific references to Aboriginality in the whole novel, which glosses over the significance of the historical and political reality of land rights for Tasmanian Aborigines, which they demonstrate is inextricably linked to their economic and social marginalisation. Members of Kelly's Indigenous family continue to be affected in varying degrees by the trauma and disruption of colonisation, yet there is no discussion of the intergenerational responses to the historical consequences of the dispossession and destruction of Tasmanian Aboriginal culture. Dugon simultaneously avoids historicisation and politicisation of her subject. Kelly's mumbling of "Natter, natter, natter", an unusual expression for a teenager to use, foreshadows her disengagement with this issue as well as trivialising and dismissing this subject for the reader. However, as the novel proceeds to demonstrate, Kelly is an Aborigine who lives for some of the time in Clare Street, but a detail that is deliberately eluded in both novels by both writer and illustrator is that Kelly does not look Aboriginal.

Both Grandfather Ryan and the childless Mrs Kneebone live in their own homes, but Dugon's narrative depicts the emptiness, loneliness and lack of purpose that they acknowledge in their old age. Mr Ryan feels useless, "he wasn't really needed here ... If only he had somebody he could make plans with, do things with. He should have a grandchild somewhere, he thought … The child would be big by now ... just like his son Patrick" (Dugon, 1988, pp. 72-73). Youth and old age are both marginalised, in need of mutual support. Dugon's argument through the character of Kelly is that personal identity is tied to belonging to a place, a community, a family, a home. Children who are deprived of a home are also prevented from defining themselves and realising their identity. Home as a place of belonging, of having a sense of identity, presents different histories of attachment to home or place in Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultures. In *Lonely Summers* both Kelly's grandparents' homes denote her personal attachment to the concept of home. The easily dismissed topic of land rights as ancestral home is a reminder of the coloniser concept of *terra nullius*, suggesting continuity between past and present for Tasmanian Aborigines whereby historical dispossession contributes to denial of their identity.

Re-claiming Aboriginality for Mothers and Daughters

Dugon's second major theme explores the politics of claiming Tasmanian Aboriginality as an identity to be proud of. The question of recognition as a Tasmanian Aborigine is expressed by Uncle Gary, who manages to deliver his message with no specific reference to Aboriginality. His sister Peg typifies the legacy of shame attached to her Aboriginality which has damaged her to the extent that she perpetuates and imposes her own loss of family and cultural heritage onto her child, Kelly. Kelly's displacement and dispossession are initiated by her mother, but also reflect the intergenerational dispossession experienced by Tasmanian Aborigines who have been told that they don't belong, or even that they no longer exist. *Lonely Summers* is propelled by the discussion of Kelly's mother, Peg, as emotionally incapacitated by her own shame and denial of her racial and cultural heritage. The extent to which this impacts on or is inherited by Kelly is the source of psychological tension in both novels.

Early in *Lonely Summers,* Kelly's burgeoning faith in herself is challenged when she feels that she has been set up to look as if she had attacked and burgled Mrs Kneebone. Her impulse to run away from uncertainty, from the potential security and attachment that Mrs Kneebone offers, renders her homeless again with no obvious source of support and resilience. She has learnt from her mother not to hang around and "Never answer any questions … Peg never answered questions. Not even Kelly's questions" (Dugon, 1988, p. 57). Kelly realises that Peg's strategies of personal survival are based on silence and invisibility.

Kelly's quest therefore is to find answers to the difficult questions that her mother avoids. "Peg was saying over and over again, "Forget about it! Don't talk about it! Don't talk about it! Don't ask or even think about it. It's not *our f*ault, it's *their* fault!" (Dugon, 1988, p. 57). In her nightmare vision of Gramma, whom Peg wants "to forget", Kelly's fears are not of her present circumstances, which sees her as lost and vulnerable by sleeping out and being unmissed by anybody. Her deepest fear is of reliving her mother's unknown past. Ironically, Kelly's response of running away inadvertently repeats Peg's behaviour. Peg's rejection of her own family amounts to a total rejection of her Aboriginality, as she sees nothing of value in her Indigenous culture, as evidenced in Peg telling her alcoholic Aunt Fanny, "I'm not one of *any* mob!" (Dugon, 1988, p. 135). Peg's fragile success in life has been dependent on her passing as a white Australian. By assimilating into the group which denigrated and denied her Aboriginality and that of her parents, Peg has assumed what she perceives is higher status as well as a new identity. Moreover, she has deliberately deprived her daughter of grandparents and an extended family, as well as her Aboriginal heritage and a place to call home. Peg's assimilation conforms to the view that "the assimilation policy seemed to demand that the children reject their families" (HREOC, 1997, p. 200).

Dugon's themes of relationships and identities lost in time and dislocation, of both children and adults, are interwoven. People running away from conflict is a recurring motif in Kelly's life. However, Peg's failures do reflect those of other parents in the novel who are, at times, incapable of offering security and nurture due to their own self-preoccupation, thereby also failing to impart5 or help construct an identity to their straying children. The drama surrounding old Mrs Kneebone's vulnerability as a victim of a physical attack and robbery works as a catalyst for Kelly to seek out her mother.

Peg is “Peg” not “Mum”. Kelly has no expectations of finding a mother figure, but an explanation for her own abandonment. “The reasons in her life for moving on or running away were always tied up with Peg. What was the secret she did not understand, that Peg would never explain? Was she guilty of something?” (Dugon, 1988, p. 69). Peg’s escape to the mainland, a place where Tasmanians can become lost and invisible, enables her to annihilate her problematic Indigenous past. Only Kelly’s friend Mick, whose petty criminal father has also disappeared to the mainland, is privy to the knowledge of Peg’s family background, of who she really is.

Symbolically, assimilation for Peg is superficial. If the goal of living “as members of a single Australian community” (Commonwealth of Australia, 1994, p. 17) was integral to assimilation and integration, then none of Dugon’s Aboriginal characters are assimilated into mainstream white or multicultural Tasmanian society. Both *Lonely Summers* and *Clare Street* depict the pain of exclusion and denial experienced by contemporary Tasmanian Aborigines, but Dugon’s representation of them also reinforces modes of marginalisation.

Dugon’s Tasmania is small enough that according to Allie, “Doesn’t everybody in Tassie know somebody who knows somebody who eventually knows everybody?” (Dugon, 1988, p. 107). Ironically, Kelly has no knowledge of her own family. She has never met her grandfather, who has never met his deceased son’s wife, Peg. Her experience of disruptive family relationships early in her life means that she has little knowledge of her mother’s mother. The plot interweaves coincidences of time and place, thus Kelly’s flight takes her on a vaguely familiar road:

> Suddenly she remembered a time when she was a very little girl and played with another little girl, brown-eyed and amber skinned, with hair like dark honey. She looked at the scattered houses as she passed. When she came to a broken gate and saw the old wooden house at the end of the track, she stopped. *She knew that house* (Dugon, 1988, p. 99).

Gramma’s family is not named. Kelly’s impression of her grandmother’s physicality reinforces her Indigeneity, “a big woman, well-built, with short, grey curly hair and tawny skin" (Dugon, 1988, p. 100). The lack of family identity in the form of shared surname confirms the marginalisation of Gramma's large family. It stands in ironic contrast to the shared common knowledge of everyone knowing everyone, and reinforces Kelly's own lack of family history. Her maternal grandfather is the most invisible of them all.

Meeting Gramma is a pivotal event in the novel, as it affirms Kelly's Indigenous heritage. "I always knew you'd come back!" … "After all," she said "Tassie's not such a big place" (Dugon, 1988, p. 100). Gramma is potentially the source of knowledge regarding the hidden history of who Kelly really is, where she came from, and the crisis of their separation. Gramma explains Peg's behaviour, "Your mother was ashamed of us, and that's why she took you away" (Dugon, 1988, p. 100). Gramma also feels she has failed as a parent, as an Aboriginal woman, who has not succeeded in transmitting her strength and self-esteem to her only daughter. Thus, deeply hurt and disappointed in her daughter, Gramma tries to deter Kelly from finding Peg. "I don't see why you should go looking for her. Not when she left you like that. Peg was never any good to anyone – least of all herself" (Dugon, 1988, p. 101).

But Kelly *is looking* for Peg, because, despite everything, "she is my mother"; to which Gramma responds "And I'm *her* mother ... But she'd rather forget that. She'd rather forget her own blood. She's ashamed. But we're proud of that blood" (Dugon, 1988, p. 101). Although proudly confident of her own heritage, Gramma appreciates the trauma of the overt and officially endorsed racism that Peg experienced as a child:

> "It would make her mad when other kids called her half-caste. It's not nice to be called names, especially when you get *official* names like that ... But I'd tell her, like I told all the kids, there's no cause to be ashamed of anything, unless it's something that *you've done*" (Dugon, 1988, p. 102).

Gramma is marginalised and disempowered as an Indigenous woman. Living in an isolated, rural, working class community which provides a fertile ground for institutional and public racism and discrimination, hers is a lone voice. Peg's escape from her family and community is understandable; her humiliation makes it impossible to identify with or be proud of being an Aborigine. Labelled a "half-caste", Peg's experience of the stereotyping and disenfranchisement of Aboriginal people is so scarring that she has never told Kelly the truth about her background. Peg's survival lies in her constructing a new identity as a country singer: "She'd never face the truth", she grew up "Always wanting to be somebody else!" says Gramma (Dugon, 1988, p. 104). By contrast, Kelly is yearning for some information that affirms her as a member of a family, whatever that may be. Gramma provides this affirmation, "Well, I'm telling you now. And I can tell you who you are and where you came from, and who your ancestors were. You can be proud of it because it's *real history"* (Dugon, 1988, pp. 102-103). But Gramma's "real history" is omitted in both of Dugon's novels.[44] Kelly's sense of history and her place in it is never confirmed. Kelly's reunion with Gramma and her family provides no concrete family history of who she is and where she came from.

Gramma's unexplicated "real history" also conceals the truth of more recent family history. Peg's shame explains her conflict with Aunt Fanny, whose death is attributed to alcoholism. The dilemma of "why did we run away?" is tied up with a crisis regarding Aunt Fanny, "A fighting woman" for whom "the drink didn't do her much good. But generous, and good-hearted … she loved kids. Peg had no cause to hate her the way she did" (Dugon, 1988, p. 103). Aunt Fanny told Peg, "You're one of our mob whether you like it or not", which Peg rebuffs; "I'm not one of *any* mob!" (Dugon, 1988, p. 135).

Gramma's family's Tasmanian Aboriginality is acknowledged through their traditional muttonbird hunts. Kelly, who is "sort of vegetarian" (Dugon, 1988, p. 121), is disgusted by muttonbirding, but appreciates that the family eats what they have hunted. Muttonbirding for Gramma's family is an indicator of their heritage and identity as Tasmanian Aborigines from a particular region not indicated in the novel. This lack of information and the family's namelessness serve to homogenise Gramma's family and deny their intergenerational history. It also reinforces the myth of *terra nullius* with regards to identity which is associated with place names for Indigenous people.

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[44] Greg Lehman, a Palawa man, points out that "Our grandmothers, most important in Aboriginal culture, draw on their own experience and the collective memory of their family and their community. Nanna relied on her memories - memories that were not just biographical in nature but refashioned in the light of her experiences. Her memory was archival and a shaper of her own identity. Inevitably it also shaped ours. She knew that 'something was not right.' Her response was to try and protect her children from harm." (Lehmann, 2003, p. 177).

Unlike the location of all the white families' homes depicted in the novel, Gramma's house does not have a geographical reference or a place name, which in itself can be a tangible reminder of identity and association (see Commonwealth of Australia, 1994, p. 37). Gramma's family home is on the edge of a few "scattered houses" (Dugon, 1988, p. 99), representing one of the "small dispersed Tasmanian Aboriginal groups" (Lehman, 2006); implicitly, therefore they are fringe dwellers, living at a "safe" distance from white people. As the victims of racial prejudice at the local public school, and having no obvious employment alongside of white people, they are not accepted by the white community, and (as explained by Uncle Gary) their assimilation is not realised.

Through her conversations with Kelly, Gramma is a vivid presence in the novel, as opposed to Peg, who is represented through Dugon's interpolation of her thoughts: "It would have been nice to have her daughter with her, she thought, now that she has something to offer her" (Dugon 1988, p. 109), a reiteration of Grandfather Ryan's yearnings for his son. Peg's "something" is ambivalent as she remains relatively shallow, too self-absorbed to be an effective parent. Her relationship with Con Carmody brings a "simple, practical sincerity" that satisfies "her desperate need for some certainties in her casual, heedless, increasingly hopeless life" (Dugon, 1988, p. 108). In her flight from herself she repeatedly abandons her own daughter, which Kelly also realises, yet appears unscathed by these revelations. Dugon's narrative of Kelly's journey ensures that she learns very little that is useful in constructing her personal history. Reflective of contemporary cultural attitudes, Dugon's strategy maintains unstated local cultural knowledge which ensures that Tasmanian Aboriginality remains invisible.

Kelly's search to fill in the gaps of her own personal history, for where she belongs, motivates her to seek out her mother. Gramma points out to Kelly that Peg "should be looking for you. But she's not, is she?" (Dugon, 1988, p. 133). Peg's demoralisation has long historical roots which are alluded to in the novel and her own adult identity is also under construction. Peg's relationship with Con, her rescuer, and her recognition and status in white society is integral to her selfhood. Gramma, by contrast, is her own person, having a strong sense of her place, family and personal history.

Gramma's proud valuing of family and kinship ties over the accumulation of material wealth is essentially anti-assimilationist, as is Uncle Gary's discourse, limited as it is, in the novel. Uncle Gary's insight into Peg's running away is a pivotal speech in the novel. He, too, is demoralised, but he is also angered by what he sees as betrayal by white Tasmanians' persistent denials of the existence of Tasmanian Aborigines:

> I suppose she reckoned we all spoiled things for her ... By insisting on being what we are. By insisting on our existence the way we do … now everybody's running around like headless chooks trying to prove they're *real* Tasmanians, going through archives to prove that they're fifth- or sixth-generation Tasmanians, descended from convicts or first settlers or whatever. And here we are, descended from convicts, first settlers, sealers and whatever, and *thousands of generations Tasmanian*, but they don't even want to know about us. They try to convince themselves we don't exist. So, *we* have to prove we *do* exist, and keep on proving it everyday. That used to make Aunt Fanny really mad. And it used to make her sad too. She solved both problems by drinking (Dugon, 1988, pp. 134-135).

Gary never suggests why it is that non-Indigenous Tasmanians want to convince themselves that Tasmanian Aborigines don't exist. White Tasmanians have previously denied their own convict ancestry, but continue to deny the existence of Aboriginal Tasmanians. However, Gary does acknowledge that in the revival of interest in white family histories there is status in identifying with a previously denied convict heritage. In this process of identity formation through history, Gary doesn't refer to the historical construction of race relations. If Gary is Dugon's political mouthpiece, this omission avoids the contentions and complexities of a deeper exposition of her characters' disposition and the contemporary social realities of racism and denial.

Uncle Gary's summary of his family's ancestry, "thousands of generations Tasmanian", subsumes all Aboriginal Tasmanian history into one period, one which does not admit to the historicism of colonisation when so many of their Indigenous predecessors died or were forcibly removed. It also excludes the facts of Aboriginal resistance and endurance, and survival in a racist society. The contemporary reality for Tasmanian Aborigines depicted in Dugon's novels is that legislated denial of their Aboriginal heritage ensures that the likes of Gramma and Uncle Gary and kin remain at the bottom of the socio-economic hierarchy. But Gary is not an activist, he is an ordinary Australian who cares deeply and understands the intergenerational impact of white colonisation on his immediate family. Gary utters the strongest statements in Dugon's writing, one which reflects real experience for Tasmanian Aborigines, when he argues that Peg's real problem lies in her failure of "How to be herself. It's not easy for anybody growing up in a society that picks you out as an Aborigine, then denies you the right to be an Aborigine, and says you're nothing, *nobody*" (Dugon, 1988, p. 135).

In *Lonely Summers,* Peg, who is the most damaged by her childhood experiences of racism and marginalisation, is denied a voice as well as three dimensionality as a character. She is talked about by others, including her family, but she is never a dynamic presence in the novel. When she finally appears in the novel, Peg admits that she was ashamed "of *myself*. I thought I'd never be anything but what I was if I didn't get away from there … It wasn't what I wanted to be" (Dugon, 1988, p. 143). Peg's attitude conforms to and perpetuates the colonial ideology of denial and forgetting. "I didn't belong. I never belonged there". "But I do!" cried Kelly, as she recognises her own need to belong somewhere, "her need to be a part of some intimacy, some relationship that was her own; a family or a place" (Dugon, 1988, p. 146). *Lonely Summers* concludes with Kelly's realisation of her absolute independence from her mother: "I'm not just a kid now, you know" (Dugon, 1988, p. 146), consequently, "she would have to make her own decisions about herself" (Dugon, 1988, p. 148). But this is as far as Dugon goes towards the resolution of her thematic journey. There is no reminder of Kelly's own personal quest for identity and selfhood. At this point Kelly remains politically naïve and innocent of the social inequities that she has witnessed and personally experienced. Kelly's acquired information regarding her origins, that of finding out who she is as an Aboriginal person and where she belongs, is vital information which should inform her psycho-social identity. But this information is too sparse to be meaningful to both Kelly's character and to the reader.

The logical historical explanation of Gramma's existence and her survival as the head of her family is that her people, "thousands of generations Tasmanian", are descendants of Cape Barren Islanders[45], some of whom relocated to Launceston during the mid twentieth century. However, Dugon's writing evades the verisimilitude of historicisation which should respect and inform the integrity of her thematic development.

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[45] By the beginning of the twentieth century, most Tasmanian Indigenous families had been removed to Cape Barren Island off the north coast of mainland Tasmania where they were effectively segregated from non-Indigenous people. Until the late 1960's, the Tasmanian Government insisted that there were

Lonely Summers does not conclude with a tidy resolution. Sixteen year old Kelly is neither child nor adult, but readers are left with a sense of optimism for a continuing journey which is connected to her evolving Indigenous identity. Free to embrace whatever she wants of her cultural background, Kelly chooses not to participate in the muttonbirding that her uncles and cousins enjoy. Depicted as continually negotiating a place between two cultures, Dugon strives to demonstrate that Kelly is not a victim of her colonialist past.

However, Dugon's teenage protagonist lacks a voice and a depth of characterisation that is informed by realistic emotional reaction to any of her personal trauma. As a writer Dugon avoids locating her Indigenous characters securely in a specific place and culture. Indeed, the book is marketed as "the story of a teenage survivor". Critics Maurice Saxby and Margaret Dunkle make notice of the Indigenous content; Saxby suggests that "Aboriginality is one part of [Kelly's] complex self" (Saxby, 1993, p. 455), whilst Dunkle notes that *Lonely Summers* "presents the special problems of Tasmanian Aborigines, who even today are considered officially extinct" (Dunkle, 1994, p. 38).

***Clare Street,* 1990: Negotiating Racism through Identity Construction**

In *Clare Street* Dugon picks up the momentum of Kelly's search for a home and identity through her romantic involvement with Nicholas Watson and his family. In making meaning out of the rejection and homelessness that she experiences throughout her childhood, Kelly articulates a concrete desire for a home. In *Clare Street* Kelly wants to settle down, for, as she points out in *Lonely Summers*, she is "not like Peg", her mother. Kelly has already demonstrated that she is less self-preoccupied and "wants to belong" to a family and extended community, be it Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal or a mixture of both identities. Dugon suggests that

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no more Tasmanian Aboriginal people, just some "half-caste" people. Lack of schooling and medical facilities, as well as access to reliable food supplies, stimulated many Islanders to settle on the mainland (HREOC, 1997, p. 29).

Kelly is more prepared than her mother ever was to face the uncertainty and ambiguities of her own future. Unlike Peg, Kelly's identity is not constructed through any career or professional ambitions. Peg's aspirations as a professional singer have been a driving force and a socially acceptable rationale for her nomadic lifestyle. However, Kelly realises that Peg's identity is a fragile construction, that Peg herself has no real home.

Nimon and Foster (1997) discuss how in fiction for adolescents, "constructs of home are essential ingredients of identity"; that the construct of home is not just a physical space, but also a metaphysical space in which identity is housed (Nimon and Foster, 1997, p. 26). "Young people engage in discovering the home in which they wish to live, a home composed of ideals of how society ought to be and the people they wish to become" (Nimon and Foster, 1997, p. 26). Going home to Gramma's place is integral to the healing process which could enable Kelly as a young adult to identify her own metaphysical space of identity construction.

Dugon's authorial voice presents multiple perspectives, thereby ensuring that the reader always knows more about the other characters' thoughts and motives than Kelly does, whilst simultaneously maintaining Kelly's innocence regarding adult ideologies and their racial politics. Dugon's narrative suppresses the range and depth of Kelly's potential emotional responses as she remains consistently underwhelmed and inarticulate regarding her own experience of dislocation and unbelonging. The narrative's impersonal third person adopts the view of the character in focus, be it adult or child, often through a stream of consciousness or by recounting action and conversation. Hence the reader has access to Grandfather Ryan as a multi-dimensional character. Old fashioned, isolated, lonely and a racist, he sees Peg and her mother's family as beneath him. But he cares deeply for Kelly, and is not about to disown her for her Aboriginality. Hence, in *Clare Street,* Kelly is empowered to be the link between Grandfather Ryan and his deceased son, and between Grandfather and Kelly's Aboriginal grandmother.

Dugon's readers are discouraged from making harsh judgements about adult attitudes. Grandfather Ryan could be anybody's grandfather, typical of his generation, "not a cheerful man; life had left him disgruntled and disappointed ... too many failed expectations" (Dugon, 1990, p. 1). Belonging, home and identity are all themes which underpin Dugon's exploration of the covert and overt racism that Kelly and her Aboriginal family experience. Kelly's deconstruction of the silences which surround her family history enables her to project forward, assessing adult communication regarding relationships, loneliness and her own construction of self and place. As Kelly contemplates Grandfather Ryan's solitary future: "I don't think it's right for anybody to live alone" (Dugon, 1990, p. 4), she articulates her own desire for a lifelong partner, "somebody like Nicholas Watson ... [whose family] were the most important people in the street" (Dugon, 1990, p. 4). Kelly consequently enters new territory; identity and home become imbricated within a prime relationship. At this point in time, a relationship with Nicholas, who comes from a respectable stable middle-class family, reflects her need for emotional security. The Watson family's reputation is inherent in being "important", that is, influential and possessing cultural capital. Subconsciously, Kelly is also aspiring towards upward social mobility to potentially embrace the economic security that the Watson family represents. The reality is that as a Tasmanian Aboriginal woman who is homeless, unemployed and not well educated, Kelly, like her Gramma, is at the bottom of the socio-economic ladder.

Kelly's homelessness is never expressed as abject poverty but a romanticised disassociation from a conventional way of life. "All she wanted now was a place of her own somewhere, a place where she could feel as if she *belonged* ... "Will I ever belong anywhere?" she asked herself" (Dugon, 1990, pp. 7-8). In *Clare Street* Kelly's friendship with the Watson family dominates plot development. In contrast to Kelly's nomadic lifestyle, her unbelonging to a place that she can call home, the Watsons have all the appearances of stability, comfort and affluence, generated by Mr Watson's professional involvement in law, accounts and real estate. Dugon's invasive authorial voice projects them as "so handsome and important ... [who] lived in an imposing house … the most talked-about family in the district ... every girl was attracted to Nicholas" (Dugon, 1990, p. 10). Home and parenting or nurturing are thematically interwoven in *Clare Street*. Innocent of a conventional way of life, Kelly's involvement with the Watsons becomes a catalyst for her developing awareness of the realities of cultural capital, of who has real social and economic power. Associated with this is her recognition of the deeply ingrained socio-historical repeated patterns of black - white relations in Australia.

Incorporating the Other into Kelly's Sense of Self

Three pivotal events accrue in meaning, depicted through action and conversation. Chloe Watson proceeds to sabotage the romantic relationship that is developing between Kelly and her brother Nicholas, engineering the humiliation and exclusion that Kelly experiences through her new "best friends". Recognising Kelly's vulnerability, Chloe carefully stage manages the first event. Invited into Chloe's bedroom, Kelly is confronted by its untidiness:

> Kelly, used to occupying a small space and keeping her few possessions neatly arranged, always ready to move on, was shocked at such careless evidence of belonging and ownership. She understood the untidiness of poverty, when things were worn, sagging and broken ... Later it would seem natural to her that those who had much should value so little (Dugon, 1990, p. 24).

Unused to sharing such intimate spaces in people's houses, let alone receiving gifts, Kelly's discomfort increases as Chloe offers her a gift from her trinket box:

> "Trinkets to exchange with the natives?" asked Kelly without thinking. Chloe laughed. "What do you mean?" "I didn't mean anything" said Kelly, but she had this strange mental image of the conquerors exchanging tokens for power. *What made her think of that*? (Dugon, 1990, pp. 24-25).

Chloe appreciates the symbolic value of the "baubles" in Chloe's trinket box. As objects that have no use and no real value for their owner they cost nothing to give away, but are useful for buying friendship, or "power", as Kelly recognises in her analogous reference to coloniser relationships with the "natives" in Australia. As the recipient of useless gifts that relegate her to inferior status, Kelly realises Chloe's untrustworthiness. Materially, Chloe has everything that Kelly doesn't, including "the perfect mother", the artistic and musical Berenice Watson (Dugon, 1990, p. 25). Moreover,

> There was something about the Watsons, something lavish, open-handed and unthrifty, which Kelly would both envy and reject ... But she saw that the Watsons were secure, not only in their apparently easy affluence, but in the richness of family life that supported them (Dugon, 1990, p. 24).

Chloe's undermining of the burgeoning romantic relationship between Kelly and Nicholas precipitates the second manipulation of Kelly's feelings of exclusion and non-acceptance. Kelly's lack and her "envy" is transparent to Chloe who stage manages Kelly's discomfort. Kelly becomes enmeshed in "part of a game that she didn't understand" (Dugon, 1990, p. 67) when Nicholas drives them to the beach at George Town. For Chloe this journey serves a purpose; playing Aborigines. Finding "coloured stone", "she tried to paint Kelly's face … "Come on! Pretend we're Aborigines" … and … rubbed some colour down Kelly's nose and cheeks" (Dugon, 1990, p. 65). Chloe's embarrassing spectacle "I'm an Aborigine. See me do corroboree!" (Dugon, 1990, p. 65) humiliates Kelly as does Nicholas's castigation; "I knew you'd be trouble … You can go down to the river and wash that muck off you. Kelly too. And then stop fooling about!" (Dugon, 1990, pp. 65-66). Kelly's psychological disempowerment prevents her from retaliating to Chloe's "joke" (Dugon, 1990, p. 66). Kelly's outsider position is secured by Chloe's game, suggesting that she knows more about Kelly's Indigenous heritage than she reveals. Chloe's stereotyping, "coloured stone" and "corroboree", is maliciously intended, as is her manipulation of Nicholas, whose response foreshadows disgust and repulsion; "wash that muck off you" is internalised by Kelly as a snide reference to her Aboriginality.

Kelly's outsider status is ensured by the third pivotal event, brought on when Gramma pays Kelly a surprise visit. "Kelly turned to her friends to share her pleasure. "Look, Gramma's here!" … When Kelly saw Nicholas's face, the shock stung her like a blow ... His eyes were treacherous" (Dugon, 1990, p. 152). Dugon's intentions in the novel are made explicit in Nicholas's betrayal of Kelly, who feels "a bottomless sense of loss … She had been accepted by them, felt that she was one of them. Now she was *other* again, *different*" (Dugon, 1990, p. 153). Kelly's articulation of loss, rejection and otherness is intellectualised in adultist language. It is not a credible response from a heartbroken teenager, desperately seeking love and friendship. However, Nicholas's betrayal is a loss of naïveté for Kelly.

The covert racism of the Watson children confirms Kelly's earlier perceptions of feeling "uncomfortable, as if she had no place there" in the Watson home and her relationship with Nicholas is damned (Dugon, 1990, p. 56). Yet, throughout Dugon's novels, Kelly is never seen to respond with deeply felt grief or anger to any experience. She emerges from her close encounter with Nicholas's intractable racism with a “cold maturity”. “At least when you grew up, she thought, everyone would have to let you be yourself. Then she would know where she belonged. She would belong to herself” (Dugon, 1990, p. 153).

Witnessed by Grandfather Ryan and Gramma, Nicholas’s rejection of Kelly is a catalyst for their mutual respect, and the beginnings of their own intercultural communication, whereby Grandfather Ryan overturns his preconceptions regarding Gramma’s unreliability. Grandfather Ryan’s racism embraces a hierarchy imported to Australia, which positions all Anglo-Celts above Aborigines, as well as the English above the Irish. Commenting on Gramma’s appearance, “You look more Aboriginal than most”, invites Gramma to affirm her Aboriginality. “It’s more than colour” said Gramma. “It’s relationships. It’s a sort of racial spirit” (Dugon, 1990, pp. 155-156). But Grandfather Ryan shifts his prejudices to another group: “Well you *are* Australian ... You couldn’t say you weren’t Australian. We’ve got some funny people coming into the country now” (Dugon, 1990, p. 156).

Gramma is potentially a dynamic influence in Kelly’s life. Drawing her strength from her past, her “sort of racial spirit”, she is typical of Aboriginal women who held families together, having nurtured a family in spite of the social alienation and dysfunction which she experiences. At the conclusion of *Clare Street* Gramma’s warmth and resilience bring Kelly back to Gramma’s home for a combined birthday celebration. Gramma, aged seventy, introduces Kelly, aged seventeen, to “the whole mob”, her extended family (in contrast to Grandfather Ryan who is totally alone). Kelly’s Aboriginal family offer her a sense of continuity and acceptance. Gramma’s home therefore becomes Kelly’s home base, albeit temporarily, from which she can launch her own adult life and personal ethos. For Kelly, as a Tasmanian Aborigine, going home to Gramma’s place is also essential to the healing process of separation and dislocation that she has experienced throughout her childhood.

Ultimately, Kelly rejects belonging to “the mob” and her mother’s hollow offer of accommodation. The resolution of *Clare Street* also sees Kelly planning to get a job and share a flat with Katrina, her Tasmanian Aboriginal cousin in Hobart. Kelly’s concept of home and belonging are integral to the process of constructing her identity and personal ethos, of which her Aboriginality is a significant component. Katrina and

Kelly share a bond of the same family and cultural heritage. Their plan to share a home emulates a surrogate family arrangement.[46]

Kelly's quest to "[be] her *own person*, not someone pulled about by relationships" (Dugon, 1990, p. 107) is fulfilled by her voluntary separation from her elders, Mrs Kneebone, Grandfather Ryan and Granma, who provided support during a crisis. Dugon's conclusion offers some grandmotherly "reassurance" through Kelly's self doubt (Nora Dugon, journal entry, 27 August 1985, unpublished); "Kelly needed as desperately as anybody to love and be loved. *But how*? Life on the move had taught her nothing about continuing relationships, and experience had made her wary" (Dugon, 1990, p. 186). The implications are that Kelly is really just like every other teenager. However, the obliqueness of Dugon's thematic concern ensures that the racism that Kelly experiences is never confronted, and that Kelly is never really empowered with a sense of her personal history.

Conclusion: Dugon's Constructions of Indigeneity - Identity, Belonging and Home in *Lonely Summers* and *Clare Street*

Lonely Summers and *Clare Street* explore new ground in children's literature, reflecting contemporary perspectives of the Tasmanian Aborigines and depicting the deeply embedded prejudice and denial of their existence. Dugon demonstrates an interwoven concept of the impact that colonialism has had on many Aboriginal people, projected through her teenage protagonist, who discovers and embraces her Aboriginal family and identity. Both novels reflect the attitudes of the settler coloniser culture of Australia that late in the twentieth century were being perpetuated in the Tasmanian communities depicted, attitudes which denied or totally marginalised Tasmanian Aborigines. In *Lonely Summers,* Kelly discovers her hybrid mixture of Anglo-Celt and Aboriginal heritage. Her life experience is therefore distinctively Australian, yet identifiable and shared by many who have experienced the diaspora of postcolonial displacement and identity construction.

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[46] Dugon's intention to write a third book in the series is hinted at by Kelly's group housing arrangements, offering a home beyond childhood and before the development of a prime relationship (Nora Dugon, personal communication, 9 April, 2010).

Dugon's Tasmanian Aboriginal characters are people in a hiatus, invisible fringe dwellers, and unassimilated. As a people whose culture is unrecognised they are unacknowledged as members of the Australian community. Dugon's dismissive attitude towards the contemporary political reality of Tasmanian Aborigines and their struggle for land rights and recognition reinforces racist attitudes of the period, as she has not replaced these perceptions with deep understanding and authentic representation of their way of life and the historical/political/social reality of their existence. Dugon's authorial perspective does not dig deep enough into the psychology of the individual construction of identity as it pertains to her Aboriginal characters. In particular, Dugon demonstrates no deep knowledge of her teenage protagonist as a character.

Dugon never convincingly demonstrates that her teenage protagonist has discovered the psycho-social dimension of her identity, of the ways in which intergenerational experiences and family histories impact on Kelly's own experience as a child and a teenager. Kelly's voice is obscured by Dugon's narrative which strives to demonstrate the writer's imagined universality of teenage identity formation, on her own nostalgia for stable family relationships. In this arena, her arguments are convincing; children deprived of parents are sometimes deprived of grandparents, but grandparents are deprived of a relationship too. Intergenerational relationships offer continuity, stability, knowledge and love, as well as the prospect of a future role for all participants. Grandfather Ryan discovers this later when he discovers that Kelly is his only son's daughter and that he has effectively missed out on a generation of a relationship with his one surviving descendent.

By contrast, Kelly's Gramma's heritage is acknowledged through her family and their shared activities, passed down from generation to generation, as exemplified in their traditional muttonbird hunts. As a unique cultural and economic activity, muttonbirding locates Kelly's Tasmanian Aboriginal family in place and history. But this is not developed convincingly in either novel, so that neither Kelly nor the reader has access to a deeper appreciation of Gramma's resilience as an Aboriginal woman and a survivor of social alienation and dysfunction (as suggested in the racist taunts which Peg experienced at school).

Dugon’s novels do go some way towards suggesting that there are different ways of being Aboriginal, including the notion that Aboriginality is also constructed through interactions between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people (see Langton, 1993, p. 31). However, as a writer, Dugon avoids answering the “too hard questions” and depicting the too hard emotions that one expects to see in YAF of the era and communities which she depicts. Her lack of deep appreciation of the socio-cultural issues which underpin the psychological makeup and motivation of her Indigenous characters ensures that Kelly never acquires the historical background to her culture which would enable her to orient herself and determine her self identity. Whilst Dugon suggests that multiple heritages sometimes require complex negotiations, her representation of their identity fails in its acknowledgement of the deep fissures of denial and exclusion that Tasmanian Aboriginal people continued to experience at the time she was writing.

Dugon’s fiction is effectively a lost opportunity in its capacity to contribute to a revision of Australia’s ethnocentrism and racism. The protagonist Kelly remains untraumatised by her dispossession, unmoved or unsurprised by her discovery that she is Aboriginal, or Aboriginal-Irish, and totally unpoliticised by the social and historical reality of her identity as a Tasmanian Aboriginal person. Towards the end of *Lonely Summers*, Dugon speaks for Kelly, who “was beginning to experience some idea of her own existence … just a short kid with mixed-up parentage and no special talent for anything” (Dugon, 1988, pp. 147-148). If this slippage represents an attempt at reader identification, it also complies with dominant values. Kelly is seen as inferior, as the hybrid other who is bound to the marginalisation of her Indigenous heritage, which essentially undermines the thematic exploration of the impact of the past on identity formation. Dugon’s construction of Indigeneity in her two novels not only reflects the contemporary perception of the status of Tasmanian Aborigines at the time of her writing, but they also reinforce perceptions of Tasmanian Aborigines as invisible or non-existent. Ultimately, her treatment of the subject does little to challenge these understandings. There is no real evolution in characterisation, and the meaning of both novels is unarticulated, focussed on the happy uncertainty of Kelly’s nebulous future.

Kelly's final thoughts in *Clare Street* are that "nothing was certain" (Dugon, 1990, p. 192). Kelly's uncertainity is an ironic resonance of Dugon's own lack of conviction towards her subject and her elusion of her thematic concerns which essentially suppresses the Indigeneity of her characters. Effectively, Dugon has walked away from her subject and reiterated "the lost history" in that she has provided none and reflected no real knowledge of her Aboriginal characters. Dugon's Tasmanian Aborigines are marginalised to the point that they are effectively invisible on the landscape.

Dugon's novels briefly refer to muttonbirding as an indicator of the Tasmanian Aboriginality of Kelly's Aboriginal family. As an urban Tasmanian Aborigine, Kelly eschews participation in the annual muttonbirding activities that her uncles and other family members greatly enjoy. Hence Kelly's Aboriginal identity is being constructed through her own personal experience and understanding of what her family can offer to her, particularly through what she chooses to take from Gramma's concept of "relationships" and "sort of racial spirit" (Dugon, 1990, p.156)

The next chapter examines two picture books which centralise muttonbirding as an economic and traditional activity for their Tasmanian Aboriginal protagonists. Both Matthew in Mary Small's *Night of the Muttonbirds* (1981) and Harry in Elizabeth Stanley's *Night without Darkness* (2001) express the need to distance themselves from the muttonbirding in order to develop their personal identities.

Chapter 8

Getting off the Island: Negotiating the Future and Identity for Cape Barren Islanders in Mary Small's *Night of the Muttonbirds* (1981) and Elizabeth Stanley's *Night without Darkness* (2001)

Introduction: A Crisis of Environmental Conscience

The previous chapter demonstrated that Nora Dugon's assertion of the "real history" of Tasmanian Aborigines eludes important information for her readers regarding the heritage and genealogy of her Indigenous characters. The setting for this chapter, the windswept rocky islands of the Bass Strait separating Tasmania from the Australian mainland, is significant as the location of new Aboriginal communities who escaped the genocide of the Tasmanian mainland. Sustained by their sealing, whaling and muttonbird practice for centuries, the Cape Barren Islanders[47] and their descendants are living proof that Tasmanian Aborigines have survived into the twenty-first century.

This chapter examines two picture books for older readers; *Night of the Muttonbirds* (1981) by Mary Small, and *Night without Darkness* (2001) by Elizabeth Stanley. Both raise questions about muttonbirding as central to the lives of either Indigenous or non-Indigenous families, told from the perspective of their protagonists; an Indigenous boy (Matthew) and a non-Indigenous girl (Phoebe), respectively. The protagonists' personal identity formation involves separation from their respective traditional cultural backgrounds. Whereas Dugon's protagonist, Kelly, is essentially discovering her Aboriginal identity and learning to embrace what it can offer her personally, the focal Indigenous characters of Small's and Stanley's books (Matthew and Harry, respectively) realise that they must leave their island home to manage their own futures and personal identities. All the young characters in the two stories, Matthew in Small's story, Phoebe and Harry in Stanley's story, participate in the muttonbird hunts, but the focal Indigenous characters, both boys, come to realise that their individual futures lie beyond the restrictions of the isolation and insularity of their island homes. For them, physically "getting off the island" becomes symbolic of their need to distance themselves from their community in order to develop their own identities. The prospect of their separation from parents exposes the construction of childhood and childness as well as Indigeneity.

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[47] Cape Barren Islanders can trace their heritage back to the early 19th century, as descendants of Tasmanian Aboriginal people who relocated to Cape Barren Island in the Furneaux Group of islands in the Bass Strait.

Small’s *Night of the Muttonbirds*, consisting of fourteen chapters, was first published as a picture book, illustrated by Robert Ingpen, whose sepia watercolour images offer a series of impressions of a windswept landscape, rather than focussing on its inhabitants. In contrast, Stanley’s illustrations in *Night without Darkness* focus primarily on the characters.

The Tasmanian muttonbird is one of a few Australian birds to support small cottage industries (Skira, 2006) where the chicks are harvested commercially for their flesh and oil, but the feathers are no longer gathered. For some Tasmanian Indigenous families, as represented in these stories, Muttonbirds provide the staple food from November to April. In her Introduction to *Night of the Muttonbirds*, Small explains that:

> The toll, now carefully supervised and controlled by the Tasmanian National Parks and Wildlife Service, is said to be the greatest mass slaughter of birds in the world, yet it does no real harm to their numbers for many of the breeding colonies throughout the Strait are left unmolested (Small, 1981, p. 6).

Small’s narrative assumes an objective scientific perspective, and presents readers with graphic information on the birds, the hunting and processing methods, including explicit references to the way that the chicks are strangled in their burrows. The reflections on this activity by her Indigenous protagonist, Matthew, intersect the narrative. By contrast, Stanley’s description of the hunt is a sanitised version of this mass slaughter. “New-born muttonbird chicks, fattened by months of indulgent feeding by their parents, are plucked by hand from their warrens by the birders, efficiently killed and threaded by their beaks onto a smooth straight piece of melaleuca” (Stanley, 2001, Author’s Note at end of book). Stanley’s imagery of “efficiently killed” birds conceals the cruelty and harshness of muttonbirding as a way of life. As a writer she is fearful of her subject being too offensive to readers. Her Author’s Note describes how the industry has changed with the use of tractors and gas heating. Her reference to “modernisation” of the industry, which is irrelevant to the story, attempts to render the subject more accessible to readers.

Muttonbirding is a symbolic representation of Tasmanian Indigeneity as well as a symbol of Indigenous resistance to dispossession and assimilation. Aboriginal descendants, through their matriarchal lines, have followed “as closely as possible the ancient tribal way of life” (Rae-Ellis, 1996, p. 112). Aboriginal people on the Bass Strait islands have been harvesting the muttonbird or short-tailed shearwater for over 8000 years. As the seal population was decimated by wholesale slaughtering, muttonbirding became an essential mainstay of the economies of Aborigines on Cape Barren and Flinders Islands throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Today some Tasmanian Aborigines regard muttonbirding as a major social and economic activity for their communities. Indeed, muttonbirding and shell necklace making are regarded as amongst the few skills to have survived the impact of colonisation (Lehman, 2006). In 1995, the Tasmanian Government recognised the significance of this cultural and economic activity to Aboriginal people in its handback of twelve sites, which included four islands where Aborigines are permitted to harvest shearwaters for personal use. Metaphorically, the muttonbirding harvest depicted in the two books discussed in this chapter underpins Tasmanian Indigeneity, reflecting a thriving culture very compatible with certain features of European society.

The communities of Cape Barren Island “represent the major expression of Tasmanian Aboriginal society today” (Ryan, 1996, pp. 258). Their isolation has facilitated their convergence as an acculturated Aboriginal-European community, based on their traditional muttonbird hunting activities. Small’s picture book is a particularly effective representation of the contemporary presence of Tasmanian Aborigines and the evolution of their culture. Politically, Cape Barren Islanders have played a dynamic role in the shaping of policy and the granting of land rights to Tasmanian Aborigines through their affirmation of their own Tasmanian Aboriginal ancestry. However, their struggle for self-determination is never alluded to in either of these two picture books.

In Small's story muttonbirding is essential to the economic viability of the isolated community. It is a shared activity with specific age appropriate and gender roles.[48] The Indigenous identity of Matthew, the main protagonist, is reinforced by his sense of belonging to both his family and his island home. In comparison to Small's story, Stanley's is an emotive romanticised presentation of muttonbirding told from the non-Indigenous perspective. The family heritage of Stanley's other focal character, Phoebe, is Anglo-Celtic, as Stanley's illustrations depict them as blonde or red haired with blue eyes. Her parents are totally accepting of Phoebe's relationship with the dark-skinned Harry. Stanley's Author's Note explains that "the white farming community on nearby Flinders Island is also part of the [birding] industry" and that "Indigenous elders are trying to rekindle the interest of their children in what has been a traditional and valued way of life". However, her story promotes a non-Indigenous perspective of the activity that eludes its significance for Aboriginal Tasmanians.

In both stories the young characters, Matthew, Phoebe and Harry experience a change of heart regarding their own roles in the muttonbird harvest. The muttonbirding continues, and the species is unthreatened by extinction, but Matthew and Harry's, as well as Phoebe's, understandings of the birds' behaviours reflect a developing environmental awareness which is not shared by the older generation.

Cape Barren Islander Indigenous Identity and Muttonbirding

From the late 1790s, seal hunters from various nations (British, American, New Zealand Maoris, South Sea Islanders and elsewhere) began visiting the islands in Bass Strait and the northern and eastern coasts of Tasmania, which were close enough to mainland Tasmania for the sealers to make contact with the Tasmanian Aborigines. Aboriginal women from mainland Australia and Van Diemen's Land were frequently abducted by or voluntarily chose to live with these sealers. George Augustus Robinson attempted to protect Aboriginal people against what he perceived as the violent depredations of inscrutable settlers and sealers by placing them under colonial control, but his efforts met with limited success. The descendants of the surviving children of the unions of Aboriginal women and the sealers of these various nationalities became known as Straitsmen or Islanders and were eventually officially recognised as Tasmanian Aborigines (Rae–Ellis, 1996, p. 71).

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[48] Participation in muttonbirding conforms strictly to traditional gender roles, as Aunty Ida West explains, "women are not allowed to salt the birds when menstruating" (West, 1984, p. 60).

Small's *Night of the Muttonbirds* (1981) was written at time when, as Tasmanian Aboriginal writer and activist Jim Everett[49] points out, "Tasmanian Aboriginal people were still being subjected to racism over the issue of identity". Denial of Aboriginal identity was sometimes easier than affirmation, as "experience of racism … made them ashamed of being Aboriginal" (Everett, 2006). The impact of colonisation continued to affect Cape Barren Islanders until the last decades of the twentieth century, as many of them were victims of government policy which forcibly removed children from their parents on the grounds of the island's lack of health and education facilities. The 1997 *Bringing Them Home; Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families* begins with the story of a Cape Barren Islander family of eight children, all of whom were removed from their family in the 1960s and fostered separately on the mainland of Tasmania (HREOC, 1997, p. 2). This practice of the removal of children from their families under "duress" continued until 1980 (Ryan, 2012, p. 341). The *Bringing Them Home Report* discusses how,

> in areas where no secondary education facilities were available, for example on Cape Barren Island in Tasmania ... the families of 'promising' students were asked if they wanted their children to be 'given the opportunity' of furthering their education by leaving home and going to live elsewhere ... Realistically, however, there was no likelihood that Indigenous families would have the material resources to ensure continuous regular contact (HREOC, 1997, p. 8).

One of the issues that these two books raise is the representation of Cape Barren Islanders. Robinson's[50] journal accounts of the sealers' violence towards their Aboriginal women have, since the beginnings of colonisation in Tasmania, percolated through non-fiction and thereby into fiction, including children's literature. Small recognises the Islanders' origins when she describes the white settlers of the Bass Strait as "rough and ruthless men, used to hard living" and notes "It was easy enough for them to steal Aboriginal women from nearby Tasmania and it was these men and women who were to become the ancestors of a unique group of islanders that still live on Cape Barren Island in the Furneaux Group" (Small, 1981, p. 5).

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[49] Jim Everett is a descendant of Chief Mannalargenna, who was tricked by George Augustus Robinson into captivity at Wybalenna on Flinders Island.

[50] Stanley has an unproblematic view of Robinson's accounts, as in her Teaching Notes (Stanley, 2004) she refers to him as a "philanthropist".

In Small's story, Robert Ingpen's visual representation of an Indigenous muttonbirder is intriguing. His sepia-toned watercolour drawing on page 7 shows the animated, intense, wrinkled face of a Cape Barren Islander looking into the distance. Across his shoulders he carries a "spit" of slaughtered muttonbirds threaded onto a thin stick. Ingpen's illustration of the human face of muttonbirding is taken from a photograph of an Indigenous muttonbirder[51], whose identity is not acknowledged in the book. The photograph is that of Eric or Kerry Maynard of Cape Barren Island[52], who had a muttonbirding shed on Big Dog Island.[53] The use of this image is typical of the ways in which Aboriginal people have been represented textually and visually. Eric Maynard's identity has not been acknowledged, nor the source of the photograph. Hence, he is decultured; his personal and cultural identity and his geographical location have been effaced by the lack of background information, either visual or textual attribution. Eric Maynard thereby becomes Ingpen's generic muttonbirder, as in this story he could be imagined as any of Matthew's older male relatives. There is very little visual representation of people throughout the book. The one visual reference to a child is the back view of a man and a boy walking on the beach, looking up to a shearwater flying across the sky.

Whereas Small's "unique group of islanders" informs her understanding of the environment, history and social reality of her Indigenous characters, Stanley's Authors' Note attempts to contextualise her story as a sort of postscript to the story. Stanley allows no space for politicisation or authorial interpretation of contemporary Cape Barren Islanders' circumstances. "Descendants of these first 'Straitsmen' and their indigenous wives have lived on the reserve called Cape Barren Island since the 1880s and birding has remained their chief livelihood" (Stanley, 2001, Author's Note).

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[51] Robert Ingpen gave this illustration to the author, Mary Small, who said, "He told me he had worked with photographs" (Small, personal communication, 5 October, 2011).

[52] Greg Lehman identified the person shown in this illustration as Eric Maynard (personal communication, 23 July, 2011). However, see also the photograph of "Kerry Maynard and Rex Johnson muttonbirding on Trefoil Island in the 1980s" in Ryan (1996, p. 276).

[53] See Robert Mansell's *Child's drawing on Big Dog Island near Eric Manyard's Shed* (d.u).

Small's story was written less than a decade after the practice of removing Indigenous children from their families had ceased. At that time the majority of Tasmanian Aborigines did not go beyond primary school for their education (Murray-Smith, 1981, p. 8). There is no evidence that Small's protagonist, Matthew, or his family are under any duress to send him to secondary school on mainland Tasmania. Small shows how Matthew is free to make up his own mind regarding his education and his future, and although he has no financial resources, he has local knowledge and community support to return to his family when he needs to. But this difficult and painful past history of children leaving the island must serve as a subtext for Tasmanian Aboriginal readers of the story.

Identifying with family and involvement in family activities, both social and economic, is an important affirmation of Aboriginal identity. Small's story does not politicise the issues of Aboriginality, but it does not avoid the contemporary reality of racism which Matthew experiences when he leaves the island.

Stanley's *Night without Darkness* represents black-white relationships through the romantic friendship of Harry and Phoebe. Stanley's Indigenous protagonist, Harry, does not survive to create a future for himself, but Dusky the muttonbird does. Implicitly, in Stanley's book, the birds are more resilient than the first Tasmanians.

Night of the Muttonbirds: **Managing the Future for Birds and Boys**

Night of the Muttonbirds offers a description of a unique lifestyle, one that is familiar to generations of Tasmanian Aborigines. As a picture book for older readers, it presents a thoughtful discussion of a child facing decisions and responsibility for himself and his family, which in Matthew's case also involves negotiating his identity as a Tasmanian Aborigine from Cape Barren Island.

Writing of her inspiration for the book, Mary Small states:

> While living in Launceston, Tasmania, I became aware of the annual slaughter for commercial gain of the migratory "muttonbirds" on the islands of Bass Strait. I am indebted to the late Dominic Serventy, CSIRO, for his help in providing an authentic background to this story (Small, 2010).

Small's awareness of the "slaughter for commercial gain" is not written into the story as a didactic environmental treatise. The meaning of the story invites an open-ended reading of the issue of the mass slaughter of wild creatures, which Small affirms does not impact significantly on the numbers of migratory shearwaters as a species. Although the location of the setting in the Bass Strait may be unfamiliar to many readers, Small's story offers a "sensitive and rewarding insight into the lives of these isolated island people" (Adams, 1983, p. 55). As "a novel of transition, of the external world impinging on the life of this little-known community" (McVitty, 1981, p. 204), Small's story offers an incisive portrayal of Matthew's evolving identity.

Margaret Dunkle suggests that in *Night of the Muttonbirds*,

> there is no indication of identification with Aboriginality in Matthew's family, who, like the boy himself, are described rather clinically from a distance. The author's main interest is in the muttonbirding, which she describes in detail, and in the research conducted by the wildlife service (Dunkle, 1994, p. 129).

However, a careful reading of Small's eloquent prose offers a gradual revelation of Matthew's personal understanding of his Indigeneity. Details of his family relationships, including the importance of Grandma as an elder, and the roles that his uncles play in his life, as well as the significant non-Indigenous people with whom Matthew interacts, offer an insightful construction of Matthew's Tasmanian Aboriginality. Dunkle also draws attention to Robert Ingpen's "marvellously evocative water colours [which] set the stage for the story, at once a plea for wildlife conservation, a study of young humanity at risk, and an armchair travelogue of these arid, barren, beautiful, all-but-forgotten islands" (Dunkle, 1981, p. 33). Ingpen's illustrations have appeal for their tone and mood. They do not offer an explicit interpretation of what is a complex narrative that operates on two levels, to tell Matthew's story and to depict the lives of the shearwaters. Instead, Ingpen sees the landscape as a central character in Small's narrative.

Matthew's personal story is offset by information on the birdlife of the area which is tied into the narrative. Birds and planes are symbolically enmeshed in the story. The birds represent many things to different characters in the story. Muttonbirding provides Matthew's family with a subsistence living and are a source of food for them. The birds' annual departure from the island symbolise a freedom that is paralleled in the role that small planes represent for the island. They symbolise transition and the capacity to reach a new destination, but Matthew wants to be more than a passenger, he wants to be a pilot. The small plane bringing weekly supplies and passengers to the island is piloted by Mister Greg, Mathew's "hero … who had flown planes ... through Bass Strait's most troublesome weathers … The Cape Barren Islanders relied on him for almost everything; except for an occasional ship, he was their link with the outside world" (Small, 1981, p. 11). Mister Greg is an accessible role model, but Matthew's "horizons were larger, more distant, for when he left school he'd fly the big ones, the 747 Jumbo jets, the DC 10s, and Concorde. The very thought of the future made Matthew thrill with excitement" (Small, 1981, p. 11).

The birds also facilitate Matthew's freedom for a new vision, through his encounter with an outsider, a scientist, rather stereotypically named "the Professor" (in homage to Small's acknowledgement of her mentor, eminent ornithologist Dr Dominic Serventy), who appreciates the benefits of education as well as Matthew's cultural ties. Consequently, Matthew is enabled to make informed decisions that will separate him from his family and their traditional activities, without the author denigrating muttonbirding as a practice that is carried out unchecked.

The arrival of the plane from Launceston that brings his grandmother back to the island foreshadows Mathew's impending journey from the one teacher school on Cape Barren Island to high school in Launceston. Mr Trent, his teacher, promises Matthew that he can leave class and meet Grandma off the plane. This scenario sets up Matthew's unfolding conflict of acknowledging his family ties whilst aspiring towards a future that lies beyond his family and island home. Symbolically, planes represent modernity and a form of escape that facilitates Matthew's freedom to manage his own future, which also has positive outcomes for the shearwaters.

The separation of school and home is less rigid than conventional mainland schools. Mr Trent muses that Matthew is a "Funny boy … So intelligent and yet so unsure of himself. It'll do him the world of good to get off the island to high school next year" (Small, 1981, p. 9). Mr Trent's appreciation of Matthew's personal dilemma and cultural ties are significant to empowering his eventual independence. However, Matthew's insecurities are fuelled by Grandma's experience of her hospital stay in

Launceston. Respected as “one of the most energetic people on the island, a hard worker during the muttonbird season, as tough as a nut” (Small, 1981, p. 10), Grandma’s declaration that “No one will ever make me leave the island. It was horrible, so lonely in Launceston” (Small, 1981, p. 10), resonates deeply in Matthew. Small’s story contextualises the mass slaughter of wild creatures by those for whom it is a traditional way of life against the environmentalist ethos of wildlife conservation. Matthew’s childhood is typical of the Indigenous families of Cape Barren Island, as he is expected to participate in a community activity which contributes to their collective income. The location of the muttonbirding activities is on the even more remote Big Dog Island:

> The small island, like so many others in the Strait, belonged almost entirely to the birds ... The only other signs of habitation were small clusters of tin-roofed sheds, close-shuttered and part hidden in teatree thickets by the edge of the sea. There was something sinister about them, almost menacing (Small, 1981, p. 14).

Ingpen’s illustrations make use of a palette of earthy browns, grey-blues and sunbleached yellows, depicting the windswept icons of what in Small’s text is an intense activity in a landscape bustling with wildlife. His illustrations offer an impressionistic interpretation of the landscape of the Bass Strait Islands as the setting for the Islanders’ way of life. The sepia tones reinforce the timelessness and the starkness of the harsh environment. The absence of identifiable characters in Ingpen’s “imaginative space” (Ingpen and Cox, 2004) means that all interpretations of characterisation and psychological motivations are gleaned by the reader from the text. The muttonbird slaughter and processing is implied by objects which symbolise the industry; barrels, ropes, a boat tied up on shore, all devoid of human presence. The shabby dilapidated shacks have a temporariness about them; for all its claim to history, Ingpen’s watercolours evoke an impression that muttonbirding will have its day, despite Small’s psychological tension evoked by the “menacing” human presence on the natural environment.

‘It was a job, nothing more. Yet he felt like a murderer’

Matthew’s family’s annual departure in a small motor boat from the larger island for the primitive existence in the hut on the smaller Big Dog Island embraces total autonomy. Hunting and fishing for their own food seems a lot less cruel than the repetitious strangulation of baby muttonbirds. The environmental argument for self sufficiency is distinguished from the mindless slaughter and processing of the muttonbirds.

Matthew's traditional experiences both individualise him and incorporate him into his Indigenous community. His difference from his family is highlighted when he accompanies his father, Charlie, and grandfather, Big Tom, to Big Dog Island. In the cramped tin shed that functions as both factory and accommodation, reading books offers him escape from the stifling closeness of "so many people in the one room, one family closely related" (Small, 1981, p. 49). Books offer another transition to leaving the island that sustain his dreams, for example, the book on planes and flying that he asked Grandma to bring back from Launceston.

Matthew's traditional learning includes bushcraft skills passed from his father and grandfather. He also knows how to read the weather and the sea, is a competent boatman and muttonbirder, and "although underage, was no mean shot with a .22 rifle" (Small, 1981, p. 23). Big Tom notes that "Matt's a fine lad and a good worker with the birds. But if he's real set on this high falutin' education then not one of us will stop him" (Small, 1981, p. 21). Charlie admits that he's "a bright boy but strange for all that. Best let him go his own way and learn - get it out of his system before he decides to come back" (Small, 1981, p. 21). The overriding ethos of the story in *Night of the Muttonbirds* is that for his own personal development, Matthew must leave the place of his childhood, the island he calls home. However, Matthew's childhood is not romanticised; it is warm but harsh, a space where significant learning takes place in a natural environment. Moreover, the story does not privilege white institutional learning or knowledge over Indigenous learning and cultural practices, as represented by the birding activities. Formal school education is not put forward as a kind of salvation for Matthew, as he pioneers the difficult path of negotiating his individual and cultural identity.

Indeed, formal schooling presents an obstacle which Matthew has to negotiate if he is to achieve agency for his own future. In Launceston, overwhelmed by the regimentation and enormous number of children at school, and as the subject of racist taunts for the first time in his life, Matthew becomes aware of his own cultural difference. Derisively called “muttonbird” because of his dark skin and accused of going “walkabout” by other students, he becomes “engulfed by loneliness” and “Obsessed with the idea of leaving” (Small, 1981, pp 32, 33, 34). A few weeks later, at birding time, Matthew escapes back to the life he is used to. However, escape and freedom are mollified with compromise as Matthew is encouraged by his pilot friend to negotiate his own terms for returning to school, after the birding. Mister Greg’s advice regarding Matthew’s “ideas of flying big jets”, that he will “have to leave home ... and study hard, very hard … It’s not easy to become a pilot” (Small, 1981, p. 44) suggests that the transition from the restrictions of childhood to adult freedom is a long term process.

Additionally, Matthew’s negotiation of his traditional Indigenous culture is experienced in the “suffocation” that he experiences in his role in the intense killing, mutilation and processing of the muttonbirds; “so many people in the one room ... his grandfather squeezed the oil, old Annie and Lucy in the pluckhouse, his mother Bessie and her sister Aunt Mabel in the scalding room with Shelley and Deborah and sometimes Jim chopping off legs” (Small, 1981, p. 49). In the slaughter which takes place at night Matthew participates energetically, almost mindlessly, “plundering the burrows, pulling out chick after chick and killing with an increased fury. By the end of that first day he was exhausted, his hands and his clothes greasy, stained and splattered with blood and oil” (Small, 1981, p. 49). Matthew’s revulsion at the muttonbirding is a catalyst for his need to escape the island and to make meaning of this childhood experience.

Getting off the island is a recurring motif in this story, as depicted in the shearwaters’ migration and life cycle, and through the narrative in which Matthew learns to spread his own metaphorical wings. A late November storm brings in millions of migratory shearwaters. The shearwaters’ annual journey portends Mathew’s own personal journey:

> They flew with an urgency ... that has propelled them from half a world away over limitless horizons towards these Bass Strait islands, their summer breeding-grounds. Many were exhausted, and some had been lost on the way through battling strong headwinds (Small, 1981, p. 13).

Matthew’s empathy with the birds is foreshadowed by an evocative illustration by Wildsmith that depicts a solitary dead shearwater on page 27. The text on the opposite page tells of Kelpie, dropping the dead bird at Matthew’s feet, who “saw it was a decomposing muttonbird, its dark wings and feathers sodden from the sea, its head devoid of eyes” (Small, 1981, p. 26). The image of the bird lying on the sand next to a scrubby bush is a poignant reminder of the vulnerability of the birds in a storm. “The sight of the bird sent a stab through Matthew’s heart. His family would be birding in just a few weeks” (Small, 1981, p. 26). The interanimation of text and image invites the reader to draw his or her own conclusions and see its symbolic value, for this solitary dead bird has been killed by natural elements, and not by muttonbirding.

Matthew’s change in perspective is fuelled by a chance meeting one night with the Professor, an ornithologist on his annual field trip to the island. The Professor is looking for one particular bird, “Peter”, whose burrow he has observed for over twenty five years has recently been raided for its chick. The Professor’s empathy for the birds and Matthew’s interaction with the muttonbirds has a cumulative effect on his psyche. “These plain, ordinary looking creatures are fantastic. Their wings, shaped like boomerangs, fly thousands of kilometres year after year yet they need no mechanical repairs … they’re the greatest aircraft in the world, far better even than Concorde” (Small, 1981, p. 56). The Professor’s point of view is unabashedly conservationist and Matthew identifies strongly with his analogy of birds to aeroplanes. The Professor’s reference to “boomerang” is very important to the wider Aboriginal culture, particularly that of males, as he compares this Indigenous tool to the grandeur of the muttonbirds’ wings. Better than a Concorde, like a boomerang, the muttonbirds come back.

Moreover, the Professor’s empathy for the birds extends to Matthew’s circumstances whose psychological need for escape through flight is appreciated by the Professor, whose explanation of the fascinating lifecycle of the migratory shearwaters encourages Matthew to think of the birds as individual living creatures. The Professor also appreciates why he chose to run away from school. Living on the island, Matthew has led an innocent childhood, quarantined from racism. But it wasn’t necessarily the racism and teasing; the real reason for running away, as Matthew admits, was homesickness. However, like Mister Greg, the Professor shares his knowledge of his profession and argues the case for returning to school, so that Matthew can eventually achieve his ambition of becoming a pilot. “In the meantime … model yourself on Peter. He’s only a muttonbird, one of a million but he still keeps on going against terrible odds, far greater than yours” (Small, 1981, p. 57).

Matthew’s evolving empathy for the natural environment of which the birds are an integral component is juxtaposed against the realisation of his own participation in the hunt. In the cold damp mist of the night, sleep-deprived, Matthew works with his uncles and father:

> Before long, Charlie appeared, with a spitload, fifty to sixty dead chicks lolling grotesquely over his powerful shoulders. The sight suddenly sickened Matthew and he turned away abruptly not wanting to talk ... What was the matter with him? ... He’d killed hundreds of birds without thinking before. It was a job, nothing more. Yet he felt like a murderer (Small, 1981, p. 58).

Graphic images of the killing of the young muttonbirds are seen from Matthew’s point of view, who now realises the role that he and his family have played in the annual slaughter. “Matthew looked with revulsion at the pieces of birds; legs, wings and guts lying outside the door … what had they done all these years butchering them in their thousands? Why had they been allowed to do it?” (Small, 1981, p. 59). The miserable working conditions bring about a realisation that for Matthew this way of life and earning a living is not sustainable.

Questioning the practice means questioning the only way of life that Matthew and his family have ever known. In reality this is a way of life that marginalises many Indigenous Tasmanians from participating in mainstream Australian society, and, lacking the economic means to move upwards or outwards, positions them at the bottom rung of the socio-economic ladder.[54] Matthew’s recognition that he is different from the rest of his family is a turning point for him. The bird called “Peter” is a catalyst for a new respect for nature and wildlife that Matthew is developing and leads him back to seek advice from the Professor, from “someone not involved; someone outside my family” (Small, 1981, p. 64). The Professor acknowledges that

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[54] Contemporary with Small’s writing of *Night of the Muttonbirds*, Anne Bickford writes that “Aborigines in Tasmania, as in every other state in Australia … suffer 50% unemployment, where the state average is about 5%” (Bickford, 1979, p.12).

"Maybe in some ways it's harder for you because you come from a community that is particularly isolated and rather misunderstood by outsiders. Hence the teasing at school" (Small, 1981, p. 64).

Matthew's identification with Peter the shearwater symbolises his own situation. The bird's epic flights across the Pacific, its lonely endurance and survival against huge odds, to return each year to this isolated barren island in order to find its one mate and reproduce one chick per year is a motif of resilience. In his own family Matthew is an outsider, a middle child whose older brothers didn't go to high school and can see no point in it for Matthew; yet his younger siblings look up to him. When Matthew persuades the Professor to band some of the muttonbird chicks on Big Dog Island, so that they can be tracked in years to come, his younger family members follow and participate enthusiastically in banding the chicks. "Matthew felt proud and important helping the Professor in this way, and the Professor was delighted to show these Cape Barren Islanders a little of what his work meant" (Small, 1981, pp. 69-70).

The Professor understands the importance of muttonbirding as an occasion for Matthew's family to come together. Although the cultural significance has not waned for Matthew's family, his personal reflection is indicative of the contemporary lack of interest by younger people in the industry (McLeod, 1995, p. 44). The Professor's cross-cultural understandings of the significance of this activity for Tasmanian Aborigines and his response to Matthew's suggestion that they band the chicks on this unprotected area on the island are symbolic of a potential future for the muttonbirds, as well as for Matthew, his siblings and their Indigenous cultural practices. Underlying this reciprocity is a mutual respect for the roles and relationships that Indigenous and non-Indigenous people can have in this island environment. Moreover, through this relationship, Tasmanian Indigeneity is not represented as relatively static and homogenous.

Matthew's transformation from "murderer" (his own words) to conservationist with the genesis of sound scientific knowledge and methodology enables him to begin to make sense of his life and to move on from the traditional and uncomfortable roles of his family, without rejecting his family and their heritage. The story shows Matthew as having acquired complex skills and knowledge as well as deep understandings of the social practices of his Tasmanian Aboriginal community through his participation in significant community activities. As an Aboriginal boy, nurtured by his Indigenous grandmother, he has access to a range of male role models, Indigenous and non-Indigenous. The Professor sees the potential in Matthew's deep knowledge of his local environment, as well as his skills as a bushman and seafarer as a means to another career, that of environmental scientist. Matthew's vision of becoming a pilot is clearly just a starting point for a boy who must leave the island to go to high school in order to fulfil his potential. Matthew is also a facilitator of the education of children younger than himself, as he enthusiastically introduces them to what he has learnt.

The shearwaters are a powerful motif in the story. The strong implication is that, despite their culling by the hunters, the shearwaters will survive, particularly as this practice becomes less relevant to modern young Indigenous people like Matthew, who choose to leave the island to see the world. Moreover, Matthew and his siblings are inspired with a conservationist ethos for their island homes, which despite their remoteness, are subject to human desecration. Symbolically, the shearwaters' perseverance and resilience are transferable to the Tasmanian Aboriginal child's long term goals and a global future that offers alternatives to an isolated and impoverished subsistence lifestyle.

The omniscient third person of Small's narrative allows entry into Matthew's thoughts, which are more profuse than his spoken words. His story, juxtaposed against the story of the muttonbirds and details of the harvesting of the birds, is securely located in a geographical area which reflects the links between culture and land. Small's representation of the ways in which Matthew constructs his Indigenous cultural identity, through kinship and blood ties, is inextricably linked to the land and its use. Matthew's Tasmanian Aboriginality is assigned to a living present, to a geographical area which is historically specific.

Death and Resurrection in *Night without Darkness* (2001)

Whereas Small's narrative promotes and invites a close reading of Mattthew's evolving personal and Indigenous identity, Stanley's self-illustrated *Night without Darkness* privileges the role and perspectives of non-Indigenous people in the muttonbirding community. Stanley's presentation of muttonbirding also depicts the industry as dominated by non-Indigenous interests, supported by Indigenous labour. Historically, "The hunting of muttonbirds reflected both Aboriginal and British traditions [of eating oily seabirds] and the impact of the cross-cultural encounter" (Boyce, 2010, p. 14).

Like her award winning *Deliverance of the Dancing Bears* (1994), Stanley's *Night without Darkness* also examines a form of animal cruelty, that of one family's annual slaughter of the muttonbirds on Big Dog Island. Stanley says that the story was originally inspired by A.D. Hope's poem "Death of The Bird", in which she interpreted that the bird in the poem is a muttonbird, based on the lines referring to the bird perishing in its fateful migration from Bass Strait to Siberia. Stanley imagined a Flinders Island setting for her book "because I love the concept of its isolation and the intensification of all the issues that I can bring out in the story, but using the migratory aspect more as a metaphor" (writer unknown, *Canberra Times*, March 16, 1995).

Night without Darkness presents a somewhat sentimental view of muttonbirding from the perspective of Phoebe, a girl in her early adolescence, whose non-Indigenous family supplement their Flinders Island farm income by muttonbirding on Big Dog Island. Phoebe's burgeoning relationship with Harry, an Indigenous boy, propels the plot. The wide page format and the dominance of illustration identify it as a picture book, whilst the love interest and its aftermath suggest its appeal for older readers.

In *Night without Darkness* Stanley used dry hard pastels and pastel pencils on textured pastel paper of various colours, which lend themselves to the stylised two-dimensionality of her naïve illustrations, since they look as if they could have been drawn by Phoebe herself. The moody, cloudy illustrations take up three quarters of the double page spread. Stanley's visualisation of the isolated Big Dog Island is communicated through the first two pages on which paratextual information regarding publication details are cited. A placid scene of undisturbed tranquillity is evoked, in which a few scattered cottages and two sailing boats hug the shoreline. If Stanley's professed attempt to invoke "hope and the comfort of renewal" (Stanley, 2004) is evident, it is in the settings of her story in an impressionistic palette of blues and gold-yellows, the colours of the Australian beach and sky and the grasslands of Phoebe's family farm on Flinders Island. Stanley's picture postcard countryside is a romanticisation of the reality of the stark landscape and forbidding climate of Big Dog Island in particular. However, alternate illustrations in contrasting dark, shadowy, gloomy tones reflect the "darkness" of the title which is thematically reiterated on the book's cover, the storm opposite text page 7, and the last page.[55]

The juxtaposition of the visual against the textual communicates a sober mood throughout the story. The narrative evokes a sense of futility regarding the carnage of the shearwaters, but more significantly, of the slaughter of war. Moreover, Stanley's story involves another representation, which is that Harry, the one focal Indigenous Tasmanian in the story, dies on the battlefield of World War Two. The pathos of his death resonates beyond his friendship with Phoebe and his pseudo resurrection in the spirit of Phoebe's special muttonbird. Harry's endowment of spirituality through a form of totemism imagined by the writer, his death and disappearance from the narrative, resonates with "the last Tasmanian" ideology. Unlike the shearwaters who return to the island each year to mate and rear their young, Harry's departure is forever.

Stanley's use of "darkness" is a metaphor that colours her vision and ethos throughout the story. Some scenes are depicted in shadowy grey monotones. The birds arrive in their thousands on the island in the evening, forming a cloud that creates a temporary darkness that is alleviated when they find their home, their individual burrows to which they return each year. Harry is "Shown in the pictures as dark, one of the Indigenous Tasmanians who traditionally helped the European invaders with the birding process" (Lowe, 2003, p. 34). When Harry is killed far away in the Middle East, Phoebe comes to know the real meaning of darkness.

The outset of the story foregrounds Phoebe holding a muttonbird chick. In the distance, Phoebe's father, Frank, lugs a spit of dead chicks on his shoulders. Phoebe's face is animated as she admires this chick which she has named Dusky. Her revulsion towards her parents' occupation is quickly established. "The sight of all those birds in tortured shapes, so recently warm and secure in their cosy burrows, tugged at her heart. It hurt her to see them threaded on the spit by their delicate beaks, necks broken: the taking of the morning's birding" (Stanley, 2001, text page 2).

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[55] The pages of Stanley's book are unnumbered. Here quotes are identified according to the sequential order of pages with text.

The gendered roles of Indigenous muttonbirders depicted in Small's story are maintained in Phoebe's family as she helps her mother and aunts in the grey steamy preparation room. Phoebe's ambivalence regarding this way of life is conveyed as she "felt part of the simple, predictable rhythm of their lives, and this helped to lessen her unease about what they were doing" (Stanley, 2001, text page 4). However, in handling the "warm naked bodies", Phoebe reflects that the cooling room is "a mortuary" (Stanley, 2001, text page 4). Her participation in the birding is clearly at odds with her caring, nurturing role that is communicated through the text and illustrations of the first and final two pages of the book. In other illustrations, however, Phoebe's eyes are downcast, her lips closed, her face and body suggest sad resignation. The exception is the illustration for text page 8, where she is looking upwards, admiringly, at Harry on a horse. Stanley's figures are stylised and static; their clothing is timelessly traditional, symbolically reflecting an enduring consistency of people's roles, relationships and their resistance to change.

When young Harry arrives to help with the birding, Phoebe optimistically tells him "Dad's banded a chick for me, so I can find him when he comes back next season" (Stanley, 2001, text page 5). Harry's pragmatic response foreshadows their relationship, "If he survives that incredible distance, Phoebe, you won't have any trouble finding him" (Stanley, 2001, text page 5). Harry's words resonate throughout the story, for he deeply understands the ways in which the muttonbirds continually face the prospect of death, either through their perilous migration or through the annual slaughter by people like themselves. Phoebe realises the expendability of the muttonbirds as a source of income for her family when she says "People call them "muttonbirds" as if being eaten is all they're good for". "My people call them *yolla*" said Harry. "But whatever name we call them, Phoebe, I think you and I were never meant to be birders" (Stanley, 2001, text page 5). Harry's "my people" and "yolla" identifies him as one of the Cape Barren Indigenous people. Harry envisages a future that does not involve killing the birds. However, for the time being he and Phoebe are both caught in a time frame that enmeshes them into a lifestyle and a value system which conflicts with the way they see the birds; that is, as living creatures with an amazing spirit of resilience and deserving of their protection.

The timelessness of the setting is disrupted by the war. Harry sees the opportunity the war offers and enthuses that "A lot of fellas are thinking of enlisting … We'd get to see a bit of the world, anyway. How else will we ever get off the island?" (Stanley, 2001, text page 6). Harry's dream of getting off the island disturbs the predictability of their lifestyle and disrupts the existing social hierarchy that has so far been taken for granted. Frank's protest that Harry is underage, "They're looking for *men*, not boys" is a futile deterrent for leaving the island. The conversation is a turning point in Harry's relationship with Phoebe's family as it reveals her parents' entrenched attitudes towards his Indigeneity.

Apart from the one mention of "my people", Harry is represented as having no family. He sees that his only way of getting off the island is to enlist in a war that he barely understands. Whilst he is accepted as a guest in Phoebe's household, Harry feels confined by the ideological perspective of the older generation. Implicitly, he will always be theirs or somebody else's employee. Frank sees him as a "boy" or a "young fella", not yet a man, yet he is doing a man's work on the farm. Frank's insinuated construction of him as a "boy" [56] condemns Harry to a permanent state of childhood. Getting off the island for Harry is a means of forging a future for himself that is not dependent on seasonal employment by Frank. Harry's eagerness to leave the island also challenges Nell's contention that "We've lived here all our lives. This is your home" (Stanley, 2001, text page 6). Frank's proprietary tone of "I don't know how we men are supposed to run our farms and do the birding with you young fellas clearing out on us" (Stanley, 2001, text page 6) resonates of the traditional boss-manager-owner discourse towards farmhands, implying that Harry is not a good worker, and that he is incapable of determining his own future. Underpinning this discourse are the discrepancies of land ownership by Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.

Like many other Cape Barren Islanders who enlisted in the Second World War, Harry sees the opportunity to join up as a way of getting off the island, an adventure and life experience that will enable him to stand out from the crowd when he returns, and so earn Phoebe's pride. Symbolically, his own community is now scattered and invisible in this story. For him and the other "fellas" the War offers the opportunity to construct a future that is not determined by the current status quo of racial, social and generational hierarchy. In the short term it will earn him the respect of manhood and offer a form of equality. It is also an escape from the monotonous routine of muttonbirding, an activity which now goes against his, and Phoebe's, conscience. The future of his romantic friendship with Phoebe is dependent on a shared aspiration which does not include muttonbirding. For Harry, getting off the island is essential for their relationship as well as his personal identity and agency.

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[56] "boy" was a generic term for male Aboriginal station workers of any age (see Torney, 2005, p. 74).

Ironically, Harry enlists to support the country that denies him as an Indigenous person the right to vote, as well as citizenship. The senseless brutality of the War, instigated and controlled by European interests, is beyond Harry's imagination and his personal memory. Like the shearwaters, which operate by instinct, Harry plans to return. But also like the journey of some shearwaters, his impulse for adventure and his escape from the island is also fatal.

The return of the shearwaters offers a moment of excitement which is then abruptly marred by the news of Harry's death. Frank's bitter comments "He was only a boy. It's a bloody waste" (Stanley, 2001, text page 11) present an ironic connection between the waste and carnage of war and that of Frank's wholesale annual slaughter of the muttonbirds on Big Dog Island, which Frank himself fails to see. Harry's death represents the death of a whole generation of young men across the world.[57] But the death of the only Indigenous person in Stanley's story is a careless reiteration of the decimation of the Tasmanian Aboriginal people. Harry's death on the battlefield in the Middle East renders him a romantic tragic figure. Moreover, as the burgeoning relationship between Phoebe is never consolidated, and is far from being consummated, the potential for a close relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous is symbolically avoided.

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[57] For Cape Barren Islanders the absence of discrimination in army life was an experience that did not translate back to their homeland (see Ryan, 1972, pp. 70, 71).

Through her reflections on the freedom that Dusky and Harry represent, Phoebe realises the smallness of her own life. Yet Phoebe's own dreams remain unshaped in the story. Immediately after the announcement of Harry's death, the next page sees Phoebe back with her family, muttonbirding. Upon Harry's absence in her life, Phoebe reverts to her parents' expectations. Conforming to their wishes to "stay here all our lives" defines her relationship with her parents and extended family, consequently her evolving personal identity is thwarted: "She knew she belonged here. Her flesh was rock, her blood ran like the sea. The pulse of the island beat within her. After months of desolation she no longer felt alone" (Stanley, 2001, text page 12).

The saccharine ending sentimentalises the story, with its suggestion of transmutation, that of Harry's spirit returning in the form of Dusky, which Phoebe renames "Yolla"[58] in memory of her Indigenous friend. The return of the shearwaters represents her first "night without darkness". Harry's resurrection is invested in the one banded shearwater, but there is no more mention of the environmental ethos that was integral to their friendship and shared ideology. Essentially, Phoebe remains infantilised as, on the last page, she looks up to her (almost) pet Dusky; "All that had seemed lost was in that moment restored to her 'Yolla, yolla,' she whispered. 'You've brought him home to me' " (Stanley, 2001, text page 13).

Ultimately Dusky becomes Phoebe's cute little pet, thereby losing his characteristics of a wild bird. Dusky remains forever a chick in the eyes of Phoebe, who herself is infantilised by her relationship with Dusky and her parents. She is rendered a passive female who accepts the dominant ideology of her parents, and she forgets the enlightening conversations that her friend Harry offered. Throughout the story, Phoebe reacts rather than takes initiative. Harry's spoken words make the most impact in the story. But Harry fails to conform to his non-Indigenous employer's expectations which demand consistency, an unquestioning inflexible work ethic, and staying on the island. As a young soldier who sails away overseas to his death in a distant country, Harry's voice is silenced and he and his people become invisible.

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[58] *Yolla* is the Palawa for "muttonbird".

Stanley’s illustrations invite empathy with Harry in particular, as his bright yellow shirt and army uniform separate him from Phoebe’s family. Harry is always animated and smiling. Visually and psychologically, he is a non-conformist, with a strong sense of individuality. He appears to be at ease with whatever role he takes on, in contrast to Phoebe whose static facial expressions see her incarcerated in a prolonged lonely girlhood. The story’s closure suggests that Harry’s colourful personality is a liberating energy that Phoebe does not sustain beyond his death. Harry’s aspirations for a future off the island result in a loss for both characters.

Stanley’s representation of Harry as the one and only Indigenous character, or the last, again highlights the invisibility of Tasmanian Aborigines on the landscape of children’s literature**.** Not only is this representation inaccurate demographically, textually it perpetuates and facilitates the dispossession and invisibility of Cape Barren Islanders in particular.

Conclusion: Boys and Birds Leaving the Island

Mary Small’s *Night of the Muttonbirds* and Elizabeth Stanley’s *Night without Darkness* depict protagonists negotiating the transition from childhood to adulthood. Realistically, during the time of early adolescence, intergenerational conflict is normal, for it is a time in which children take risks and learn to make their own decisions. Both authors see the parallels in the lives and migratory flights of muttonbirds and the development of independence for their young characters.

The construction of childhood and childness for these authors evolves as a fascinating subtext. Small’s story is all the more convincing for its capacity to separate parents from children, enabling genuine autonomy, independence and the freedom to think for themselves, all of which are essential to getting off the island and transitioning to a potentially fulfilling adulthood. Matthew’s parents are implicitly “better” parents for giving space to him. Whilst not devaluing the affectionate relationship and ties that Matthew has to his family, Small has captured the essence of Indigenous attitudes towards the construction of childhood. *Night of the Muttonbirds* represents getting off the island as ultimately a positive move that affirms Matthew’s evolving sense of personal identity and Indigeneity.

There is a distinct difference in the construction of childhood in Matthew's Indigenous family to the non-Indigenous parenting of Phoebe. Harry's death leaves Phoebe without an obvious future, as she retreats into a sentimentalised protracted childhood. Her one banded chick is a tokenistic symbol of the conservationist conscience which she started to share with Harry before his departure. Stanley's Harry is tragically killed in his first attempt to spread his wings. Symbolically, the didactic value of Harry's death could be seen as punishment for his non-conformity and adventurism. Phoebe, the girl who stays home, seems unlikely to get off the island, while her parents continue to exploit the muttonbirds.

Stanley has evidently wished to construct an element of history in her interpretation of the muttonbirders' lifestyle on Big Dog Island. Her historical setting reinforces traditional views of women in the home, of white men as bosses and land owners, but also enables her to elude the significance of her Indigenous character's participation in the story. Harry's death is (unconsciously) loaded with significance for the future as the story implies that he is caught in a limbo without a culture of his own, hence, for him there is no continuity of culture. Despite evidence of Islanders' role in the muttonbirding and their enthusiastic enlistment in the Second World War, Stanley's mediation of the past sees Tasmanian Aborigines as having no existence in the present, a reiteration of their tragic fate of total annihilation.

For the focal Indigenous characters in *Night of the Muttonbirds* and *Night without Darkness*, getting off the island has radically different outcomes. Matthew is ultimately well equipped to negotiate his future, as he navigates issues of personal and Tasmanian Aboriginal identity. Stanley's representation of Harry's people as scattered or dispersed renders them invisible subjects to her narrative which metaphorically positions him as the last Tasmanian Aborigine and lost forever.

The final chapter in this study examines Gary Crew's *The Lost Diamonds of Killiecrankie* (1995), set on Flinders Island. Crew's picture book is intriguing, for despite his postcolonialist critique of white versions of colonial history, he reiterates the trope of the last Tasmanian through his Indigenous protagonist.

Chapter 9

Faction and the Fabrication of History in Gary Crew's and Peter Gouldthorpe's *The Lost Diamonds of Killiecrankie* (1995)

Introduction: Gary Crew's 'Sense of History'

The Bass Strait islands of the previous chapter, as the site for young people involved in their family's muttonbirding activities, provides the setting for this chapter which resurrects the colonial history of Flinders Island.

This final chapter examines a postcolonial response in the representation of Tasmanian Indigeneity in children's literature though the genre of a picture book for older readers. Gary Crew's and Peter Gouldthorpe's *The Lost Diamonds of Killiecrankie* deliberately obfuscates fact and fiction whilst challenging the traditional mythology of hero worship surrounding George Augustus Robinson and his purported rescue of Tasmanian Aborigines from settler violence and interracial warfare. In this book, Crew's reconstruction of history regarding Robinson's pivotal role on Flinders Island intersects with his representation of Tasmanian Aboriginality. Adamant that young people lack "a sense of history", Crew's goal is to encourage his readers to question the past as well as the present, "to engage in historical inquiry within the text" (Nieuwenhuizen, 1990, p. 4). This chapter will discuss Crew's approach to the construction of history in *The Lost Diamonds of Killiecrankie* and his representation of the Tasmanian Aborigines as postcolonial subjects in his story.

As one of Australia's most prolific and well known writers for children and adolescents, Crew's works span a range of genres; including historical fantasy, allegorical fable, social realism and satire, as well picture books for younger and older readers, utilising a range of literary techniques. His writing blurs the edges of fiction and non-fiction, stretching the capacity of picture books to engage older readers in metafictive readings. By the time Crew and Gouldthorpe wrote this book, Crew had received the Children's Book Council of Australia of the Year Award twice for his novels, *Strange Objects* in 1990 and *Angel's Gate* in 1993, and twice for his picture books, *First Light* and *The Watertower* in 1994. In 1996 *The Lost Diamonds of Killiecrankie* was commended as a CBCA Notable Book[59].

Crew suggests that his own sense of history was fuelled by his childhood experiences and reading. Born in 1947 and brought up in suburban Brisbane “in an environment permeated by religious thought and actions” (McKenna and Pearce, 1999, p. 9), Crew later moved away from the “stifling suffocation” of this religiosity. However, Crew does attribute his love of literature to his religious upbringing. Moreover, his understanding of being an outsider to mainstream society, and his concept of “other” which permeates the plot and characterisation of his novels, is informed by his experience of isolation as a child with chronic illness and being “brought up in a small sect which let me know what it was like to be separate … the issue of otherness is crucial to an understanding of otherness”. He does, however, acknowledge that he “can’t answer the question of whether that gives me some empathy with Aboriginal people” (McKenna and Neilson, 1994, p. 18).

Crew’s childhood reading consisted mostly of boys’ adventure stories, detective adventures of Arthur Conan Doyle, the works of empire builders Rider Haggard, R. M. Ballantyne and Arthur Mee’s *Children’s Encyclopaedias* (McKenna and Pearce, 1999, p. 10), all conservative writers for the 1950s. Crew suggests that R.M Ballantyne’s *The Coral Island*, “a colonial children’s book of the worst sort”, contributed to his childhood construction of “the other”, along with the sometimes gruesomely violent and racist novels of Ion Idriess (McKenna and Pearce, 1999, p. 11). Forays into libraries and museums instilled in him “a deep love of narrative linked with history”. Eventually Crew recognised the colonial ideologies which had informed his childhood readings, specialising in postcolonial writings for his Master of Arts in English. Subsequently, he completed a doctoral thesis which focussed on racism and sexism in nineteenth century Boy’s Own Adventure Books.

Crew has worked as an English teacher in the Queensland Public Education system, publishing editor and lecturer in creative writing. His writing career was directly influenced by his experience as an English teacher of having to teach literature that was “archaic and useless” to high school students, often that of the literary canon to which he himself had been subjected in his own schooling. Stimulated by what he perceived to be a dearth of suitable engaging literature for teenagers, particularly a lack of Australian material, he wrote his first novel in 1985, *The Inner Circle*, deliberately targeting a less academic, predominantly male audience. Crew well understands the children’s book market in Australia; much of his work specifically targets the education market and is supported by teaching notes endorsed by his various publishers or state departments of education.

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[59] A Notable Australian Children’s Book is one which is “commendable in the standards of the category entered” (CBCA Handbook 2009, p. 26).

Known for writing on the “dark side, frequently with death as a motif” and for writing “fiction as if it were fact” (Nimon and Foster, 1997, p. 135), Crew’s interest in Aboriginality and racism percolates through his earlier works, *The Inner Circle* (1985), *The House of Tomorrow* (1988), *Strange Objects* (1990) and *No Such Country* (1991). *The Lost Diamonds of Killiecrankie* has some elements in common with these novels, particularly the centralisation of history as a narrative device. Crew’s understandings of postcolonial ideologies percolate through much of his writing, particularly his award winning and best selling *Strange Objects* which he indicates “is a novel of colonial discourse intended to challenge the reader to examine what has happened in our past, to re-assess what forces shaped this nation – and the effect the white invasion has had on the original inhabitants of this country” (Crew, 1991, p. 11). Stylistically very innovative, *Strange Objects* juxtaposes multiple narrative modes and disjointed structures with unreliable narrators. Other works incorporate mixing the genres of fantasy and history in multiple representations of history. Crew’s metafictive writings are intriguing and popular, simultaneously challenging the notion of history and the ownership of history, as well as concepts of visual literacy and book production for older readers. Claiming that his books are “thoroughly researched before beginning”, he writes “endless drafts” which he constantly reworks (McKenna and Pearce, 1999, p. 19). He happily exposes his modus operandi of notes taken, sketches, diagrams, photographs and newspaper clippings to interested readers and aspiring writers in his workshops and lectures, all of which are emulated in the paratextual elements of *The Lost Diamonds of Killiecrankie*. In examining the construction of history as objective and factual, readers of *The Lost Diamonds of Killiecrankie* must not believe everything they see and read; this is a picture book which tests the borders of fiction and non-fiction.

On one level, in *The Lost Diamonds of Killiecrankie*, the intention is to fool readers into believing the whole book is a true story; on another level, the visual elements expose the constructedness of this narrative, to those who are able to see through the guile. The narrative invites multiple readings in order to appreciate Crew's authorial intentions of communicating "a sense of history" (Nieuwenhuizen, 1990, p. 4). In this collaboration with Gouldthorpe as illustrator a scrapbook of realia of fabricated documents, including excerpts from texts and mock reproductions of iconic historical paintings are presented as historical "evidence".

Crew argues that "it is the very nature of history to compare interpretations of 'facts and events' in an attempt to arrive at the "truth" and that truth is essentially relative (Crew, 2004, p. 8). This ambivalence regarding the construction of truth is intriguing and problematic. "Facts" and "events" are so cleverly and intricately constructed through verbal and, in particular, visual textualities that it is difficult at times for the reader to interpret the historical truth. Moreover, the book privileges fiction over fact as it offers no list of further reading or textual sources used by the writers. A historian would encourage readers to go back to the sources in order to deconstruct their authenticity and see them as open to interpretation, but here Crew's own construction of history precludes such an analysis.

In *The Lost Diamonds of Killiecrankie,* Crew's and Gouldthorpe's fabrication of sources and documents presents a form of role play for historical investigation. Moreover, the book does demonstrate the ways in which historical information and local histories can be uncovered, from oral history and personal narratives, to an examination of letters, graveyards and visual images such as artworks and photographs. The scrimshaw map is an iconic object in this story, for it requires decoding by a capable investigator. Yet, the "veracity" and "authenticity" of these constructions is somewhat manipulative as they deliberately distract readers from their own investigation of real history and authentic sources. A close reading of the picture book reveals only one historic source that was adequately documented so that readers could track its origins and contemplate the intentions of the maker, that of the photograph of "*Tasmanian Aborigines at Government House, Hobart, about 1865*" (Crew, 1995, p. 25), which will be discussed later in this chapter. All other "historical" illustrations are constructions or copies by the author and illustrator, sometimes amounting to a pastiche of old paintings and drawings.

Crew's "faction" shifts towards fiction through his incorporation of the motif of the young Aaron Bates as "the last of his tribe" which is a reinforcement of the mythology of colonialism that Crew simultaneously challenges. This storying contradicts the history which acknowledges the survival of Tasmanian Aborigines "among the islands of Bass Strait" (Crew, 1995, p. 25); thus Crew deliberately utilises the myth of the last Tasmanian Aborigine to juxtapose and confuse faction and fiction.

Faction and the Fabrication of History: 'The Last of His Tribe'

The Lost Diamonds of Killiecrankie is a story of a white man's encounter with a Tasmanian Aborigine in the remote area of Mount Killiecrankie, on Flinders Island. The narrative requires a certain engagement on the part of the reader with issues of colonialism and specifically with the actions of Robinson, the "Conciliator" of the Tasmanian Aborigines. The significance of Flinders Island lies in its remote geographical location, in the Bass Strait twenty kilometres off the northeast coast of Tasmania, as the site of the forced "relocation" of 160 mainland Tasmanian Aborigines captured in 1833 by Robinson. The Flinders Island settlement experiment was a cruel and disastrous failure and in 1846 the remaining 47 Aborigines were repatriated to Oyster Cove (Crew, 1995, p. 25; Ryan, 1996, p. 202).

The Lost Diamonds of Killiecrankie was written in an era of significant political activism by Tasmanian Aborigines on Flinders Island. The reconciliation process, begun in 1991, presented Australia as a fundamentally divided society. Officially the Howard Government continued to obstruct the implementation of the Declaration of Reconciliation which understood and accepted "the history of our shared experience" as fundamental to the process (Attwood, 2000, p. 255). In the isolated community of Flinders Island, Tasmanian Aborigines were determined to recover their past and reclaim the ancestral site of Wybalenna, the burial ground of their forebears. The Aboriginal Lands Act which acknowledged the dispossession of the Tasmanian Aborigines was passed in 1995. At the time of Crew's writing of *The Lost Diamonds* *of Killiecrankie*, Tasmanian Aborigines were advocating the return of Wybalenna to the Aboriginal community, specifically the burial ground near the chapel, where so many of their ancestors are buried in unmarked graves. These graves lie next to a cemetery full of carefully tended non-Indigenous gravestones. As descendants of the Tasmanian Aborigines who eluded Robinson's capture through their escape or abduction by European sealers and whalers to other islands in the Bass Strait, they understood that "The colonial government had an agreement with Tasmanian Aborigines that this would be their reserve, as compensation for giving up the mainland" (Henry Reynolds, in Thomas, 1992).

Respected elder in the community, Aunty Ida West (1919-2003), whose family moved from Cape Barren Island to Killiecrankie in the 1920s, was a strong social advocate who campaigned for over twenty years for the return of the land to her people.[60] On April 18th 1999, the title deeds to Wybalenna on Flinders Island were handed over to the Aboriginal Community (Department of Premier and Cabinet, Tasmanian Government, 2011). Ida West and her community's determination to reclaim their ancestral site of Wybalenna has been realised, albeit fraught with the racial politics that continue to pervade the Tasmanian psyche. Arguments against this land rights dispute by local white landowners resurrect misperceptions and misinformation regarding Tasmanian Aboriginality. As Lisa Horler points out, "It has always been the case in Tasmania, and often in the rest of Australia, that if a person is not full-blood black, they are not entitled to call themselves Aboriginal, no matter how dark their skin is, no matter how they are treated" (Horler, 1993, p. 51).

In the white community of Flinders Island, depicted in the 1992 documentary film *Black Man's Houses*, popular genetics intersects with assertions that "The Aborigines didn't live here, they were brought here, so land rights are not their rights" (Helen Dugan, in Thomas, 1992). The film shows Aboriginal community members marking out the burial sites at Wybalenna according to Robinson's chart[61] in which he numbered each grave with a key to the list of persons interred. The evening after the filming finished, the site was vandalised and the markers removed "by persons unknown" (Don Ranson[62], personal communication 30 August, 2011). On Flinders Island Tasmanian Aborigines continued to be victims of identity denial, whilst the site of Wybalenna as a place of resistance was at the centre of the land rights dispute. At the time of Crew's research and writing of *The Lost Diamonds of Killiecrankie,* the contemporary racial complexities were evidently unresolved.

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[60] McKenna and Pearce (1999) offer an interpretation of *The Lost Diamonds of Killiecrankie*, including a revisiting of the historical background. No Indigenous sources were cited by these writers.

[61] The chart is reproduced in Plomley's (1987) *Weep in Silence*.

Crew states that "We talked to white islanders about Wybaleena, but not Indigenous Islanders. We did not see the enduring significance of what we were creating. This was an adventure. We had no idea that the book would endure" (personal communication, 29 April 2013). Invited to stay on the island and work with the children at the Flinders Island High School, Crew suggests that he and Gouldthorpe

> went to Flinders Island *to look for* a story ... We had no idea that the diamonds (topaz) were even found there. In response to our question about what they did on weekends on such a tiny island, [the boys] said that they took their trail bikes and fossicked for uncut (alluvial) topaz (diamonds) on weekends. We had no idea about what they were talking about and laughed. When they said that they were serious we asked them to show us where they went. They did. We found no diamonds. The boys in the photograph are the actual boys who showed us where to look (personal communication, 29 April 2013).

Letters of thanks which we could assume are from the teachers appear on the front inside cover of the picture book. Documents such as these are juxtaposed without explanation for the reader to decipher their role and significance in the construction of the story are integral to the device of the author becoming part of the narrative.

The Lost Diamonds of Killiecrankie looks like a picture book. The cover is reminiscent of boys' adventure books of the 1950s, dominated by a yellowed map of Flinders Island, superimposed by two green shiny "diamonds" (a gem quality, topaz). In the following pages the book's paratextual elements of letters, photographs, maps, diagrams, sketches, paintings and newspaper cuttings support the verbal text. Amongst this scrapbook of realia the word "ALERT" leaps out from underneath a photograph of the main street of Whitemark, the main town on the island, as a subliminal warning to the reader to be alert to the potential of credibility, veracity and levels of meaning within the text. The verbal narrative is stimulated by a handwritten letter which Crew and Gouldthorpe allegedly received from ex-school teacher and reclusive artist Geoff Middleton.

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[62] Don Ranson is the archaeologist who supervised the marking of the graves in the film *Black Man's Houses* (Thomas, 1992).

The story is told through Middleton’s perspective, a formerly disengaged schoolteacher who tells of his own obsessive pursuit of the diamonds believed to be in the remote area of Mount Killiecrankie, on Flinders Island. In a subversion of the adventure genre, Middleton never actually acquires the diamond, and as Aaron becomes infected by the older man’s obsession, a young life is tragically lost in the process. Aaron, who can trace his ancestry back to the Aboriginal people who survived Robinson’s capture, dies in the bush helping Middleton in his futile quest. Middleton’s other obsession is his perception of Robinson as “a do-gooding Victorian missionary” who forcibly removed mainland Aborigines to the “death camp” on Flinders Island (Crew, 1995, p. 21, 23).

Middleton, as narrator, gradually becomes part of the narrative. A Tasmanian with a tertiary education, he knows nothing of this history until he is informed by Aaron’s friend, Johnno. His curiosity and empathy are aroused towards the plight of the dispossessed Tasmanian Aborigines. In 1969, the year of his account, Middleton’s historical knowledge was, and still is, typical of many Australians, including Tasmanians who “are poorly educated on this matter”. Moreover, as Aaron himself demonstrates, “many of Aboriginal descent are still shamed and silent about their heritage” (Grieves, 2008, p. 5).

Middleton’s “research” into the history of Flinders Island reveals that in 1849 the Colonial Secretary requested that a group of Aboriginal men find suitable diamonds for Queen Victoria, to be exhibited in the Great Exhibition of 1851 at the Crystal Palace, as a symbolic trophy from this far flung corner of the British Empire. Middleton’s story tells of one Aboriginal boy and two male convicts forced to dive into the freezing waters and collect the “diamonds” (topaz) from the sea bed, for their colonial masters.[63]

A subplot to the story is provided by one of the convicts seconded from incarceration to help find the diamonds. James Gallagher absconds and disappears with one of the most valuable green diamonds. The jewel lost by Gallagher provides another strand to the quest for riches. It transpires that Aaron Bates is descended from Little Boy Billy, one of the Tasmanian Aborigines relocated to the mainland by Robinson, and later the only Aboriginal person fit enough to be employed to retrieve the diamonds. Hence, Billy knew the location of the Killiecrankie diamonds and recorded this on a scrimshaw map which was passed down to his granddaughter, Lizzie Bates, Aaron’s grandmother. In another twist of fate, Aaron was orphaned when he was very young after his parents were drowned whilst trying to retrieve the diamonds. Clearly, the diamonds are very destructive for the Indigenous people, who recognised it as a commodity of value through their colonisers. The conclusion to be gleaned is that “It is the search for the diamond that virtually destroys the last possible Aboriginal line of descent with Flinders Island” (McKenna and Pearce, 1999, p. 197). The fictional past of Crew’s book would have readers believe that with Aaron’s death, and eventually that of his grandmother, all Tasmanian Aborigines had died out. However, Crew’s version of researched history in the chapter “Going Back A Way” states otherwise.

Crew’s book refers to Wybalenna as “a concentration camp, a dumping ground for social outcasts, misfits and aliens”, “a death camp” (Crew, 1995, p. 23). In acknowledging the genocide which took place there, he also asserts that:

> Aboriginal Tasmanians ... did not die out. Among the islands of Bass Strait they survived – as whalers’ women; as sealers’ women, as mutton-birders’ women – bearing children and raising them, never once forgetting their Aboriginal identity, never once forfeiting their claim to those islands whose isolation had protected them from Robinson’s all-encompassing net (Crew, 1995, p. 25).

Crew’s references to graves, for example the “unmarked graves” of the original Aborigines at Wybalenna, the photograph of Aaron’s final resting place in the Wybalenna cemetery (annotated by “G. M.”, Geoff Middleton), and “At least his grave is marked" (Crew, 1995, p. 62), implies a revision of colonial history with some small acknowledgement of Aaron's short life. However, Crew's construction of Aaron as "the last of his tribe" essentially erases Flinders Island Aboriginal identity from the context of the story.

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[63] Crew claims that there is no historical evidence of Indigenous persons looking for the stones (personal communication, 29 April, 2013).

The Lost Diamonds of Killiecrankie: 'A Story that Must be Told'

The title, *The Lost Diamonds of Killiecrankie,* prepares the reader for an adventure story, of the type reminiscent of early twentieth century British literature targeted at boys as potential empire builders. In this genre, plot is paramount to characterisation. In Crew's story, neither of the characters Aaron Bates nor Geoff Middleton is sufficiently developed to invite reader identification. Middleton's empathy for his subject is evident, yet he has guarded the ownership of the story for nearly thirty years. His handwritten letter to Crew and Gouldthorpe, comprising the frontispiece of the book, claims that he "longed to speak out, to tell the truth, but I lacked the courage". Fearful of his "materials" being perceived as "no more than the ravings of some madman, hiding out in the wilderness on this god-forsaken island" (Crew, 1995, frontispiece), Middleton makes Crew and Gouldthorpe the custodians of his story, thereby relieving himself from ownership of the documents, and absolving himself from responsibility for this particular piece of the hidden history of Flinders Island.

Middleton's obsession has parallels to that of his colonial predecessors, whose motivations were far more transparent, as they sought the topaz to enhance their own purses and reputation, as validation of the power of empire. He admits to his own obsession, but it is not clear why he wants to find the topaz, and he seems to have no other direction in his life. Middleton is anti-social, seemingly aimless, having no ambition to create great art, content to paint the same landscape over again, and earn a living making postcard art for the tourist market. When he finally reveals his story, Middleton is middle aged. The passage of time sees him continuing to live the life of a recluse, as he mentions no relationships, marriage or other life experiences which have influenced his lifestyle. He continues to live as an outsider in a community that is also very remote from mainstream Australian or indeed Tasmanian society. Middleton is himself an island, psychologically, living on an island, which is off the coast of another island. Middleton's isolation and introversion renders him socially dysfunctional and incapable of insight into himself, though he is aware of Crew's potential perceptions of him as a "madman … In the wilderness" (Crew, 1995, frontispiece). Middleton is therefore an unreliable narrator, and the motives for his confessiona of his part in Aaron's death are unclear, but it is apparent that in telling his story he wishes to expiate himself of the remorse and contrition regarding his role in Aaron's death. Retrospectively, he recognises that he personally witnessed the death of the "last of his tribe".

The first person narrative of Middleton's account constructs an unassuming personality. Middleton is comfortable with his own social isolation, and depicts himself as well assimilated into the strange remote community in which he exists as a fringe dweller. He explains how he abandoned his teaching career; by taking extended leave of absence, combined with a dose of the flu, he is sacked by the Department of Education. The scrunched up letter from the Tasmanian Department of Education is reproduced early in the story as evidence of this potentially life changing event (Crew, 1995, p. 18).

Middleton mentions no extended family in the narrative; he seems to have no one he cares about and no one who cares for him. His disengagement from family and community seems typical of the rest of the few characters in the community. There is but one female character in the book; Aaron's grandmother, whom Middleton mistakes for a man at first (Crew, 1995, p. 36). Lizzie is a feisty eccentric, but also a loner, and long term survivor, eking out a subsistence living on the harsh isolation of her late husband's soldier settler land grant. Lizzie is another emotionally damaged fringe dweller, having suffered the bereavement of her husband, son and his wife. The shopkeeper who supplies Middleton with his food and an old bike is a widower. Adult characters in the story are imbued with a sense of grief for the loss of their family members, or permanent loneliness, and incapable of starting over. There is a sense that these non-Indigenous residents of the settlement of Killiecrankie are themselves the last of their kind, as there are no females for potential regeneration in the community. From their lack of conversation on the topic, even the adolescent boys are disinterested in the opposite sex.

Such masculism and asexuality were common in the adventure stories which comprised the popular literature of previous generations of young men and boys, with which Crew was familiar. Crew's incorporation of elements of the genre does work towards a reduction of these characters to two dimensional types who seem to have no inner life, nor zest for living. Characters in this picture book are imbued with a sense of gloom and foreboding. They merely exist in the harsh landscape with no sense of a future. On one level, Crew's "sense of history" as enacted through his characters is backward looking. It does not incorporate nor inform the present, nor does it acknowledge the potential of a better future for black and white relations.

Middleton's "story of terrible loss" is promoted to readers as "a story that must be told" in the letter from Helen Chamberlin, Senior Editor, Lothian Books, to Geoff Middleton (Crew, 1995, frontispiece). Middleton and Chamberlin's words are resonant of the grieving accompanying doomed race ideologies. Crew's narrative is so structured that the adventure quest intersects with the central theme of the impact of white colonisation on Indigenous people through the history of the Tasmanian Aboriginal presence on Flinders Island. The first chapter, "A Beginning", shows that when he arrives on the island on his first camping painting expedition, Middleton is yet to be informed of the local history which represents a significant event in colonial Tasmania: "So far as I knew, all the Tasmanian Blacks had died out a century ago" (Crew, 1995, p. 8).

Middleton as narrator is simultaneously appalled and fascinated by white colonial history. He can't help himself as he re-enacts the colonialist impulse to gain riches (and possible notoriety). He never achieves empathy with Aaron and his people, and he is simultaneously engaged yet detached from the land. He paints it, yet has never learnt to read the landscape so he does not understand it as Aaron does. Middleton vocalises the ambivalence of colonial displacement in an alien space, raising questions about what is he really doing there? What does he hope to achieve? And what is he really escaping from? The book enables ongoing discussion about non-Indigenous collective guilt. Through the notion of history as faction, the verbal and visual texts elicit discussion that scrutinises past colonial practices and continuing injustices which lie in non-Indigenous ignorance; for example, Middleton's lack of knowledge about Tasmanian Aborigines in the very place in which he is living, or escaping to, and the continued resistance to acknowledgement of Tasmanian Indigenous identity. In Middleton's case, his compulsion to re-exploit Tasmanian Aborigines metonymically results in the destruction of Aaron as "the last". The ambivalence that pervades this book suggests the nihilism of modernity which Peter Mathews recognises as that of "transforming the positive dream of creating a paradise on earth into a pointless nightmare of colonial exploitation of misery" (Mathews, 2010, p. 251).

Middleton's first impression of Flinders Island is of an idyllic, exotic and ancient location:

> the turquoise sea, the shimmering gold of the beaches, the haunting grey-green of the bush. But it was the mountains that made me catch my breath. A range of peaks the length of the island, as stark and weathered as the fossilized backbone of some prehistoric beast (Crew, 1995, p. 6).

Whilst he reminds his readers of the antiquity of the land, Middleton's romantic description precedes his experience of the "notorious 'Roaring Forties' that sweep along … from the vast, uncharted regions of the Southern Ocean to batter the western shores of Flinders" (Crew, 1995, p. 10). Such is the barren landscape and severe climate which the book later asserts contributed to the decimation of Tasmanian Aborigines.

Middleton's solitude is temporarily disrupted by three boys throwing rocks at him. Two of them are on motorbikes, "the little one" Aaron, he is informed, "He's only got a pony" (Crew, 1995, pp. 13-14). Aaron's pony is an indicator of his lack of affluence, but also his self sufficiency, and his position as an outsider to mainstream society. Aaron's way of life is unaffected by the modernity of motorbike ownership and its inherent group identity. "He's not one for people" explains Luke (Crew, 1995, p. 44). The rocks turn out to be specimens of the "not too good" Killiecrankie diamonds. The "stupid story about a green topaz" inspires Johnno, the eldest of the trio, to relate what he knows of the local history:

> "About 150 years ago this island was used as a dumping ground for Blacks from Tasmania. Tasmanian Aborigines ... [who] lived at ... Wybalenna – that means "Black Man's Houses" ... It's a horrible, cold place, windy as hell. Anyway, these poor Blacks, they couldn't take it, see, and nearly all of them died and got chucked in the graveyard there. Hundreds of them, they reckon. All in these unmarked graves" (Crew, 1995, p. 16).

Of those who survived “there was something they knew about this place ... something the white man wanted” (Crew, 1995, p. 17).

The second chapter of the book, “Going Back A Way”, presents a reconstruction of the appalling treatment of the Tasmanian Aborigines as the victims of Robinson’s proselytising ambitions. Crew’s written reconstruction of history leaves little doubt as to his moral perspective. But the accompanying illustrations to this chapter offer ambiguity; they could be taken at face value, or they can be deconstructed as the reader is led to draw his or her own conclusions. Readers of *The Lost Diamonds of Killiecrankie* need to be vigilant and sceptical of the construction of the images in the book, in their representation of history as fact or fiction.

This chapter presents an unequivocal overview of the impact of dispossession on the Tasmanian Aborigines. Crew’s anger also addresses the mythology surrounding the Tasmanians, that of their passivity and their total destruction, in a way that personalises the telling. It is not history, but one man’s version of history, provocative and passionate, that potentially opens up conversations, interpretations and the question of “whose history is it?”

Imaginings and Visual Representations in *The Lost Diamonds of Killiecrankie*

Able to choose his own illustrators for his work, Crew sees “the union of print and visual in a successful picture story book as wholistic” (McKenna and Neilson, 1994, p. 27). The selection and design of the visual elements of *The Lost Diamonds of Killiecrankie* can be directly attributed to the close collaboration of both Crew and Gouldthorpe. One of the ambiguities in this book is the attribution of illustrations to either Middleton, the character who is himself an artist, or Gouldthorpe, the illustrator. Apart from photographs, all visual elements are fabrications, copies and pastiches intended to lure the reader into accepting their veracity or rejecting them as a hoax.

The picture book combines text with mock evidence, including a variety of letters and official type written correspondence that support the context of the narrative. Handwritten letters include the letter from Middleton to Crew and Gouldthorpe, offering them his story (Crew, 1995, frontispiece). In the fourth chapter, "An unexpected letter", the typewritten response, dated 23 May 1969, from the curator of Colonial Museum in Launceston to Middleton's request for information regarding Tasmania's contribution to the Great Exhibition of 1851 is included on page 30. On the opposite page is a handwritten letter in copperplate script to Dr Joseph Milligan, Medical Superintendant[64], from the Governor's Colonial Secretary, written on "this Fourth Day of October, 1849", thereby predating the use of the typewriter (Crew, 1995, pp. 30, 31). The "Colonial Museum in Launceston" never existed; the address on the letter corresponds to the actual Queen Victoria Museum and Gallery in Launceston. Dr Milligan's handwritten responses to the Governor's request for assistance to find the topaz are located later in the chapter entitled "The Beginning of the End" (Crew, 1995, pp. 48, 49).

The range of realia documents Middleton's research and travel to Flinders Island. Images include a rubbing of a gravestone at Wybalenna, maps, sketches and photographs. Some oils and sketches are attributed to "G. M." (Geoff Middleton) or "P. G." (Peter Gouldthorpe). Images celebrating Queen Victoria's colonial achievements purport to be copies of old paintings, such as " '*Opening of Crystal Palace',* after the style of Sir Thomas Botham R. A., watercolour and ink, 1851" (Crew, 1995, p. 29). The artist, Sir Thomas Botham, is an invention, and the "watercolour and ink" illustration is a digitally enhanced version of a chromolithograph of the "View Across the Transept of The Crystal Palace from South to North" from *Dickenson's Comprehensive Pictures of the Great Exhibition of 1851*, 1854, (see Blakesley, 2009, p. 19), manipulated by adding sketchy representations of what could be Queen Victoria and Prince Albert and their entourage. Its purpose for multiple reproductions in a prestigious publication promoting the event is effaced in the description of the illustration as a one off "watercolour and ink". Similarly, the "watercolour" of "*'Her Majesty, Queen Victoria, wearing the "Green Fire" diamond'*, watercolour, Sir Eustace Hawksworth, R.A" (Crew, 1995, p. 64) is a fabrication, undated and untraceable. This pictorial "evidence" is intended to lead the reader to believe that Queen Victoria did wear one of the Killicrankie diamonds.

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[64] Dr Joseph Milligan supervised the transfer of the Flinders Island settlement, consisting of 46 Tasmanian Aborigines to Oyster Cove in October 1847. In little over a decade more than 150 died and there were virtually no children surviving (see Ryan, 1996, pp 202, 203).

The mixture of fact and imagination is deliberately confusing to the reader. Apart from photographs the majority of visuals are "imaginings" created in the production of this book, created as visual evidence of narratives which are set in three timespans; the colonial historical, the personal memories of Middleton in 1969, and the present time of the story book production in 1995.

The distinction between imaging and "imaginings" in the book is deliberately obfuscated as is the attributing information; that is, the backgrounds of construction which should inform readers of the cultural context and techniques of construction of paintings, etchings, drawings and photographs as historical documents.[65] Additionally, there are some confusing discontinuities which inadvertently undermine the reader's suspension of disbelief whilst suggesting that the story itself is a reconstruction or re-enactment of sorts. Intriguingly Middleton sat on this story for "some thirty years", only to be triggered by Gary Crew's public lecture as he begins his story; "I first heard the story of the lost diamonds of Killiecrankie from a group of boys I meet on Flinders Island back in March 1969" (Crew, 1995, p. 6). The "tough" group of boys are seen in a photograph, attributed to "G. M.", labelled "Luke, Johnno and Aaron lurking in the shadows" (Crew, 1995, p. 14). Metaphorically, it is Aaron who is lurking in the bush, hiding behind the easel that has been digitally added into the picture. Luke and Johnno are leaning against their impeccably clean motorbikes, but the bike in the foreground is sporting a Queensland number plate. Another discontinuity is that the boys are wearing branded sweatshirts which were not fashionable in 1969. A close up photo of Aaron on the inside back cover shows him with a hairstyle contemporary to the 1990s. These details of personal identity are intended to support the veracity of the source of the story, that is, Middleton's own account of this period of his life, but the discrepancies are clearly observable to an astute reader.[66]

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[65] Art historian Bernard Smith defines "imaging" as being created at the time, or soon afterwards by people who witnessed events they described or drew. "Imaginings" are created by people who did not have this direct knowledge and were therefore dependent upon the images of others (Smith, 1992, preface ix).

[66] Crew explained that "the boys on the bikes were in the class that Peter and I taught and that the bike with the Queensland number plates was given to one of the boys by his grandmother and the plates hadn't yet been changed" (personal communication, 29 April, 2013).

The story unfolds as Middleton learns more about the island to which he has essentially escaped from a confused past. Aaron is prepared to share his knowledge of the topaz, but he is not keen to talk about past history and hence reveal his Indigenous identity. The reader is led to conjecture that the "poor Blacks ... chucked in ... the unmarked graves" in the cemetery near the shearing shed[67] (Crew, 1995, p. 16) are Aaron's descendants.

The historical significance of Middleton's quest is contextualised in this second chapter. The narrative point of view switches dramatically from Middleton's relating of his own personal story (or history) of 1969 to the interpretation of colonial history which unfolds in this chapter. Middleton (or is it Crew?) is impassioned by what he learns of the atrocities meted out to Truganinni and William Lanney, both of whom are represented by purported portraits from an old history book: "From P. O'Brien, *The Last of the Tasmanians*, Thomas Carlisle Publishing, Melbourne, 1958" (Crew, 1995, p. 21), which the reader might assume came from Middleton's personal library, as he seems fond of resurrecting his own collection of old fashioned references[68] with colonial ideologies. The book's title exemplifies the endurance of the perception of the last of the race, and of how such a book can continue to inform the way we think, even a long time after their original publication.

The Last of the Tasmanians was a frequently used title by Victorian race scientists, including James Bonwick's *The Last of the Tasmanians or The Black War of Van Diemen's Land* (1870). Clive Turnbull's *Black War* (1948) also has a chapter entitled "The Last of The Tasmanians". Both these writers explored the notion of guilt regarding colonial attitudes towards Tasmanian Aborigines, but both "were in no doubt that the Tasmanian Aborigines had become extinct" (Ryan, 1996, p. 2). While no such publication exists by P. O'Brien, "Thomas Carlisle Publishing, Melbourne" is an ironic reference to the publisher of *The Lost Diamonds of Killiecrankie,* namely; Thomas C. Lothian, Melbourne. The original owner of this long established company was Thomas Carlyle Lothian, who was active in the 1950s and might well have published a book of that content. However, such speculation, invited by the forgeries depicted in the book, offers further engagement with the pursuit of fact versus fiction. Of the drawings of the two most well known Aboriginal people, attributed to the fictional P. O'Brien, but executed by Peter Gouldthorpe, William Lanney is recognisable as a reasonable copy drawn from photographs, but Truganinni bears no resemblance to any of the photographs of her taken when she was an older woman.

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[67] The shearing shed is the former chapel at Wybalenna.

[68] Middleton finds a reference to topaz "in an encyclopaedia that I hadn't touched since I was at school" (Crew, 1995, p. 19).

It is unclear as to who owns the narration of "Going Back A Way". Throughout the book Middleton is a man of few words, who cautiously reveals a past that he recognises as painful and shameful. The language and concepts of this chapter seem uncharacteristically colourful and complex for Middleton who is gradually coming to terms with his role as an interloper on the island. Emotive use of language ("brutal", "land-grabbing", "amoral", "murdered", "marauding", "exhumed", "dismembered" and "ghoulish") draws a dramatic picture for the reader (Crew, 1995, p. 21). Ownership of this particular narrative is therefore one of the ambiguities which Crew sets up for his readers. The main thrust of his argument is to refute the perception that "Many people believe that the Tasmanian Aborigine is extinct" (Crew, 1995, p. 21) and to argue that:

> Through one of history's marvellous ironies, the Tasmanians' greatest threat was not the brutal sealer, nor the soldier, nor the land-grabbing pastoralist, nor the amoral scientist, but the do-gooding Victorian missionary who, given half a chance, would turn the natives into white people – even if they died in the process. The worst of these was George Augustus Robinson (1788-1866), founder of 'Wybalenna' the infamous Aboriginal settlement on Flinders Island (Crew, 1995, p. 21).

Crew's version of history offers a "modern interpretation [of] George Robinson as hypocritical devil" (Hunter, 1996, p. 26). His perception of Robinson's missionary zeal, "Show him a black man and he had to save him. Civilize him. Christianise him. Turn him into the only human being the white man considered worthwhile: himself" (Crew, 1995, p. 22), is a radical opinion that invites readers to consider Robinson's colonising motives. Travelling "from 1828 until 1835 … the length and breadth of Tasmania" (Crew, 1995, p. 23), Robinson's round–up of Tasmanian Aborigines preceded Victoria's ascension to the throne in 1837. Robinson's missionary fervour was certainly coloured by the "God, Glory and Gold" ethos of the burgeoning British Empire which fuelled his own ambitions for affluence and status. However, Robinson's reputation declined in the next decade, and his actions which were reported as having resulted in the near total destruction of the Tasmanian Aboriginal people were an embarrassment to British colonial administration. Robinson was a duplicitous self promoter, a liar and a usurper of colonial funds in his management of the settlement at Wybalenna (see Pybus, 1991).

Crew asserts that during this time Robinson used “every means possible to lure them - and later force them”, and later to dump them for a while on Gun Island, before they finally ended up at Wybalenna (Crew, 1995, p. 23). Inserted into the narrative is a Gouldthorpe rendition of a French lithograph, *“Natifs de la Terre de Vandieman”* from *Atlas Australes, Editions anthropologiques, Paris, 1823, Vol 11* (the typographical and grammatical errors of bad French must be attributed to the authors), depicting naked Tasmanian Aborigines cooking shellfish on the river, with a resemblance of a snow capped Mount Wellington in the background. Gouldthorpe’s appropriation of the noble savage image is augmented by traditional canoes, kelp water carriers and a stereotyped pose of an Aboriginal male standing on one leg, holding a spear, depicting an innocent way of life undisturbed by white colonisation.

The discussion of Robinson’s influence is supported by two dominant images in the chapter, and indeed in the whole book. The first is an imagining, “ ‘*George Robinson welcomes natives to Wybalenna’ (detail), Benjamin Deveraux, oils”,* with the annotation that “Truganini is to the right, the chapel behind” (Crew, 1995, p. 24). The name Benjamin Deveraux is close enough to Benjamin Duterrau as to be almost a typographical error. The “Deveraux” illustration is a pastiche of Australia’s first history painting, Benjamin Duterrau’s *The Conciliation* (Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Hobart). Painted in 1840, it was inspired by Duterrau’s enduring admiration of Robinson’s attempts to conciliate the wild Aborigines before taking them back to Bruny Island. Duterrau’s “models were of course Robinson’s group of ‘domesticated’ natives, and Truganini is closest to him” (Dutton, 1974, p. 36).

By the time Duterrau’s paintings were executed, all but one of the Aborigines depicted were dead. Truganinni was the only survivor of this historic moment as represented by Duterrau. In Deveraux’s (Gouldthorpe’s) and Duterrau’s pictures, Robinson is the solitary white man, chubby and rosy cheeked in his ludicrous Kate Greenaway hat, with his left forefinger extended in a gesture of a dramatic didactic moment, surrounded by his new recruits, a small group of Aboriginal people. Deveraux's "oil painting" has reduced the grand historical subject to that of a small gathering of domesticated Aborigines, who are more Europeanised than Duterrau's original, as most of them are clothed. Aborigines on the right hand side of Robinson, including Truganinni, are dressed in white smocks or shirts and brown trousers or, in Truganinni's case, a long skirt, typical of white working-class attire of the era. In all other contemporary images of Truganinni, she wears a shell necklace, yet in Deveraux's image she is not wearing it. Deveraux's Aboriginal men are wearing knitted red beanies, which is visually attractive but historically inaccurate.[69] Whereas Duterrau's Aborigines as "a concession to the public of 1836 and 1841 rather than a true fact" (Noetling, 1911, p. 98) are wearing kangaroo skin loin cloths. For Robinson, clothing was as much a sign of civilisation as was religious conversion. Both pictures show Robinson shaking the hand of a kangaroo skin clad Aboriginal (known as Timmy in the original Duterrau portraits). This handshake can be interpreted as a symbolic gesture of treachery (see Parr, 1985, p. 500).

Duterrau's tableau of the historic handshake is set against an ominous grey sky in the untamed Tasmanian bush as they "accept resettlement on a reserve on King Island" (Jones, 1988, p. 37). By comparison, in the Deveraux picture, the Aborigines and Robinson are depicted full length, with the Wybalenna chapel in the background. The chapel, states historian Lyndall Ryan, was "a physical manifestation of the civilisation of the Aboriginal people settling down, becoming educated, respecting the Bible and praising God" (Ryan, in Thomas, 1992). Gouldthorpe's pastiche of Duterrau's painting, in which European clothing for the Aboriginal subjects and the Chapel are conspicuous additions, evokes another interpretation; that of Robinson having consolidated his ambitions of conversion and civilisation of his Aboriginal entourage.

This message is subliminally reinforced by the image on the opposite page, the only authentic historical image or document in the book, the aforementioned photograph of "*Tasmanian Aborigines at Government House, Hobart, about 1865*. William Lanney is on the left, Truganini far right. At the time they were considered to be the last of their race. Photograph: Chas. Woolley, courtesy of Hind-Sight, Tasmania" (Crew, 1995, p. 25). Chas. (Charles) Woolley's photograph of four Tasmanian Aboriginal people is typical of the genre produced by colonial photographers, referred to as "salvage ethnography" (see David, 2000, p. 232), who were aware that they were witnessing the end of traditional Aboriginal culture, and indeed of a whole race of people. As guests at a ball at Government House, an event attended by the well-to-do of Hobart, the Tasmanian Aborigines are dressed in formal Victorian attire, as so-called civilised people would be. As objects of curiosity for the other non-Aboriginal guests, they pose unsmiling, which was not uncommon due to the long exposure times of early photography. Their faces also express discomfort and alarm. The photographer has captured another significant historic moment and his photograph has thereby contributed to contemporary understanding and promotion of the demise of the Indigenous people of Tasmania.[70] Woolley has therefore made and controlled history. Two of his subjects, both female, are unnamed and unidentified. Their stories have vanished into obscurity. Only William Lanney and Truganinni have their place in history, remembered as the last of their race. As the caption indicates, their plight was certainly understood by contemporary viewers. Whilst addressing this claim of total extinction as mythology, Crew's narrative choice (which includes images and imaginings as narratives, as well as text) ensures that readers remember William Lanney and Truganinni and their anonymous female friends for the ghoulish fate which surrounded their deaths.

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[69] Red flannel fabric was available as an imported product in the colony, as Thomas Bock's portrait of Mathinna shows. It is unlikely that red wool for knitting was available, as the colony largely relied upon its own products for spinning, knitting and weaving. I believe Crew and Gouldthorpe extracted this detail from Price; "They (the Aborigines transported to Flinders Island) all liked the little red woollen caps" (Price, 1979, p. 67). It is possible that the caps were sewn, rather than knitted, from red wool flannel.

These images also hold other poignant significations which Crew and Gouldthorpe have imported into the book. Whilst this group of Aborigines has not "dutifully died" like the rest of their people (Crew, 1995, p. 25), the ordered, well clothed, silent and staring remnants of the Tasmanian Aborigines serve another purpose, in that they demonstrate the *potential* for civilisation of this "last group", too little, too late. Crew's and Gouldthorpe's picture book has incorporated the poor quality of captions associated with visual representations such as these examples of colonial photography and paintings. Taken at a time when traditional Tasmanian Aboriginal culture has ended, the lack of contextual information regarding Woolley's photograph contributes to the stereotyping, or the creation of types, in which readers are obliged to take the images at face value.

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[70] Charles Woolley's photographs of Tasmanian Aborigines were exhibited in 1866 for the Melbourne Intercolonial exhibition and were widely available from that time (MacDonald, 2005, p. 176).

Moreover, the fact that all the other illustrations in *The Lost Diamonds of Killiecrankie* are hoaxes detracts from our understanding of the past. Photographs act as illustrations rather than documentary evidence, because the reader is not offered information on the elements of their construction; the date, place, the subject and the name of the subject, as well as the exact medium and the maker.

Duterrau's representations of the Tasmanian Aboriginal people are significant to this discussion, because he continued to worship Robinson well beyond the effects of his round ups and genocide were being felt and questioned by the colonial authorities who originally supported his endeavours. Both Duterrau the artist and Woolley the photographer intended their images to be seen at face value, to an audience who could read their codes of representation. Deveraux, alias Gouldthorpe, in appealing to a new audience, has eluded Duterrau's original message of contrition contained in the ominous grey sky and the artificial poses of the original "full-blood" Tasmanian Aborigines in his tableau of their traditional roles.

Of all the works discussed in this thesis, Crew's and Gouldthorpe's is the most provocative in its intention to represent history and to question those intentions. The visual elements discussed above demonstrate just how easy it is to transgress and manipulate the boundaries of truth, and historicism, in what is seen and in what is read. This meld of fabrications cleverly creates complexity; the blurring of faction and fiction.

The Quest for Significant Objects of Desire: Aaron's Story as 'The Beginning of the End'

Crew's narrative describes an explicit setting and location for events in the story. The remoteness of this wilderness has its particular hazards, one of which is the presence of venomous snakes. Snakes are very common throughout Tasmania and a potent symbol in this story, offering an almost Biblical allusion to the acquisition of forbidden objects of desire. Middleton's aspirations regarding the topaz seem vacuous and pointless, yet he manages to invade Aaron's and his grandmother Lizzie's private space with his curiosity. Lizzie's "fantastic collection of objects and artifacts" (Crew, 1995, p. 39) includes "lumps of dull, grey rock [topaz]" and "a bone china cup and saucer commemorating Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee … and a scrimshaw, an engraved whale's tooth decorated with the repellent motif of a fanged snake" (Crew, 1995, p. 41), all objects symbolic of British colonial enterprise. Refusing to lend the scrimshaw to Middleton, Lizzie explains its significance. Her oral history yields more than Middleton's "months of research":

> my old Pa made this ... Little Boy Billy they called him. He was a proper blackfella. True. He lived on this island when he was a kid, down there at Wybalenna. But after they cleared the place out, and took his mob away to the main island, he came back with some doctor looking for good stones to send over there ... He found something ... Something big (Crew, 1995, p. 41).

"Poor old Pa" resorts to carving the scrimshaw map as a record to pass onto his family:

> They didn't want no black man coming here. So he done this up for my dad. Reckoned it was a map, see, but my Dad, he was one for the grog, hopeless he was, and whatever Pa told him he forgot. So now we got nothing, just this snake with two green eyes (Crew, 1995, p. 41).

Aaron's body language indicates that he is not comfortable with Middleton's transgression into his family history. His mate Johnno recognises Aaron's need for secrecy regarding the location of the diamonds; "You'd think they were all his, to listen to him … It's cause of his great grandad. Aaron's an Abo, ya know ... You can't tell to look at him, but that's the truth." (Crew, 1995, p. 43).

Crew's incorporation of intergenerational Indigenous family history is a pivotal revelation in the novel, one which is a credible reflection of the impact of colonial history on enduring black–white relations in Australia; from exploitation, dispossession and the ensuing social dysfunctionality, particularly for the men, being drunk and "hopeless". Aaron's unsophisticated mates refer to him as "an Abo", and their friendship still positions him as an outsider who is culturally different and not really one of them. Aaron doesn't look Aboriginal, but his affinity with the location of the diamonds separates him from his peers. Middleton is insensitive to his own invasive role in disturbing and appropriating, rather than respecting Aaron's knowledge and desire to keep some information secret from intruders, and it is implied, specifically from white intruders. Later in the story Middleton's reference to

Aaron as “my ‘little native companion’ had finally found something better to do” is psychologically revealing (Crew, 1995, p. 56). Though he self-consciously uses inverted commas to play with this colonialist racist language, Middleton is evidently aware of the power relationship that has developed between him as a white adult male, and Aaron as the Indigenous child of twelve years. Aaron’s sense of self is disturbed by Middleton’s intrusions into his personal life (including his family history and knowledge of his local environment). Yet, by manipulating Aaron’s hostility towards him, Middleton eventually manages to whittle down Aaron’s resistance to his quest.

The ominous title of the final chapters in the novel, “The Beginning of the End”, “A Final Journey” and “A Legacy”, all contribute to the construction of Aaron’s role in this story. Whereas “Going Back a Way” offers a representation of the facts of colonial history, Middleton’s narration in the ensuing chapters excavates his personal past, that of his own investigation into the mystery of the green topaz stolen by the convict James Gallagher, and the evolution of his relationship with Aaron Bates. Middleton’s acquisitive “ridiculous obsession” (Crew, 1995, p. 52) subjects them both to the hazards of the quest and simultaneously challenges their interracial relationship.

“The Beginning of the End’ consists mostly of the documents received by Middleton confirming the veracity of the Killiecrankie diamonds. The chapter title, resonating of old colonial ideological predictions of the fate of a primitive people, controls the mood of the narrative, as a foreshadowing of fateful and conclusive events. Middleton never considers leaving the quest unsolved, thereby disallowing any ambiguity in this link to colonial history, and his own motivations for the acquisition of the gem are not articulated. The next chapter, “The camp at Killiecrankie” reiterates the pathos in his personal mission, “When I look back, after all these years, I would have to say that those were the happiest days of my life” (Crew, 1995, p. 52).

Bowman, the storekeeper, warns him about venomous snakes in the bush where he paints his “calendar art”. “Copperheads. Tiger snakes. Real killers. You better watch out” (Crew, 1995, p. 54). Bowman seems to derive gratuitous pleasure from Middleton’s naïveté as a camper and prospector, for Middleton is a novice when it comes to bush skills in this particular Tasmanian wilderness. He relies on the mentorship of Aaron, whose knowledge of family, history and environment intersect. He covets Aaron's grandmother's significant object of desire; "That scrimshaw was more than a piece of folk art" (Crew, 1995, p. 56) "It should be in a museum" (Crew, 1995, p. 41) on public display, like so many other Indigenous artefacts and remains.

Ultimately, it is Aaron who reluctantly decodes the scrimshaw etchings of his great grandfather, as a map indicating the location of the green topaz. Like his despised colonial predecessors, Middleton is reliant on Indigenous intelligence to decipher the graphic representations of land and territory to lead him to the treasure. But the discovery is short lived, as the combination of Aaron's pony's terror of "a snake: a sleek black monster, its vile head raised, poised to attack" and a rock fall kills Aaron instantly (Crew, 1995, p. 61). In an ironic repetition of family history, like his own parents, Aaron dies in the pursuit of the diamonds.

Conclusion: Making Sense of History

The Lost Diamonds of Killiecrankie exposes the impact of colonialism in "a story rarely told" (Hunter, 1996, p. 26) for young readers, of the appalling treatment at the hands of white colonisers of the Tasmanian Aborigines at the Wybalenna settlement on Flinders Island, and specifically the instigations of Robinson. Crew's early decision to "develop themes which had usually been considered the preserve of adult novels, but present them in a way that makes them accessible to youth" is evident in the impetus for the book (Neilson, 1994, p. 25). In deconstructing Robinson as colonial hero, Crew's approach to this story is therefore explicitly postcolonial.

The story is a thoughtful interpretation of the ways in which colonialism has impacted on successive generations of Tasmanian Aborigines. The two Indigenous characters, Aaron and his grandmother Lizzie Bates, can trace their heritage back to Henry Purcell, Aaron's great grandfather who, himself, was exploited by colonialist ambitions. Crew suggests that "Aaron and his grandmother are meant to appear disempowered and 'othered' " (personal communication, 29 April, 2013). Aaron and Lizzie are outsiders in their own land, and considered as unfathomable and marginalised through their subsistence lifestyle and their links to the island's shadowy colonial past, but for whom there is no continuity. Middleton's insensitive acquisitive intentions ensure that Lizzie's and Aaron's Indigenous lineage is shattered If Crew's and Gouldthorpe's intention is to interrogate the racial politics of the colonisers and past generations as a form of atonement, this narrative fails to locate the issue as relevant to the contemporary present. Crew's and Gouldthorpe's assertion that Tasmanian Aborigines "survived" is not demonstrated in this story. Whilst they explicitly acknowledge the myth of extinction there is no generational continuity for their Indigenous characters.

The Lost Diamonds of Killiecrankie is an innovative, complex and ambitious project in its exploration of the legacies of a past dogged by racist ideology. It exposes an ideology of which the character Geoff Middleton himself is not entirely free (or indeed aware) of in his own interactions with Aaron and Lizzie as Indigenous people, who are disempowered and othered in the community. Grandmother Lizzie's acceptance of Middleton's and Aaron's hostility towards him reflects the perspectives that inform different generations of the two Tasmanian Aborigines represented in this story. There are some complex psychological constructions in this story which remain unexplored, and some intriguing questions regarding the ownership of history which remain unanswered. Crew's deliberate aim to juxtapose fact and fiction, to blur the boundaries between faction and fiction, is achieved through the narrative's insistence on Aaron and his grandmother as the last of their kind, whilst maintaining a historical view which refutes this as a myth. By representing his fictional Indigenous characters as the last ones remaining on the island, having no viable cultural, economic or reproductive future, Crew is deliberately mimicking the very same ideologies which his book seeks to critique. His constructions of story and image are reproductions of the ways in which the representation of white coloniser views on Aboriginality continue to inform the ideologies which underpin the treatment and continued marginalisation of Tasmanian Aborigines. On the other hand, Middleton's expiation of his story, his admission of his role in Aaron's death, can be read as a parable of a nation that abdicates responsibility, individual conscience and acknowledgement of the ways in which colonial history manages, informs and impacts on the lives of Aboriginal people.

The meld of history and story in *The Lost Diamonds of Killiecrankie* consistently disrupts and critiques the sense of history that Crew sets out to critique. Whilst Crew and his co-author/illustrator Gouldthorpe recognise that written language can tell only part of the story, the prevalence of hoax and distorted images invite interrogation of conventional understandings of the historical context. In particular, Gouldthorpe's pastiches of colonial artworks cleverly demonstrate how representations of the other are particularly problematic, as his own images deliberately exploit the ways in which these representations can reinforce stereotypes.

The information in *The Lost Diamonds of Killiecrankie* is important. Crew successfully deconstructs the mythology regarding contemporary Tasmanian Aboriginality. The book asserts that the Tasmanian Aborigines had survived Robinson's "all-encompassing net" (Crew, 1995, p. 25), dispossession and colonial dislocation through isolation on the Bass Strait islands. A perspective shared by much of the historical fiction discussed in this thesis is that Tasmanian Aborigines are not represented as active agents in living history. However, Crew's "sense of history" does highlight the importance of understanding histories "as discursive, partial constructions of the past, as much shaped by the present of their writing or telling" (Vincent and Land, 2003, p. 21). As a postcolonial text *The Lost Diamonds of Killiecrankie* opens up significant questions regarding the privileging of Eurocentric constructions of colonial history over the oral and pictorial representations of history as practised by Indigenous people. Symbolically this is consolidated through Middleton's reliance on Indigenous knowledge systems, their modes of historical documentation to decipher the graphic representations of land and territory to lead him to the treasure. The tragic consequences of this failed quest are a metaphor for the enduring impact of colonialism on Tasmanian Aborigines.

Crew's and Gouldthorpe's collaboration calls to question "the notion of history as an ever changing discourse, rather than some fixed and absolute body of fact" (Crew, 1991, p.11) as it challenges readers to interrogate the versions of history that they encounter through non-fiction, fiction and faction. These authors also expose the ambitions and naivete of participants as well as the passivity of bystanders in colonialist ideologies. Of all the books in this study, Crew's and Gouldthorpe's *The Lost Diamonds of Killiecrankie* suggests that the politicisation of young readers is inevitable, and that they should be led to "re-assess ... the effect the white invasion has had on the original inhabitants of this country" (Crew, 1991, p. 12).

Chapter 10

Conclusion: Breaking the Silence of the Past

> And the bush is silent. There is silence in the island, outside the towns ... the silence of a land outside history, almost outside time. It is so far south: on the edge of the blank wastes of ice ... the dark stone-age people the colonists found when they came there have all been wiped out; they are a lost race, but they remain a reproachful memory in the island's silence (Koch, 1958, p. 6).

Christopher Koch's 1958 evocation of a lost race of "dark stone-age people" is a reflection of the perception that pervades most of the children's literature explored in this thesis. From primary school, Australians learnt the story of how Tasmanian Aborigines were wiped out, a view sustained by most of the writers discussed here. The major premise established by these selected writers of children's literature set in Tasmania is supported by Lyndall Ryan's assertion that "European Tasmanians have managed to convince themselves and the world that they have carried out the swiftest and most efficient act of genocide ever" (Ryan, 1996, p. 249). The rationale for this conviction permeates the literature discussed in this thesis which sees Tasmanian Aborigines as lost or invisible in this fiction for younger readers. One of the strongest tenets of the literature surveyed suggests that this loss is an inevitable outcome of colonisation for which colonisers and their descendants are not to blame. Only Nora Dugon and Mary Small depict Tasmanian Aboriginal characters as representative of Indigenous cultures that have links to the present and are continually adaptive. In all but one of the works explored in this thesis, the exception being Mary Small's *Night of the Muttonbirds* (1981), Tasmanian Aboriginal characters are depicted as the last of their kind and lost forever, or marginalised to invisibility.

This thesis is the first to examine the representation of Indigeneity in Tasmanian children's literature in any consistent way. The significance of this thesis lies in its interrogation of the extent to which the selected children's literature reflects or supports contemporary ideology and reinforces the attitudes of previous generations. The approach here is concerned with understanding and revealing the ways in which the literature examined both upholds or promotes certain understandings of Indigeneity in Australia, and simultaneously subverts, challenges or modifies those understandings. The scope of this thesis is limited to five decades, 1950-2001, beginning with Jane Ada Fletcher's (1950) pioneering representations of Tasmanian Aboriginality and concluding with an exploration of three modern picture books by Mary Small (1981), Elizabeth Stanley (2001) and Gary Crew (1995). It appears that since 2001, the thematic representation of Tasmanian Aboriginality has not been explored by writers for children, despite its occurrence in adult literature.

With the exception of Dugon's and Small's books, the literature explored in this thesis is set in the historical past which enables the distance of time and place, as well as a separation of emotional and political engagement for the characters depicted. However, the historical frame of reference is important to all these books, as the impact of colonialism continues to be experienced by Tasmanian Aborigines which is explicitly reflected in the later publications discussed in this thesis. Textually, the past continues to inform and shape meaning to the present, as authorial assumptions of impressionable child audiences reinforce white supremacy and inaccurate representations of Tasmanian Indigeneity.

The intended audiences of this literature are middle and upper primary to lower secondary readers. This age group, John Stephens suggests, "needs to have developed a less solipsistic view of the world to engage imaginatively with the characters and events not identifiable in the present" (Stephens, 1992, p. 202). Through an interweaving of history and fiction, historical fiction can evoke a strong sense of time and place. Hence, older readers should be able to make links between the historical past and the social realities of the present. For Leon Garfield, renowned writer of historical fiction for children, the value of historical fiction should be "to question the wisdom of authority" (Garfield, 1988, p. 738). Garfield also advocates that successful historical fiction should provide a "shock of recognition" whereby "history becomes a mirror in which we see ourselves, for a fleeting instant, as others see us" (Garfield, 1988, p. 738).

The historical fiction discussed in the early chapters of this thesis all evade the potential for self-reflexivity and politicisation that well written and well researched historical fiction for younger readers can offer. Individually, none of these works provide this "shock of recognition"; overall, they are conservative, often rationalising and thereby reinforcing the status quo of social hierarchy and perceptions of

Tasmanian Aboriginality. On the whole, this literature operates as an agent of repression that confirms social and racial hierarchies as well as bias. Yet Fletcher, in 1950, whilst essentially conservative, was attempting something new, as during the first half of the twentieth century, Australian Aborigines were written out of Australian history, or relegated to a very minor role (see Reynolds, 2013, pp. 5, 16). Hill's (1952) novel demonstrates how the lack of information and understanding regarding Indigenous people fuelled settler anxieties perpetuated stereotypes of savagery that was unsurvivable when confronted by European civilisation. These particular children's writers reflect significant ambivalence over what they see as the "passing of the Tasmanian Aborigines", in which sentimental regret is matched against the celebration of colonial progress and the elevation of the "progressive races".

Whereas Fletcher and Hill organise the colonial past by choosing to forget its more unpleasant aspects, Chauncy's novels (1960, 1967) disrupt the silence of the past as she opens up questions of moral culpability with regards to intergenerational responsibility for communicating and owning personal, local and national histories. In an era when frontier violence was "an optional topic the discerning historian could decide to deal with or ignore" (Reynolds, 2013, p. 26) Chauncy transgresses the myth of peaceful settlement. She holds a deep ambivalence regarding colonial motivations and their impact, which is also later explored by Crew (1995) whose own ambivalence about colonial guilt casts doubt about the believability of colonial history. Indeed, Crew's and Gouldthorpe's collaborative narrative suggest that there is no chronological separation between colonialism and its aftermath. Roberts's (1979) and Price's (1981) exploitations of the lost child motif acknowledge the wide impact of settler violence on the Tasmanian Aborigines, demonstrating that the persistence of violent attacks killed so many members of the larger group that it ceased to be viable.

The new history of the frontier, sustained by the history wars, reflects the linked histories of imperialism and decolonisation which filter through the more complex, nuanced and thoughtful works of Chauncy and Crew; both supported their narratives through historical research and fieldwork. Small's (1981) first-hand experience of Cape Barren Island produced a picture book for older readers that communicates a deep understanding of the dynamics of the Cape Barren Islander community that she depicts. Stanley's story (2001), also set on Cape Barren, alludes to the impact of World War Two on this remote community.

Small's (1981) and Dugon's (1988, 1990) works dispel myths of non-survival of the Tasmanian Aborigines, and celebrate their survival against all odds. Dugon's exploration of Tasmanian Aboriginality and identity dismantles colonialist notions of authenticity and racial purity, foregrounding survival and cultural continuity.

During the time that all these books were produced, major reassessments were taking place in Australian history regarding the incorporation of Aboriginal people into Australian national life. Nineteenth-century assumptions regarding race were overturned; the Aborigines did not die out, their complex systems of lore and languages were being recognised, and it became acknowledged that they had been here for "thousands of generations". Nevertheless, popular understandings of Tasmanian Aboriginality remained obfuscated well into the twenty-first century. Viewed collectively, this range of children's literature exposes these writers' engagement with the racist constructions of contemporary Tasmanian society. However, this analysis also reveals a collective understanding and representation of the officially sanctioned genocide carried out by colonisers in Tasmania.

With the exception of two books, Fitzmaurice Hill's *Southward Ho with the Hentys* (1952) and Gary Crew's *The Lost Diamonds of Killiecrankie* (1995), all are written by women, most of whom were resident in Tasmania. Of those who were migrants to Tasmania, Chauncy, Price, Dugon and Small no longer regarded Britain as home and viewed Tasmania as an exotic location for their fictional settings. All the writers in this study see the uniqueness of Tasmania's island status, one with tenuous connections to the mainland as a microcosm that offered a unique imaginative space within an Australian context. Chauncy's explicitly Tasmanian settings made a noteable impact on the post mid-twentieth-century formation of Australian identity through children's books. However, with the exception of Dugon and Small, all of these writers contribute to the promotion of an Australian identity which excludes any active representation of contemporary Tasmanian Aborigines. Recognising the ways in which children's literature can perform a dynamic role in personal identity formation, Geoffrey Dutton advocates "There needs to be a sense of belonging underpinning what a child reads, sees and learns" (Dutton, 1985, p. 79). This study reveals how children's literature from Tasmania from 1950 to 2001 denies Tasmanian Aboriginal children that vital sense of belonging to their island home or to Australia.

In their representations of Tasmanian Indigeneity, there are three key influences that may be responsible for these children's writers maintaining what Koch calls the "island's silence". The first influence is unreliable sources and lack of historicism, the second relates to the writers' attachment to popular history, and the last concerns the authors' focus on the ethnographic objectives of their writing.

History and Historicism

A major deficiency of the examined literary works is the lack of historicity and accuracy of research, which disallows engagement with characters, as well as any real insight into the past, and consequently the present, reality of Tasmanian Indigeneity. In 1950, Fletcher's sources were those of the Victorian racial scientists of eighty years previously. A decade later, her work provided a model for Chauncy, who accessed the same sources, but was also strongly influenced by N. J. B. Plomley, who, despite evidence to the contrary, continued to assert the total demise of the Tasmanian Aboriginal population. Though Chauncy's writing in the 1960s reflects a more sustained interest and investigation of Tasmanian history, both she and Fletcher were constrained by their own ideological perspectives and their unwillingness or inability to critique what was popularly considered as current scholarship. Roberts (1979) and Price (1981) re-iterate Fletcher's ideological perspectives of doomed noble savagery and thus show continued inability to critique populist views of history. Admittedly, even thirty years ago "primary sources were in a much less accessible form than they are now" (Ryan, 2012, *preface*, xxii) and this consequently impacted on the range of secondary sources available. Many of those available secondary sources imported Victorian racial science notions of primitiveness and self-extinction.[71] However, it must be noted that this lack of currency with regards to historical veracity and accuracy of sources was common in both popular adult literature and children's literature until the last decade of the twentieth century, which explains the persistence of myths in these genres.

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[71] Typical well known examples are Travers, *The Tasmanians, the Story of a Doomed Race* (1968), and Davies, *The Last of the Tasmanians* (1973).

Ironically, despite their belief that they are offering something new to readers, all of the writers examined from 1950 to 1981 (ie Fletcher, Hill, Chauncy, Roberts, and Price), unconsciously for the most part, all reiterate colonialist discourses of previous generations of writers. There is a pervasive over reliance on outmoded and inaccurate sources by writers who have not taken the time to read contemporary works. Although Chauncy's works reflect her thoughtful research on the subject, she also accessed a limited range of interpretations. Indeed, many authors and publishers do not seem to have the knowledge to represent and effectively use the information gleaned from their sources. However, some insight into Crew's research for *The Lost Diamonds of Killiecrankie* is provided in *Strange Journeys*, a publication targeted at the education market (McKenna and Pearce, 1999, p. 239), that includes Plomley's *Weep in Silence* (1987), Price's *The First Tasmanians* (1979) and Reynolds' *Fate of a Free People* (1995) representing a range of interpretations of Tasmanian Aboriginality.

Irrespective of whether these children's writers are constrained by available sources, and/or their own lack of historicism and skills of historical investigation, the picture they present is incomplete. None of these writers (1950-2001) has consulted or collaborated with the subjects of their fiction, Tasmanian Aborigines. Because of the pervasive belief that no more Tasmanian Aborigines had survived, the potential for conversation or collation of oral histories from Tasmanian Aborigines as sources has also been overlooked by the later writers in this study (1979-2001). Yet, from the 1970s Tasmanian Aborigines were taking agency to recuperate their heritage. Reclaiming Truganinni's skeleton in 1975 was a significant and well publicised event which foreshadowed the return of Tasmanian Aboriginal remains to their ancestors over the next decade. Affirmation of Tasmanian Aboriginal identity became politicised as Tasmanian Aborigines embarked on the process of the return of their land, which eventuated in 1995 when the High Court Mabo judgement overturned *terra nullius*, the rationale for the continuing denial of Aboriginal land rights. An important acknowledgement of past wrongs was the Tasmanian Government's apology to the Stolen Generations in 1997, the first Australian state government to do so (Ryan, 2012, p. 358). Continually aware of the stereotypes which depict them as invisible, marginalised and alienated, "Tasmanian Aborigines feel that representations of the demise of their people write them out of existence just as they are struggling to gain political effectivity" (Moore and Muecke, 1984, p. 39).

It is apparent that writers whose works were published from the 1970s onwards did not take account of or acknowledge what was in the public domain, including Roberts, Price, Dugon, Stanley and Crew. The first three of these writers, as Tasmanian residents, should have been acutely aware of the significant heritage, land rights and identity issues for Tasmanian Aborigines. Dugon's novels touch the surface of these issues but she seems restrained by a lack of confidence to challenge conventional perceptions held by many Tasmanians at the time. Apart from Small's *Night of the Muttonbirds* (1981), none of the books reflects Tasmanian Aboriginality as having continuity with the past. Throughout this literature Tasmanian Aborigines are seen from a distance and treated as other. There is a pervasive lack of contemporary understanding or reflection of where these people are now, what they are trying to do, or what they have achieved for themselves.

As outsiders to the cultures they represent, these writers were, to some extent, reliant on representations which circulated within white culture. However, it is apparent that in their interpretations of Tasmanian history for children these literary works do open up access to the consequences of race conflict history, from dealing with "the passing of the Aborigines" as an indicator of colonial progress, though the eras of the White Australia policy, assimilation, multiculturalism and the elusive, ambitious process of reconciliation.

'Hiding behind Notions of Popular History'

Children's writers who depict Tasmanian Indigeneity from 1950 to 2001 appreciate its setting as a "land outside history, almost outside time" (Koch, 1958, p. 6), which enables their stories of piccaninny frolics, boys' colonial adventure, time-slip fantasy and other historical or "pre-historical" fiction. Historical settings facilitate the reiteration of antiquarian stereotypes and perspectives. The creation of types in this literature "mirrored attitudes to the Other common to early twentieth century anthropologists" (David, 2000, p. 233), which is executed through a general lack of information regarding traditional lands, family and tribal names and the complexity of kinship relationships. In 1981 Price emulates Fletcher's reductionist depiction of traditional Tasmanian Aboriginality where family groups are reduced to those that resemble English nuclear families.

"Hiding behind notions of popular history" (Annette Peardon[72], as quoted in Dodson, 1997, p. 5) enabled powerful creations and confirmations of stereotypes through representations of Tasmanian Aborigines as lost or invisible. It is well known that children's literature is not innocent. However, to a certain extent, some of these writers are "innocent" in that they did not appreciate the long term effects of ideology on readers. Chauncy and Crew have a nuanced understanding of ideology, but even Crew suggests that he and Gouldthorpe "did not see the enduring significance of what we were creating. We had no idea that the book would endure".[73]

There are commonalities shared by many of these writers in their representations of Tasmanian Aboriginality, particularly with regards to narrative voice. The predominance of women writers who emerged in these generations did not take the opportunity to question patriarchal values espoused by the wider community. Their contribution to the field, without interrogation or appreciation of the discourses and ideologies which run through and support children's literature, perpetuates the colonialist attitudes and construction of otherness for child readers. Inspired by anthropological writings, they talk down to their child audiences, enabling the dynamics of Aboriginalism to percolate through the literature, through the promotion of "versions of Aboriginality proposed by knowledgeable and sympathetic experts, who speak about and for Aborigines" (Bradford, 2001, p. 110).

The narrative perspectives assumed by female and male writers in this study are intriguingly polarised. Hill's male narrator writes from the distance of childhood personal memory, whilst Crew's first person narrator is expunging his guilt in his complicity of events that are thirty years old at the time of his telling. Yet all the works of the women writers are written from the third person omniscient narrator. Whilst the third person narrative is distancing for the child reader, it ensures an adultist perspective, thereby reinforcing adult control over ideological impulses. Most of these stories are owned by white experts, since, apart from Chauncy's *Mathinna's People*, Small's *Night of the Muttonbirds* and (to a lesser extent) Kelly in Dugon's novels, Aboriginal characters are not given the role of focaliser. Consequently, it is difficult for the reader to identify with Aboriginal characters. Overall, these writers give the impression that they are writing about people and characters that they do not know personally. For some writers their characterisation of Tasmanian Aborigines renders them as lifeless puppets invented to animate their ethnographic intentions. Moreover, in all this literature there are no Aboriginal heroes.

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[72] Annette Peardon, herself a survivor of the stolen generations, was the Co-Commissioner for the Tasmanian hearings of the *Bringing Them Home* Inquiry, and the first Aboriginal person to address the Tasmanian Parliament in her response to the Government's Apology on August 13th 1997. "Today's response by the Parliament is a sign of community maturity, of the State of Tasmania facing up to the responsibilities of harm caused to Aborigines by official policy instead of hiding behind notions of popular history".

[73] Crew, personal communication, 29 April, 2013.

Overwhelmingly, Aboriginal characters are deprived of agency, and implicitly of a future. Of all the works discussed, only the Tasmanian Aboriginal protagonists in Small's and Dugon's stories are alive at the end of their stories and imagining a future for themselves.

Ethnographic Intentions, Writing the Present Tasmanian Aborigines Out of Existence

The ethnographic intentions of Fletcher and Hill's works of the early 1950s resurface in Chauncy's *Mathinna's People* (1967), and are also clearly evident in the later works of Price, Roberts, Stanley and Crew, who all recognised the potential for their books' representations of Tasmanian Aboriginality to be used in the social studies classroom. Indeed, Stanley's and Crew's works are supported by teaching notes that assume a lack of historical knowledge of Tasmania's colonial history on the part of the teacher or child reader. Both Fletcher's and Hill's works were specifically directed at the social science textbook market and published in Australia. However, Chauncy's work was published by Oxford University Press, London, the first university press to produce books for children and young adults. Chauncy's novels are conspicuous in this thesis as they exemplify complex and sustained narratives that are respected in the field of Australian children's literature. Of all the literature explored, Chauncy's and Dugon's novels offer more nuanced depictions of white constructions of Tasmanian Aboriginality than the other works. Dugon and, to some extent, Chauncy propose that Aboriginality is defined by relationships. Their novels suggest a deeper knowledge of social interactivity, in contrast to Fletcher and Price, for example, whose writings assume greater social distance that incorporate prescribed gender roles.

As well as a widening of genres to the modern picture book for older readers, the literature explored in this thesis reflects an evolving view of childhood. At the end of the twentieth century, there were distinct differences in social attitudes, including education, child rearing and changing dynamics of the family, all referenced in this children's literature. However, as all these texts are dominated by the adult narrator, ideology becomes less transparent to the contemporary child and adult reader. In its exposure and exploration of the ways in which racism operates in Australian society, this knowledge offers no concrete strategies for social change.

However, there is a burgeoning sense of Tasmanian Aboriginal identity that issues from some of this literature. The Indigenous family relationships depicted in Chauncy's *Tangara* and *Mathinna's People*, including Towterer's leadership and resistance to the white invaders, suggests the dynamic community engagement of Tasmanian Aboriginal people at the time of European colonisation. Small's Indigenous protagonist in *Night of the Muttonbirds,* Matthew, is beginning to understand that his personal identity as a Tasmanian Aborigine will be differentiated from his family, as he negotiates a new role for himself in his community. Dugon's Indigenous protagonist, Kelly, demonstrates the psychological and sociological complexity of the contemporary context of Tasmanian Indigeneity.

Why Dare Disturb the Universe? Writing for Readers to gain a Sense of Self, Belonging and a Sense of History

Tasmania as an island state has a unique history and socio-cultural makeup which has supported a particular construction of Indigeneity. The isolation and parochialism of Tasmanian communities in children's literature of the era covered by this thesis means that these writers had a particularly difficult task of exploring the relationship between non-Indigenous and Indigenous peoples for child readers. As the (non-Indigenous) population was relatively static, the construction of history and of story was problematic for local readers. Non-Indigenous Tasmanian writers were particularly interested in incorporating contemporary social and political ideologies into their works. With regards to Indigeneity, children's literature produced in

Tasmania continued to reflect colonialist and assimilationist ideologies as well as paternalistic racist attitudes that informed a culture of denial well into the latter part of the twentieth century.

Chauncy's fiction, marketed to an international audience, is an iconic reference in this children's literature from Tasmania, promoting the unique aesthetic of its natural environment. The Tasmania depicted in Chauncy's fiction is less urbanized and less affluent than mainland Australia. Seemingly a place locked in time, it is inhabited by people who are overtly class conscious, and those who could trace their descendents in local communities. This awareness of local sensitivities is pervasive throughout all the literature discussed. Tasmanian society, according to Vicki Grieves, was "painfully respectable" and extremely race conscious (Grieves, 2008, p. 192). Throughout the range of literature explored in this thesis, the omission of detail regarding Indigenous heritage of land and family identities not only works towards the homogenisation of Tasmanian Aborigines, but it also enables the absolution of guilt or complicity for descendants as the perpetrators or benefactors of genocide and dispossession. This tacit absolution thereby renders Tasmanian Aborigines as lost or forever dispossessed and invisible.

Viewed collectively, these writers' awareness and admission of the officially sanctioned genocide perpetrated by colonisers in Tasmania reflects their interpretations of their own roles in helping readers understand how we know about the past. Their responses range from Fletcher's sadness for the lost piccaninnies and Hill's celebration of their disappearance, to Chauncy's, Roberts's and Prices' elegies for a doomed race. In the most recently published works, Stanley's and Crew's Tasmanian Aborigines replicate the last of their race. Chauncy's historical fiction and Crew's faction recognise the potential of historical fiction "to question the role of authority" (Garfield, 1988, p. 738). Whilst they do open up questions for their readers, Chauncy's and Crew's critiques of authority are safely located in the colonial past, and neither of them embraces contemporary attitudes towards Tasmanian Indigeneity.

The overall importance of this literature reflects the ways in which the genocidal process in Tasmania (which was understood, justified and condoned at the time of writin) has textually enabled the loss or invisibility of Tasmanian Aborigines from

1950 to 2001. Though not all of the works discussed in this thesis are historical fiction, they all play a role in using the past to put the present in perspective. For children's writers who represent Tasmanian Indigeneity in their works, breaking the silence of the past is fraught with challenges, as writers continue to "select" the truths to meet the needs of publisher, media and critic, whilst attempting to meet the perceived needs of the child reader.

Children's writers who embrace Tasmanian Indigeneity have a responsibility to ensure authenticity and accuracy in their representations of Tasmanian Aboriginality. They should encourage readers to think of historical fiction as a record of the truth or as an interpretation of the truth. By providing the reader with the background knowledge of their own research they could demonstrate their strategies for constructing their stories. Most importantly, child readers should be positioned to understand that the past informs the present.

Breaking the silence of the past means understanding that the subjects of their stories are also living descendants; they are child and adult readers who are interested in "stories of their past that help them gain a sense of self, belonging and a sense of history" (HREOC, 1997, p. 181). Nora Dugon's *Lonely Summers* and *Clare Street* apparently offered this vital sense of identity and belonging to a small group of readers. When Dugon went into schools in Tasmania to talk about her novels, children said "That's me in that story." One little girl said "That's me. My name's Kelly and I'm Aboriginal" (Dugon, personal communication, 9 August, 2010).[74] Kelly's response to Dugon's novel confirms a pertinent role for children's writers, which is the potential to use the past to put the present in perspective, "helping to provide a sense of history and belongingness" (Saxby 1993, p. 20).

Writers who "dare disturb the universe" (Eliot, 1920, lines 45-46) have the power to invoke a sense of individual power versus the social forces that require them to modify their behaviours. Writing for readers to gain a sense of self, belonging and a sense of history is a potent means of disturbing the universe, empowering to both writers and readers.

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[74] Dugon intended to write a third novel in this series but it never came about (personal communication, 9 April, 2010). Her journal reads "23.10.88. Next year will commence a 3rd Kelly book."

This thesis reveals the interplay of the perception of Tasmanian Aborigines as lost or invisible in children's literature over a timespan of fifty years, reflecting a period in which the dark history of Tasmania, the culpability of colonial administration and settler complicity is generally muffled or silenced within these children's books.

This thesis makes a significant contribution to the improved understanding of the ways in which ideologies underpin and perpetuate historical myths, specifically informing attitudes towards Tasmanian Indigeneity in children's literature. It encourages readers to critically analyse all children's literature for underlying myths, distortion of facts and misrepresentation of history. Moreover, it advocates an appreciation and application of historiography when discussing the construction of the past in children's literature, reminding the reader that history is continually subject to interpretation and constant change, rather than a set of unchanging facts. Additionally, this study demonstrates the need for maintaining the appreciation of literature in the school curriculum as opposed to its exploitation as a text to be analysed in terms of language only.

From 1950 to 2001 there was at least one book published every decade which depicted representations of Tasmanian Aborigines. The fact that these books contained any Aboriginal characters at all means that these writers did acknowledge or confront the colonialist origins of European settlement in Tasmania. I have found no children's literature which represents Tasmanian Indigeneity published since 2001. There is an ongoing interest in communicating an awareness of Indigenous people's history throughout Australia, but the dearth of children's stories from Tasmania for over a decade demonstrates the vital need to ensure a sense of place and belonging for current and future generations of Tasmanian children so that they also are not "lost" or marginalised to invisibility. Writers, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, need to continue to address the silence and invisibility of the representation of Indigeneity in children's literature from Tasmania.

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