

From the editors of this issue

This year marks the first anniversary of the open access version of the *Australian Studies Journal – Zeitschrift für Australienstudien*. The online submission form and the availability of articles and reviews for free have made an impact on the reach and diversity of our readers. We could sense increasing interest in, and awareness of, this new format at institutions, such as the Menzies Centre for Australian Studies, and at conferences across Europe and Australia.

This year's issue presents a wealth of interdisciplinary research in the areas of History, Indigenous Studies and Literature. Drawing on the theoretical implications of *ego histoire*, Martina Horáková's essay analyses the ways notions of settler belonging have been expressed in the historical writings by Peter Read and Mark McKenna. Engaging in a close post-colonial reading, the study shows the complexity of power relations in the narrative strategies of shifting settler identities. Oliver Haag's article traces the causes for the increase in published Indigenous Australian autobiographies. Drawing on interviews and bibliographies, his research contributes new impetus to the study of the emerging interest in Indigenous biographical writing. His contribution finally contrasts this burgeoning interest in Australia with a low level interest in Indigenous autobiographies on the German-speaking market. Fiona Duthie's analysis deals with the colourful but also ambivalent aspects of life, love and art in Alex Miller's novels. Her vivid plea for an intellectual approach to Alex Miller's work and the subjects of love and art leaves the reader with the enlightened insight that "art" in all its expressions and facets is, indeed, the perfect partner of "love". Based on the author's own experiences in the field, GAST award winner Chrischona Schmidt investigates in her research report the role, function and scope of art centres in Indigenous communities and scrutinises particularly the implications of the differences between the absence and existence of art centres and art agencies in Indigenous communities. Finally, the new issue ends with a prologue: Henriette von Holleuffer explores the fundamental role of water as life-giving resource as well as creative power in Australia's prehistory. "On the edge of the human

Dasein in Australia" exemplifies the interdisciplinary and interrelated search for water and the beginning of history in Australia. As time is relative, it also is the hunt for water and its ever-present spirits in the land of the Aborigines.

As editors of the journal, we continue to foster the practice of Australian Studies as a multidisciplinary endeavour. The *Zeitschrift für Australienstudien / Australian Studies Journal* is a crucial forum for exchanging innovative scholarship. We strongly encourage future submissions in both German and English language. Meanwhile, our Association continues to issue a bi-annual electronic Newsletter which presents news, reports and debates on Australia's current affairs. Australianists can visit the *e-Newsletter* on **www.australienstudien.org**.

The production of this issue would not have been possible without the efforts of our authors, reviewers and anonymous referees. We wish to thank Dennis Haskell for his empathic obituary of Veronica Brady that captures the author's passionate literary career so well. In particular, our gratitude goes to Victoria Herche, Barbara Schmidt-Haberkamp, Elisabeth Bähr, Lindsay Frost and Guido Isekenmeier who helped in the final steps towards completion of the online and print versions. We really appreciate that. Thank you.

Henriette von Holleuffer & Oliver Haag (December 2015)

ESSAYS

Martina Horáková

Memoirs of (Postcolonial) Belonging:

Peter Read's *Belonging* and Mark McKenna's *Looking for Blackfella's Point*

For European scholars, the discourse surrounding the nature of relationships between Australian settlers and Indigenous population, particularly in relation to the legitimacy of belonging in the land, holds an intriguing aura. As cultural and spatial outsiders, we may feel overwhelmed by the intensity of some Australian public intellectuals' responses to what might be variously termed "spatial anxiety," "postcolonial/white guilt," or "disturbed" sense of belonging (Slater n.pag.). The period of the late 1990s and early 2000s in Australia certainly offered an interesting moment in which this intensity was particularly visible and vocal. In this moment, the consequences of various moves and tendencies conflated: the intervention of revisionist histories and Indigenous testimonies; the lasting impact of Mabo decision and Native Title; the sentiment of the *Bringing Them Home* report. Thus, in 1997 Tom Griffiths writes of "the need to rediscover a history of the white Australian conscience" and, drawing on the influential poet Judith Wright, who already in the 1950s agonized over the incompatibility of settler and Indigenous relation to land and belonging, proclaims Australia a "haunted country" (Griffiths 3); in their 1998 study, Ken Gelder and Jane Jacobs theorize the "unsettled settlement" in Australia as leading to the state of the "postcolonial uncanny" (Gelder and Jacobs 23); in the early 2000s, women writers textualize their concerns about the fragility of settler belonging: Fiona Probyn describes it as the "crisis of settler belonging" (Probyn 76); Gail Jones uses the trope of intellectual mourning to diagnose the state of Australian national consciousness, arguing that "non-Aboriginal Australians, faced with traumatic revelation, [...] have entered a specific and unprecedented historical contract" (Jones 164); and Deborah Bird

Rose identifies the “ruptured alienation of settler societies,” as she calls for understanding “how we [Australians] may inscribe back into the world a moral presence for ourselves” (Bird Rose 6). The insistence that this moment in history be used for “inscribing back a moral presence” previews some of the ethical and philosophical dimensions of the debates on settler belonging in Australia. These dimensions have been closely examined, among others, by Linn Miller, who analyses the notion of settler belonging from a philosophical point of view and suggests that belonging in Australia is problematized by the settler Australians’ state of “conscious despair” (a term developed from Søren Kierkegaard’s *The Sickness Unto Death*), which prevents settlers from being in a “correct relation” to themselves and to the world (Miller 220).

In this article I examine in more detail two examples from a group of non-fiction narratives written by Australian public intellectuals around the turn of the 21st century which thematize the ways of settler belonging. The two selected texts, Peter Read’s *Belonging: Australians, Place and Aboriginal Ownership* (2000) and Mark McKenna’s *Looking for Blackfella’s Point* (2002), are written by well-known, established historians with a strong public voice which they use to articulate their position as professional historians, as white settlers, but also as ‘ordinary’ Australians who keep searching for a non-appropriating and non-exploitative way of belonging in the space of settler colony. The two narratives are certainly different in the sense that *Looking for Blackfella’s Point* is a more conventional history of a place, while *Belonging* is more speculative and popularizing in covering a broader range of strategies to deal with the topic of settler belonging. However, they are also conspicuously similar in the way of integrating personal, autobiographical, at times even confessional, gestures that have particular effects on the readers. In Read’s account, this tone permeates most of his writing in the book, while in McKenna’s text it concerns only the longer introduction and conclusion which frame the historiographical chapters.

While such personal turn in various disciplines and/or modes of

writing is neither new nor unique in Australia, the two selected texts are illustrative of a larger group of narratives which is specifically Australian in their attempt to articulate one of the many versions of Reconciliation and perspectives on white settler guilt in relation to the dispossession of Indigenous people. As such, they can be more broadly contextualized within Australian whiteness studies; writing spatial history, as it was conceived by Paul Carter in his 1987 study *The Road to Botany Bay*; travel writing; or academic auto/biography. These narratives, which I call “memoirs of belonging,” encompass various streams of Australian public intellectuals’ personalized writing – the historiographical writing of Henry Reynolds and Anne Curthoys; ficto-critical writing of Stephen Muecke and Katrina Schlunke; anthropological and autoethnographical writing of Deborah Bird Rose; as well as feminist travel writing of, for example, Robyn Davidson, Kim Mahood and Margaret Somerville. Often, they do so through highly personal, autobiographical modes of academic/critical writing which draws both on the author’s professional expertise and on their subjective sense of belonging/non-belonging as educated, middle-class, liberal, white settler Australians. In addition, these narratives not only probe the intricacies of the white settler guilt but, as Kay Schaffer points out, they also “acknowledge that Indigenous people have very different understandings of white colonial history” (150). I would suggest that all these narratives are examples of hybrid texts that illustrate different ways of transcending (or the impossibility of it) what seems to be an impasse in searching for an ethically sound relationship to land and its first peoples.

The mode of writing described above demonstrates a level of self-reflection, doubt, questioning one’s ethical positions, internalizing complicity. On one level, these ‘acts of contrition’ in the critical writing of public intellectuals has overlapped, not surprisingly, with the emergence of whiteness studies in Australia. In “Writing Whiteness: The Personal Turn”, Anne Brewster examines Australian writing on “becoming” white in the context of, on the one hand, women’s personalized writing on critical race theory and postcoloniality, flourishing particularly in the genres of life writing

and personalized essay, and, on the other, of the continuous public visibility of Indigenous writing – testimony and life writing in particular (Brewster n.pag.). Indeed, the concurrence of the work done on the history of violent Indigenous dispossession, on the encounters between whiteness and Indigeneity, on the notions of resistance and complicity within the colonial and postcolonial studies, together with the tendency toward a more self-reflective style in academic writing, has resulted in a subgenre that Gillian Whitlock calls “intellectual memoir” (2004b: 13). One of the features of this kind of writing is the moment of recognition – recognition of one’s own boundaries and limits, recognition of one’s racial identity. For Brewster, who analyses Ruth Frankenberg’s interrogation of whiteness in her influential contribution to American critical race theory, this is an “experience of defamiliarization,” an “embodied moment of reversal, of apparent white minoritisation” (Brewster n.pag.). The textual features of such recognition may include, according to Whitlock, “confessions of estrangement and dislocation, feelings of complicity, shame and guilt, and expression of contrition and responsibility” (Whitlock 2004a: 238). There are also other generic markers of writing about whiteness, such as features of witnessing and testimony, which, according to Robyn Westcott, constitute a response to an acknowledgement of one’s racial identity:

Scholars interrogating the production of white identity have sought *testimony* – statement and account solicited through historical investigation, the ethnographic survey, ficto-critical narratives and personal reflection. (Westcott n.pag.)

Westcott goes on to identify two distinct “impulses” that she sees as evident in the so-called white writings: “a drive to achieve reconciliation (of self with other, or indeed self with self) and a desire to perform transformation (both subjective and textual)” (Westcott n.pag.). Indeed, both of these impulses are present in Read’s and McKenna’s narratives, as well as in other comparable accounts mentioned above.

Another perspective that allows for a broader contextualization of

the hybrid writing represented by Read's and McKenna's narratives is the genre of *ego-histoire*, coined and developed by French historians in the late 1980s. Pierre Nora, in his famous manifesto, with which he introduced the collection *Essais d'ego-histoire*, outlines the historian's new role in the following way: "A new personage emerges from the upsurge of history conceived as memory, one ready, unlike his predecessors, to acknowledge the close, intimate, personal liaison he maintains with his subject" (qtd. in Popkin 1996: 1141). In Nora's vision, the autobiographical reflection has been promoted as a tool for "re-vision[ing] the process of the production of historical knowledge" (qtd. in Popkin 1996: 1141). The stress on the personal/autobiographical is what French *ego-histoire* shares with Australian tradition of writing about whiteness which, according to Brewster, stems from an effort to conflate public and private memory, to "deconstruct the binaries between [...] 'objective' and 'subjective' modes of discourse and between specialized knowledges and everyday life" (Brewster n.pag.). The genre of *ego-histoire*, as defined by Luisa Passerini and Alexander Geppert, involves "thematiz[ing] the link between the history that one makes and the history that makes us", connecting "the practice of history with the philosophical and existential systems of thinking held by historians," and combining "both the individual and the collective" belonging (Passerini and Geppert 7-8). Interestingly enough, what might seem as exclusively tied to French historiographical context has recently been extended to Australian historiography. In his article "*Ego-histoire* Down Under," Jeremy Popkin claims that some of the recent Australian versions of *ego-histoire*, such as Henry Reynold's *Why Weren't We Told?* (1999), "have told stories of how they came to question major elements of that national story, particularly the country's relationship to its Aboriginal population" (Popkin 2007: 107). In the recent ground-breaking publication *Ngapartji Ngapartji: Ego-Histoire and Indigenous Australia* that "weave[s] together professional and personal accounts of studies that have Australia and Indigeneity at their heart" (3), the editors make a claim that the genre of *ego-histoire* "can demonstrate ... both the close connection between individual and national identity and the inextricable intertwining of research methodology and outcomes, and subjective

data" (6). Indeed, in this sense the opening chapters to McKenna's *Looking for Blackfella's Point* could be perceived as a more contemporary version of *ego-histoire* manifesto, with its consistent reflection on how personal history and subjective sense of belonging in a particular place can re-figure the sense of national history. McKenna contemplates: "It occurred to me that my personal quest to discover more about the history of Blackfella's Point and my professional interest in understanding the politics of history in Australia were closely related" (McKenna 6). So the memoirs of belonging, I believe, may be also thought of as important interventions into the construction of Australian national history.

Asking questions and casting doubts

Peter Read's *Belonging* is a contribution to the genre of intellectual memoir which, in spite of having provoked some critical responses, most notably those by Ken Gelder, Fiona Probyn and Gillian Whitlock (in "Becoming Migloo"), has generally been accepted as a popular, comprehensible and, in the end, optimistic and redemptive articulation of Australians' sense of belonging. The very first sentence of his Introduction, however, resonates with the many voices casting doubts on settler belonging: "How can we non-Indigenous Australians justify our continuous presence and our love for this country while the Indigenous people remain dispossessed and their history unacknowledged?" (Read 4). Not only does this question already preview the popularizing tone of Read's account through phrases such as "justify our presence" and "our love for this country," but it also conspicuously echoes the recurrent questions which a number of other Australian public intellectuals pose. Henry Reynolds, in his personal quest to provide reasons for historical amnesia in relation to Aboriginal history and Aboriginal-settler relationships, keeps asking: "Why were we never told? Why didn't we know?" (4). Deborah Bird Rose also asks questions about an alternative for the future: "We cannot help knowing that we are here through dispossession and death. What does this mean, for us and for our country? What alternatives exist for us, and what is asked of us?" (6). Mark McKenna also begins with questions as he looks over

his new property in rural New South Wales and reflects on the significance of local history and his chances to find a sense of belonging there:

The best way to begin is to ask the question I have asked myself many times when gazing across the river from my verandah. What was this land like before the Europeans arrived? Before the ships and the horses, before the sealers and the whalers, and before the squatters and the settlers? What can I glean of the indigenous past? (McKenna 11)

Brewster perceives these recurring variations of the same question as a specific trope and a “prominent rhetorical and methodological device in remedial writing about whiteness” (Brewster n.pag.). According to her, the “self-addressed question” forms an important moment in whiteness studies, interrogating the formation of the white subject. As such, ‘the question’ “perform[s] th[e] act of splitting and defamiliarisation,” as well as it describes a “moment of insufficiency, anxiety or puzzlement” (Brewster n.pag.). It is also, I argue, related to the moment of surprise and recognition which both Brewster and Whitlock identify in the whiteness writing and intellectual memoir, respectively. What is significant here is the implication that the answer to these questions is in gaining knowledge about history and understanding the complexities of it. It begins with a sense of puzzlement, doubts, ambivalence, and proceeds to coming to a certain realization, recognition, understanding – this becomes the starting point of many memoirs of belonging. In this sense, the genre of intellectual memoir and *ego-histoire* offers the space where inner anxieties about belonging/non-belonging are allowed to surface and shape the narrative. The mentioned accounts, I would suggest, are also the personal stories of revelation and of enlightenment which, in a moment of recognition, present both emotional and intellectual confrontation with the self. The following paragraphs demonstrate how Read and McKenna experience and textually construct this moment of recognition.

In order to resolve the dilemma posed at the beginning of this

narrative, Read sets out on a journey. This journey is both physical and metaphorical as Read begins by re-memembering and re-tracing the familiar landscape of his childhood spent north of Sydney. These seemingly unproblematic, nostalgic reminiscences are, however, soon to be displaced by more disturbing and elusive traces of Aboriginal presence in the very same area: the remnants of an oyster shell midden, Aboriginal fishing camp, rock painting, sacred site. This moment is again a trope familiar from other intellectual memoirs. In *Looking for Blackfellas' Point*, McKenna starts his own academic insight into the history of a particular place in the far south-eastern tip of New South Wales with his purchase of a piece of land in this area. Similarly to Read, McKenna is disturbed by the haunting presence/absence of Aboriginal history when he discovers that the spot with a suggestive local name Blackfellas' Point (while the property itself is called, significantly, Eureka), has been an Aboriginal camping and meeting place, a place "for cooking, feasting and dancing" (McKenna 5). Again, this moment of revelation prompts McKenna to a journey which loosely follows that of Peter Read: "[...] like many other Australians, I feel I cannot understand the place in which I live without first understanding something of the history and culture of Aboriginal people, and their interaction with settler Australia" (McKenna 8). This recognition is the moment of coming to terms with how the subjects' whiteness is constructed in relation to Indigeneity. According to Whitlock, it poses a challenge for the writers to imagine the most familiar places and spaces of their everyday life (just like Read and McKenna do) from a very different perspective – it makes them see their personal history differently and therefore it makes them "reformulat[e] the way in which one's intellectual work is conducted" (Whitlock 2004a: 239).

Seeking advice

In his attempt to articulate a legitimate sense of belonging devoid of doubts and ambivalences, Read decides to consult a number of interlocutors: first, he turns to prominent Australian poets, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, providing a selection of what he calls "belonging poems" (54). Commenting on the contemporary

Aboriginal poetry, Read is “struck with how almost all [poems] intimately involve the injustices Aboriginals have suffered at the hands of other Australians” (30), and he is disappointed that in their poems “the past is never shared” (34); it is, as Read regrets to say, “a time without Whites” (34). But in searching for settler Australian poets who would offer a more reconciliatory vision of the past, Read concedes that he doesn’t “find much help in the poets of [his] own grandparents’ generation” (34). In the end, he seems to appreciate most a poem by Geoff Page which, in Read’s view, epitomizes the ideal of reconciliation in which the past is put to rest:

They [non-Indigenous Australians in this poem] don’t commune with spirits in the landscape: they negotiate with real, self-confident Aboriginal people, and what they exchange is passion and knowledges and history and a love of the land. (56)

This passage, I think, reveals something about Read’s ideals of dealing with the crisis of settler belonging: it is a pragmatic approach, not so much interested in “talking to the ghosts,” to echo Derrida’s *Specters of Marx*, but rather, it seems, in finally laying the ghosts of Aboriginal dispossession to rest and ‘moving on’ – an uncanny parallel to the phrase “move forward” used, peculiarly, by two former Prime Ministers from the very opposite camps, John Howard and Kevin Rudd.¹

The second group that Read proposes to consult in order to provide answers to his questions are his fellow non-Aboriginal Australians (who also include people of non-Anglo-Celtic heritage). His ‘survey’ proclaims to map the ways in which people of different ages, occupations and social positions relate to land, or as the pastoralists and farmers say, to ‘their country.’ This strategy itself would seem to

¹ John Howard used the phrase in the context of his justification of his refusal to formally apologize to Stolen Generations: “If we acknowledge wrong and assess honestly and vigorously what needs to be done we can move forward, and move forward we must” (“Sorry” n.pag.). Paradoxically, Kevin Rudd used the phrase to “move forward” in his formal apology to the Stolen Generation but, contrary to Howard, he explicitly included Indigenous people in this process: “It is time to reconcile. It is time to recognise the injustices of the past. It is time to say sorry. It is time to move forward together” (Rudd 169).

be very appropriate as the social and institutional position seems to be of crucial importance here: Read himself admits that the role of education and a socially privileged position may be one of the determining factors in one's sense of (non)belonging. The author suggests: "Everyone I have quoted so far, so far as I know, is like me: university-educated, urban, middle-class and Anglo-Celtic. Perhaps it is only this group which feels itself to be trapped" (5). Indeed, the importance of intersection of class and ethnicity/race cannot be overlooked in any examination of settlers' narratives of belonging as it is predominantly white middle-class settlers who engage in the discourse of the crisis of settler belonging. Nevertheless, while Read's honesty in accounting for his own elitist position is certainly revealing, it also becomes evident that Read gradually excludes himself from this group that feels "trapped". He comes to criticize a certain group of intellectuals who in their work constantly problematize non-Indigenous people's sense of belonging in terms of their desire to feel a "spiritual" bond to land and therefore, according to Read, the desire to become Aboriginal. From the interviews that Read conducts, and from the comments he makes about them, it becomes clear that Read admires rural and country-based people who, according to him, have a "deeper" sense of belonging than urban dwellers.

In her critical comparative analysis of Read's *Belonging* and Margaret Somerville's *Body/Landscape Journals* (1999), Fiona Probyn comments on the use of the metaphor of depth, arguing that Aboriginal relationship to land is often identified with "depth," referring to its complexity and also spirituality, while non-Aboriginal relationship is therefore perceived as lacking this "depth". As a result, non-Aboriginal people, in their quest to belong in a "deeper" way, seek to identify with Aboriginality (Probyn 78-79). In the case of Read's *Belonging*, rather than providing a critical analysis of the pastoralists' complicity in the process of Indigenous dispossession, Read ends up empathizing with, if not admiring their supposedly "deep" anchoring in the land. So it remains to be questioned whether Read might be perpetuating the well-known dichotomy here, seeing the population in rural areas as more 'Australian' in

terms of national identity, because they belong more “deeply” than urban intellectuals.

McKenna is slightly different in this sense: he is, perhaps, more analytical (and critical) when reflecting on his ambivalent position: “my sense of belonging is divided, varied and unpredictable,” he says (8). Yet, it becomes clear that this openness towards a more unresolved and unsettled sense of belonging has its limits: McKenna admits one of his motivations for writing this spatial history was the purchase of a piece of land in the location he writes about, the land the aesthetics of which, he confesses, he fell in love with (4). So his privilege, embodied in his ability to buy the land, shape it by cultivating, and build a house on it, problematizes his endeavor in the book. In fact, the very first sentence in the introduction to the book reads: “In early 1993, I bought 8 acres of land on the far south coast of New South Wales” (2). A paragraph later, in which the natural beauties of the spot are praised and McKenna is “immediately entranced by the view,” he is “convinced it was [his] destiny to become the new owner” (2).

The relation between belonging and ownership has been convincingly theorized by Aileen Moreton-Robinson in “I Still Call Australia Home: Indigenous Belonging and Place in a White Postcolonizing Society,” where she argues that non-Indigenous sense of belonging is “derived from ownership as understood within the logic of capital; and it mobilizes the legend of the pioneer, ‘the battler’, in its self-legitimization” (Moreton-Robinson 23). Indeed, McKenna’s rhetoric does echo this argument, as he informs how “over the next three years, [...] [he] planted trees and shrubs, spent long nights making poor sketches of house plans” (2), invoking the settler claim to the right to live (and belong) in the land, the right deserved by hard work. However, this right, as Moreton-Robinson goes on to argue, is “one of the fundamental benefits white British migrants derived from dispossession” (25). Thus in this light McKenna’s sense of belonging gets compromised by linking his otherwise sympathetic project of local history writing to his economic investment in the land.

Looking for guides

In the last part of the book, Read proposes yet another experiment that should help him assuage his troubled sense of belonging. On his journey to re-visit familiar places, he gets help from a guide who truly embodies the haunting past. This guide is Dennis Foley, a Gai-mariagal man from the Sydney area. Together, they revisit the places where they would have probably met as children if only Aboriginal presence in those places had been visible to settlers. In this passage, Read comments on various perspectives of both spatial and human histories, recognizing the primacy of the ancient culture. At the same time, however, it is hard to avoid sensing that by presenting Dennis Foley as his 'Aboriginal connection,' Read merely re-inscribes his privileged insight, his intellectualism, as he constructs himself as an informed historian who *knows* and *understands* Aboriginality, including the complexity of Aboriginal dispossession. Thus he seems to position himself as an expert in relation to both spatial history and Aboriginality. Ken Gelder identifies an interesting paradox here: "Made aware of the deep history of the place he [Read] occupied, as well as the extent of Aboriginal displacement from it, Read becomes closer to Foley (rather than estranged from him)" (Gelder n.pag.). This allows Read to refer to Dennis Foley as his "shadow brother," alluding, perhaps unconsciously, to the repressed and unequal nature of their relationship. Indeed, Dennis Foley becomes a specter, a ghost whose function in Read's narrative is to legitimize Read's, and by extension the settler belonging, rather than challenge it.

Gillian Whitlock makes a noteworthy comment about the figure of a "fellow traveler" or a guide that is employed for different purposes in the genre of intellectual memoir. This guide can be either Aboriginal, as in Read's case, or white, usually an early explorer, pioneer, settler or artist whose journals, diaries or artwork is taken up by the contemporary writers and critics (Whitlock 2004a: 250-51). It is well-known that the figure of Aboriginal guide is a significant trope in Australian context, not only in the positive sense of someone

having the skills to read the country and survive in the bush and the outback, (possessing the knowledge that is inaccessible to white settlers), but also in the negatively charged trope of a Black tracker who is complicit in colonial power (Langton 56). In his illuminating article "Guides and Explorers," Kim Scott outlines the story of his Noongar ancestor, Bob Roberts, who guided the expedition of Joe Septimus Roe, and explains how Noongar people, through their welcoming and accommodating gestures of hospitality to the first explorers, introducing them to the country, offered a vision of interaction that was later "betrayed and lost" (Scott 17). Scott demonstrates that in the early colonial times, at least in Western Australia, there was a cultural dialogue between Noongar people and early explorers and settlers, a dialogue which later vanished, building instead "insecurity, uncertainty, and doubt" as the "significant component of the psychological infrastructure of the nation" (19). Neither Read nor McKenna manage to re-enact that dialogue in their quest for a sound sense of settler belonging; rather, in the words of Kim Scott, they "minimise partnership, and work with a select, strategic few [sources or informants]" (18). In *Looking for Blackfella's Point*, McKenna, although enchanted by the natural beauty of the place that by now has become 'his', reflects on his hesitancy as to whether he can actually live permanently in such an isolated spot. Suddenly, he feels like "another colonist arriving in a distant land" (4) and there is no one to welcome him, no guide to introduce him to the country. While he is "still a stranger, still waiting to feel at home" (4), this void prompts his endeavor to "know something more of the Aboriginal societies that once thrived on the land [he] now own[s]" (5). Thus writing the history of the area is supposed to shape and affirm his sense of belonging.

Belonging as becoming ... indigenous?

The problem with Read's memoir is that at the beginning it promises to articulate the issue of settler belonging in a way which is non-appropriating, independent of, and separate from, Aboriginality as he proclaims: "I'm not envious, nor do I wish to incorporate myself spiritually into Aboriginality. I want to feel I belong here while

respecting Aboriginality, neither appropriating it nor being absorbed by it" (Read 15). However, it seems that this is precisely what Read's memoir does in the end; his account is *continually* concerned with Aboriginality. This is a reading shared by both Probyn and Gelder: Probyn critiques Read's memoir as "recuperating settler belonging via an identification with Aboriginality" (78), while Gelder interprets the text as enacting "the fantasy of indigenizing the 'non-Aboriginal'" (Gelder n.pag). This fantasy is played out in the open when in the last, most personal chapter, Read walks with Dennis Foley through the land. Guided by Foley, Read acknowledges both physical and spiritual memorabilia of Aboriginal history but at the same time he seeks to transcend the difference between them in what he calls "belonging-in-parallel," which, as Read contemplates,

does not imply that the majority cultures pretend that the Aboriginals don't exist. A plaque commemorating the Narrabeen [Aboriginal camp] site, and its destruction, will remind the visitor that Aboriginality is around us and beside us. That's a step to mature belonging. Now Dennis and I, the one Indigenous, the other native-born, each respecting the past and present cultures of the other, are together traveling the northern beaches of Gai-mariagal lands in search of the proper country. (Read 210)

Read's desire to render Aboriginal displacement in "a plaque," which I read as a typically Western normative instrument of fixing history in time, reveals something important about his strategy to achieve a "mature belonging": for Read, 'mature belonging' seems to signify a qualitatively different way of belonging, different from 'immature belonging' which settlers were supposedly experiencing until now. It is the 'next stage' which is made possible precisely through the symbol of the plaque – a gesture of commemorating and remembering, not forgetting, Aboriginality "around us and beside us". But this logic also evokes a sense of progress which, in turn, mirrors again the familiar trope of laying the ghost to rest in order to 'move on and forward' towards the bright future built on reconciliation.

In this light it is not surprising then that Read's search for new ways of settler belonging ends in an optimistic, almost ecstatic tone:

During this chapter I've used for the first time the phrase 'native-born' about myself. [...] I've gained confidence. [...] I think now I'm almost ready to belong. [...] My sense of native-born has come – is coming. (222-23)

This passage, like the concept of "belonging-in-parallel," is problematic as it openly invokes the long history of cultural and spiritual appropriation of Aboriginality, so visible, for example, in the production of the so called Jindyworobak literary movement in the first half of the 20th century. Mitchell Rolls, exploring the history of cultural appropriation, claims that

the appropriation of Aboriginal cultural property not only instils within non-Aborigines a sense of belonging to the land, it enables a conceptual identification of self as becoming, in this respect, an Aborigine. This serves the two-fold function of uniting non-Aborigines with the landscape from which they are supposedly alienated, whilst at the same time negating Aboriginal claims for land based on a *unique* spirituality. (Rolls 124, original emphasis)

Aileen Moreton-Robinson also comments on the problematic vision of settler belonging that Read presents towards the end of his book:

For Read and others belonging is experienced as a profound attachment, one figured as *personal*. Personal sentiment is privileged in Read's account. This is problematic for a number of reasons, notably for its denial of the racialized structural power relations that have produced the legal conditions in which this sentiment is possible, enabled and inscribed. (Moreton-Robinson 27)

While McKenna also concludes his spatial history on a personal and reconciliatory note, he is much more sober and emotionally restrained: "my knowledge of the history of the frontier, and the way in which Aboriginal people were dispossessed of their land, leaves me feeling ambivalent about the land I own, and any attempt we might make to 'celebrate the nation'" (McKenna 221). Compared to Read's ultimately 'unproblematic' sense of belonging (there is a feeling that all anxieties and doubts related to settler belonging

posed at the beginning of his account are resolved at the end), McKenna's sense of belonging is different in the sense that it is *conditional*, clearly articulating the conditions under which settler belonging can be fully recognized as part of national identity: "Until Aboriginal people can be satisfied that they possess a greater sense of political, economic and social justice in Australia, my sense of ambivalence about the nation remains" (McKenna 221). This formulation echoes the prominent novelist Kate Grenville, who in her paratextual reflection "Unsettling the Settler", which complemented the publication of her extremely popular novel *The Secret River*, outlines her personal journey to belonging in Australia: "There's no doubt, I think, that non-indigenous Australians can and do 'belong' here. But I think that belonging has to be, in a way, earned. Part of the earning is the acknowledgement that it isn't our place" (Grenville n.pag.). I would argue that here McKenna and Grenville attempt to voice what Read fails to voice – that is, in the words of Moreton-Robinson, that

in the context of Australian postcolonizing relations, the power relations are themselves based on the denial of original dispossession. It is the foundation of the nation and its structures. Likewise it is the denial of original (and continuing) dispossession that forms the foundations for Read's belief that his personal sense of belonging is based on an equal partnership with Indigenous people. There can be no equal partnership while there is illegal dispossession. (Moreton-Robinson 27)

Conclusion

So how should Read's and McKenna's attempts to capture the sense of settler belonging through their professional as well as personal engagement with Australian spatial histories be interpreted? Read certainly performs a good attempt to locate and identify the source of his own anxieties regarding belonging. However, in spite of creating an impression that his book *Belonging* is meant to outline both his personal journey and a dialogue with a wide variety of Australian voices which Read listens to and then represents (speaking, as if, *for* Australians), his narrative remains, nevertheless, fairly monologic: after all, Dennis Foley, his "shadow

brother," is not offered any significant space in Read's memoir, as opposed to Read's non-Indigenous interviewees who are, at least partially, given voice in the form of transcribed fragments from their interviews. McKenna, while remaining more cautious and ambivalent in his articulation of settler belonging, also, in the end, feels "connected" to the place where "the corroborees took place" (McKenna 228) but only through his knowledge of the local history. This 'connection' is also textually visible through a minor shift in the vocabulary they both subscribe to. The shift is foreshadowed by Whitlock who comments on the rise of the intellectual memoir in settler societies, claiming that "a new era of morality emerged across post-colonial landscapes in the 1990s, associated with self-examination, both individual and national, and a willingness to embrace guilt in the interests of building an interpretation of the past that all parties can share" (Whitlock 2004a: 240). Whitlock's use of the term "share", which can be understood, in phrases such as 'sharing the past,' 'sharing the country', as the 21st-century substitution for the term 'reconciliation', is indeed a leitmotif in both Read's and McKenna's narratives. Read insists on "sharing the country" and bringing both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people together (Read 223). McKenna uses the terms 'reconciliation' (6) and 'sharing' (11) as synonyms in more than one case. Yet again, the concept of sharing is proposed here only in one direction – for Indigenous people, 'sharing' may, and often does, take on very different meanings. So in this intellectual loop, while Read and McKenna parade their feelings of anxiety, unease and guilt at the beginning (and in McKenna's case also at the end) of their intellectual memoirs, in the end they remain, to use Ken Gelder's phrase, "national historians" and "nation-builders" (Gelder n.pag.), who want to create and 'share,' however one-sidedly, a revised national narrative, a new fantasy of settler Australians which is based on recognition of Indigenous dispossession, on knowing and understanding the unsettling aspects of Australian history, but freeing themselves from the burden of the white settler guilt. This is an aspect of both texts that can be read as potentially indicating a paradigmatic shift in writing about settler belonging from the perspective of a liberal humanist subject, a step towards 'mature

belonging'. On the other hand, however, while both texts do attempt to re-define settler belonging and envision new forms that would transcend the simple appropriation of Indigeneity, the close reading shows that in the end they rely on familiar tropes of reconciliation and 'moving on'. This becomes more obvious when compared to other narratives by non-Indigenous authors which address the "wounded spaces and the psychic legacies of frontier violence" (Schaffer 150). In this comparison, Read's and McKenna's narratives come across as surprisingly rigid, conservative and ... *masculine*. Indeed, they are shaped by gender as well as the discipline – it does matter that they are written by male historians who have significant power to intervene in public space and address large audiences. When juxtaposing them to the women's historiographic writing and intellectual memoirs, for example the collaborative writing of Aboriginal historian Jackie Huggins with Kay Saunders, or Somerville's and Schlunke's experimental/ficto-critical writing, it becomes clear that there is a wide range of narratives on settler belonging which offer a more ambivalent, unresolved and less pleasing mode of writing, one that will always find only a fraction of Read's and McKenna's audience but which exposes radically different ways of both physical and textual belonging.

Works Cited

- Bird Rose, Deborah, 2004. *Reports from a Wild Country: Ethics for Decolonization*. Sydney: University of New South Wales Press.
- Brewster, Anne, 2005. "Writing Whiteness: The Personal Turn". *Australian Humanities Review*, 35, n.pag. Web. Nov 7, 2015. <<http://www.australianhumanitiesreview.org/archive/Issue-June-2005/brewster.html>>
- Carter, Paul, 2010 [1987]. *The Road to Botany Bay: An Exploration of Landscape and History*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Castejon, Vanessa, and Anna Cole, Oliver Haag, Karen Hughes, eds., 2014. *Ngapartji Ngapartji: In Turn, In Turn: Ego-histoire, Europe and Indigenous Australia*. Canberra: ANU Press.
- Gelder, Ken, 2000. "The Imaginary Eco-(Pre-)Historian: Peter Read's *Belonging* as a Postcolonial 'Symptom'", *Australian Humanities Review*, 19, n.pag. Web. Nov 7, 2015. <<http://www.australianhumanitiesreview.org/archive/Issue-September-2000/gelder.html>>

- Gelder, Ken, and Jane M. Jacobs, 1998. *Uncanny Australia. Sacredness and Identity in a Postcolonial Nation*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press.
- Grenville, Kate, 2006. "Unsettling the Settler". Lecture in the Australian Psychoanalytic Society's Annual Conference. *Kate Grenville – Official Website*. Web. Nov 7, 2015. <<http://kategrenville.com/node/73>>
- Grenville, Kate, 2005. *The Secret River*. Melbourne: Text Publishing.
- Griffiths, Tom, 1998. "A Haunted Country?" *Land and Identity: Proceedings of the Association for the Study of Australian Literature Conference in 1997*. ASAL, 1-12.
- Jones, Gail, 2004. "Sorry-In-The-Sky: Empathetic Unsettlement, Mourning, and the Stolen Generations", in: Judith Ryan and Chris Wallace, eds., *Imagining Australia: Literature and Culture in the New New World*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 159-171.
- Kierkegaard, Søren, 1946 [1849]. *The Sickness Unto Death*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Langton, Marcia, 2006. "Out from the Shadows". *Meanjin*, 65(1), 55-64.
- McKenna, Mark, 2002. *Looking for Blackfellas' Point: An Australian History of Place*. Sydney: University of New South Wales Press.
- Miller, Linn, 2003. "Belonging to Country – A Philosophical Anthropology", in: Kelly McWilliam, Peta Stephenson, and Graham Thompson, eds., *Journal of Australian Studies: Voicing Dissent*. St Lucia: API Network and UQP, 215-258.
- Moreton-Robinson, Aileen, 2003. "I Still Call Australia Home: Indigenous Belonging and Place in a White Postcolonizing Society", in: Sara Ahmed, Anne-Marie Fortier Castaneda, and Mimi Sheller, eds., *Uprootings/Regroundings: Questions of Home and Migration*. New York: Berg Publishers, 23-40.
- Nora, Pierre, 1987. *Essais d'ego-histoire*. Paris: Gallimard.
- Passerini, Luisa, and Alexander C. T. Geppert, 2001. "Historians in Flux: The Concept, Task and Challenge of Ego-histoire", *Historein*, 3, 7-17.
- Popkin, Jeremy D., 2007. "Ego-histoire Down Under", *Australian Historical Studies*, 38(129), 106-23.
- Popkin, Jeremy D., 1996. "Ego-Histoire and Beyond: Contemporary French Historian-Autobiographers", *French Historical Studies*, 19(4), 1139-1167.
- Probyn, Fiona, 2002. "How Does the Settler Belong?", *Westerly*, 47, 75-95.
- Read, Peter, 2000. *Belonging: Australians, Place and Aboriginal Ownership*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Reynolds, Henry, 1999. *Why Weren't We Told?: A Personal Search for the Truth About Our History*. Cobarwell: Penguin.
- Rolls, Mitchell, 1999. "The Making of 'Our' Place", *Antithesis*, 10, 117-133.
- Rudd, Kevin, 2008. "Apology to Australia's Indigenous People". *Parliamentary Debates*. Nov 24, 2015. <http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/genpdf/chamber/hansardr/2008-02-13/0003/hansard_frag.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf>

- Schaffer, Kay, 2014. "Wounded Spaces/Geographies of Connectivity: Stephen Muecke's *No Road (bitumen all the way)*, Margaret Somerville's *Body/Landscape Journals*, and Katrina Schlunke's *Bluff Rock: Autobiography of a Massacre*", in: Beate Neumeier and Kay Schaffer, eds., *Decolonizing the Landscape: Indigenous Cultures in Australia*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 149-168.
- Scott, Kim, 2005. "Guides and Explorers: Australia's Cultural Identity Now", *New Literature Review*, 44, 15-31.
- Slater, Lisa, 2013. "Anxious Settler Belonging: Actualizing the Potential for Making Resilient Postcolonial Subjects", *M/C Journal*, 16(5), n.pag. Web. Nov 7, 2015.
<http://journal.media-culture.org.au/index.php/mcjournal/article/viewArticle/705>
- "Sorry again the hardest word to stolen generation". *Sydney Morning Herald*. May 24, 2007. Nov 24, 2015.
<<http://www.smh.com.au/news/national/sorry-again-the-hardest-word-to-stolen-generation/2007/05/24/1179601573467.html>>
- Westcott, Robyn, 2004. "Witnessing Whiteness: Articulating Race and the 'Politics of Style'", *Borderlands*, 3(2), n.pag. Web. Nov 7, 2015.
<http://www.borderlands.net.au/vol3no2_2004/westcott_witnessing.htm>
- Whitlock, Gillian, 2004a. "Becoming Migloo", in: David Carter, ed., *The Ideas Market*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 236-258.
- Whitlock, Gillian, 2004b. "Consuming Passions: Reconciliation in Women's Intellectual Memoir", *Tulsa Studies in Woman's Literature*, 23(1), 13-28.

Oliver Haag

Translating a Genre

A Comparative Analysis of the Popularity of Indigenous Australian Autobiographies in Australia and Germany

The autobiography is one of the genres in which Indigenous Australian writers seem to have published most frequently between the 1980s and mid 2000s. According to the statistical survey *To Tell My Story* (Cooper et al.), the genre of family history, which includes autobiography, ranks among the most frequently published genres of Indigenous literature¹, followed by poetry, short story, and report writing (11). The autobiography has indeed experienced a tremendous increase in publication over the last three decades; with well over 170 books produced until 2007 (Haag 2008), it appears that the autobiography has become almost synonymous with Indigenous Australian literature of the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s.

However, the autobiographic genre does not always have this popularity. In German translations of Indigenous Australian literature, the autobiography is far less popular and less frequently published than in Australia itself (Haag 2009). Thus, in terms of genre, the German translations do not mirror the trend in Australia. Does this pattern suggest that the frequency of publication and the popularity of particular genres reflect national and/or local, rather than global, phenomena?

This study focuses on the reasons for the proliferation of the autobiographic genre in Indigenous Australian literature and its relative unpopularity in German translations of Indigenous Australian books. Drawing on the theoretical premise of translations being in

¹ In accordance with Indigenous self-designations, by 'Indigenous autobiographies' here, I mean books that are either co-authored or authored by Indigenous persons. See Heiss' *Dhuuluu-Yala* (26) for self-definitions of Indigenous literature. In accordance with the usage in Australia, the term 'Indigenous' is capitalised throughout this article. By 'Indigenous' here, I mean both 'Aboriginal' and 'Torres Strait Islander' Australians.

need do be domesticated to a target culture (Venuti 468), it investigates the causes behind these differences.

The Reasons for the Proliferation – the Genre

Much of the popularity of the Indigenous Australian autobiography, I argue, has to do with the genre itself. Autobiography is a genre that is closely tied to history. It is close to what is often considered history, loosely defined, a non-fictional account of past happenings. Imparting history seems to be a vital motivation for many Indigenous authors to opt for the (non-fictional) genre of autobiography. This motivation becomes evident in two ways: first, through outright declarations in the texts themselves, and second, through the motivations of the authors. As for the textual declarations, to highlight but a few examples, Rita and Jackie Huggins emphasize that “[t]he writing of this book was an attempt to reclaim the history of our people” (4). Alice Nannup elucidates at the end of her story that “[y]ou won't find anything about the hell we went through in history books, but it happened, every little bit of it is true” (1996: 218). *My Bundjalung People* (1994) is not defined as “an academic work. It is not a remote observation of a people. This is an Aboriginal history as experienced by many, many Aboriginal people” (Langford Ginibi, xii-xiii). Iris Lovett-Gardiner outlines that “[t]hese stories are about places that I've been to and about my own experiences ... These stories are only in my time. I knew about these places in the past. All histories are a personal history” (4).

As these representative examples elucidate, authors stress the historical value of their stories as well as the distinct truthfulness inherent in their histories. Autobiographies are seen as different from academic versions of history in that they are based on personally experienced knowledge (witnessing). Autobiographies are, furthermore, supposed to raise feelings and emotions in the reader, as opposed to the detached intellectualism of academic texts.

As for the authors' motivations, the significance of history in Indigenous autobiography is also evident in the authors' desire to communicate specific historical and political themes to the audience. I conducted 22 qualitative in-depth interviews with writers and editors engaged in the production of Indigenous Australian autobiographies.² The interview question "What should readers get out of your book?" helps elucidate some of the motivations of Indigenous authors in writing autobiographies.

In response to this question, Melissa Lucashenko, author of a semi-fictional autobiographic work, reveals her expectation that her non-Indigenous readers will acknowledge the survival of Indigenous cultures as well as ponder their own (lack of) knowledge of Indigenous peoples:

I suppose for white readers two things mainly. One is that Aboriginal culture is alive, not dead. And the second thing is that they know very little about Aboriginal culture. I want to illuminate people's ignorance. I want them to reach an understanding that there is a culture or set of cultures in Australia that they don't know about and that they aren't expert about.

Frances Peters-Little wishes to raise emotions and, indirectly, influence the ways of knowing about Indigenous Australians:

I don't want people to read anything that I write just for the purposes of exercising their knowledge about Aborigines, but when they read what I write, that they feel something and are moved by the story and say, 'yes, now I understand; not about Aborigines but, yes, I understand more about what I think about Aborigines'.

Gillian Cowlshaw, co-author of an Indigenous autobiography, wishes to accentuate Indigenous agency and, thus, influence the present discourse on interracial history:

² In 2004, I conducted 22 interviews with Indigenous and non-Indigenous authors and scholars concerning Indigenous Australian autobiography. The quoted interviews are excerpts of those 22 interviews. For a selection of the full transcripts, see Haag 2004.

The fact that [the main protagonist] stood up to these officials and battled with them, that's one thing I'd like people to take from the story. Because I think a lot of the way historians have been writing, or at least the way their histories are coming into the public domain, is just this awful oppressive stuff, with no sense of how people fought back and engaged with their conditions.

Jackie Huggins seeks to preserve her mother's biography within the wider historical framework of cultural survival:

[My Mother] had the story of a twentieth century Indigenous woman from Australia who had lived through these horrible times, who had come through it as a great survivor. And the resilience of spirit that every other Aboriginal woman in this country shared needed to be emulated through her story.

Despite the differences in the answers provided, a common thread is the desire not only to communicate an individual life story, but also to rewrite the images and narratives in the discourse of Indigenous Australians. There is a desire to present a revised account of history from an Indigenous viewpoint and to 'confront' readers with history. This 'confrontation' is not merely about presenting different facts (as seen from Indigenous perspectives) but also, or perhaps even more so, about leading the reader to reconsider her- or himself as a subject of history. This goal is evident in the authors' references to the reader's acknowledgment of survival (in contrast to racial oppression) and the power dynamic in his or her own knowledge of Indigenous Australians. The re-narration of the past is thereby seen as a central mechanism of imparting historical agency and Indigenous sovereignty. The autobiographic genre is apparently an appropriate form to convey such history and is indeed considered the most widespread form of Indigenous historical writing (e.g., Brock 211; McGrath 373).

Lyndall Ryan has described some of the characteristics of (published) Indigenous Australian history, including the motivation

to testify to Indigenous survival, the distinctive forms of Indigenous style and humour, the absence of bitterness, the centrality of the author, and the belief that the historian is a part of the history (56-57). This form of history is based on the memories of personal experiences over many generations, and thus relates to wider historical and cultural contexts encompassing the family and community. As Isabel McBryde remarks, “[t]o Aboriginal people, a history that is grounded in personal and family histories or accounts of familiar territory (country) has primacy” (12). Indigenous history is derived from both an autobiographical and a local background, with personal experiences forming the basis of historical accounts. The very nature of the autobiographic genre enables the expression of personal histories in which the author is the central protagonist of the story.

The Indigenous autobiography is defined by a discourse that identifies it not only as a form of life writing, but also as history and a means of re-writing Australian history. The autobiography is a genre that is seen as ideal for imparting such histories. The similarities between the genres of autobiography and history create the possibility of re-connecting with the past, re-telling history, and especially conveying the family history (e.g., Sareen 283; McGrath 374). Moreover, the primarily self-referential nature of the autobiography maintains Indigenous truths and ethical obligations not to narrate ‘foreign’—that is, not personally experienced—knowledge (Watson; Muecke 95). The sense of veracity inherent in non-fiction genres is read as adequate to support the truth of the story (McDonell 60). Although truth is not part of the literary definition of autobiography, which is usually defined as a text in which the names of the author, the narrator, and the protagonist are identical (Lejeune 26; Klüger 407-408), some scholars have indeed suggested that Indigenous authors favour the autobiography because the assumption of truth enables the communication of historical experiences (e.g., Westphalen 2002, 96; Watson 125-126, 193-194). In a similar fashion, Sonja Kurtzer surmises that white Australian audiences perceive the Indigenous autobiography as being much more threatening to ‘their’ history than fiction or poetry

(187). These very characteristics, typical of non-fiction, render the autobiography an appropriate genre for Indigenous (counter) history.

Another reason for the proliferation of the Indigenous autobiography lies in the collaborative production processes of Indigenous life writings, which applies in particular to the earlier publications of the 1970s and 1980s (e.g., Rowse; Shaw). These collaborations between Indigenous story-tellers and usually non-Indigenous editors and transcribers constitute 38% of the body of published Indigenous autobiography (Haag 2008: 8). The autobiography is an appropriate genre for publishing such 'as-told-to-stories,' as it is less constrained by literary techniques (and thus editorial influences) than the novel or poetry, and so enables a more direct expression of oral narratives.

The Reasons for the Proliferation—the Australian Publishing Industry

From the perspective of many Indigenous authors, the autobiography is a proper format for oral-based literature, for it is a genre that is distinguished by immediate and non-literary modes of narration, as well as constructs of truth and concepts of history-telling that are heavily influenced by once predominantly oral cultures. This in particular is the case with writings published during the 1970s and early 2000s when Indigenous writing was characterized by less literary and fictional styles. These—what I term genre-intrinsic reasons for the proliferation of the Indigenous autobiography—also coincided with a broader demand for Indigenous (autobiographic) histories that first emerged in Australia in the late 1960s.³ This interest evolved concurrently with the increasing

³ It is worth considering that the increase in publication of the autobiographic genre also applies to non-Indigenous Australian literature. According to Nielsen book scan figures and other sources, the biography (autobiography included) is among the top-selling and hence most popular literary genres in the Australian market (Zwar; McCooey). However, there are also many differences in the

erosion of what social-anthropologist W.E.H. Stanner in 1968 famously called the 'Great Australian Silence', that is, the long-practiced neglect of Indigenous history by Australian historians (25).

Many factors supported this erosion, including the influences of the emerging national Indigenous protest movements within Australia and the demise of the policy of assimilation (e.g., Hemming 21-22; Reynolds 4-5). These events, certainly instigated by the global social upheavals of the time, have rendered Indigenous Australians increasingly visible to a national audience. Indigenous people entered into a broader non-scholarly and non-bureaucratic consciousness, and thus aroused widespread interest. In addition, since the 1960s numerous Australian historians, who are dubbed 'revisionists,' have focused their scholarly works on interracial Australian history (Attwood 137). The rise in published Indigenous autobiographies was thus not merely an isolated phenomenon, but rather was part of a larger pattern of demand for an interracial and/or Indigenous Australian history. The subsequently published Indigenous autobiographies, I argue, complemented these academic studies with seemingly authentic, first-hand accounts by those who had lived through this long-neglected past. In an interview, Linda Westphalen, a non-Indigenous Australian author of a doctoral thesis on Indigenous women's autobiographies, describes her personal yearning for authentic Indigenous autobiographic histories:

I think, historically, we felt like we've been lied to. I did. I felt like I'd been lied to. Here was this past that we were taught in the schools that was passed off as being the truth about the past. Then Sally Morgan's book appears and then Auntie Ruby Langford Ginibi's book appears and it's not what I knew. No one told me this. How come this has happened? What? I don't know! My parents were told so far as the Stolen Generations were concerned, when they were growing up, that these children were orphans and have no parents. And so that's challenged by an autobiography or a history that comes out and says, 'no, no, we had parents, we were taken from them'. (2004)

I discern a possible connection between the achievements of racial liberation spawned by global social upheavals of the time, the incoming policy of self-determination during the late 1960s and 1970s, and an increased visibility of Indigenous Australians in the public domain. Together, these factors provoked a general interest in Indigenous Australians, and hence an interest in Indigenous 'stories' in the Australian media. This emerging interest, I assert, has consequently inspired many Australian publishers to focus on Indigenous literature, especially on autobiographies.⁴ Publishers sensed this burgeoning demand and began to publish Indigenous autobiographies, a genre that has become the most representative of published Indigenous literature until the mid 2000s.

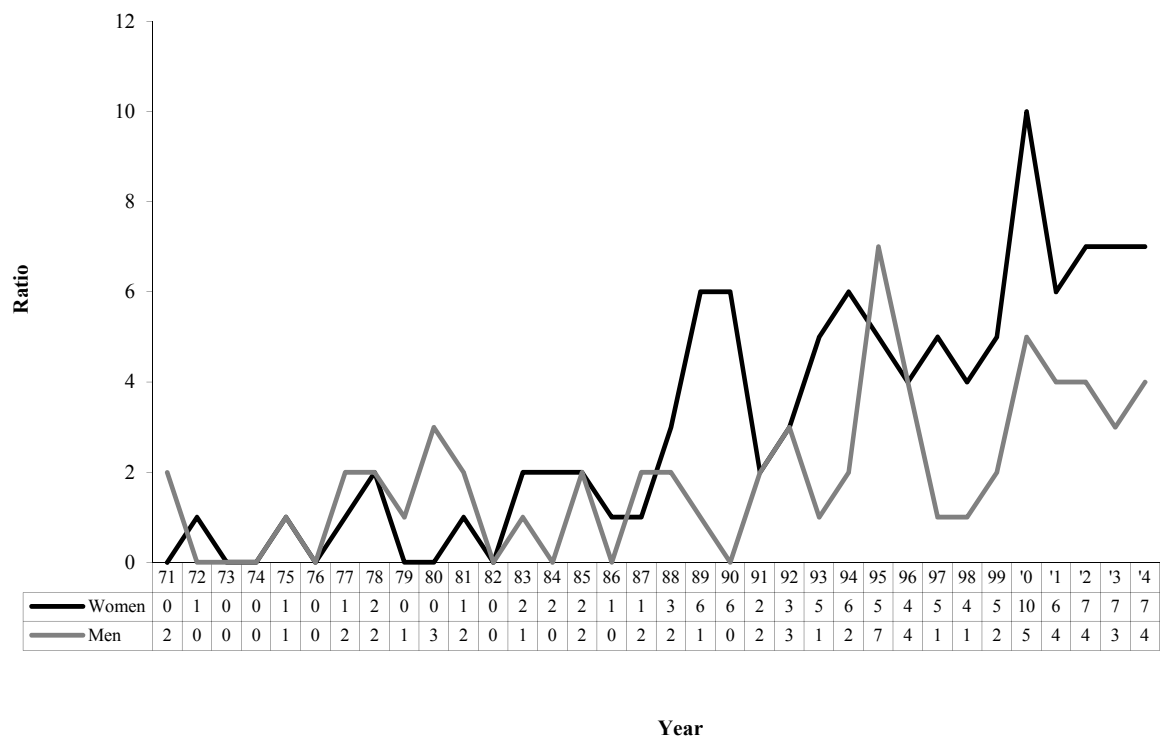
Elsewhere, I compiled a bibliography of published Indigenous Australian autobiographies. A total number of 177 books were published between the 1950s and the year 2004 (Haag 2008). A cursory look at subsequent publications revealed that this number has since exceeded 250 publications. As Figure 1 shows, there were several major peaks in the market coinciding largely with the heightened awareness of Indigenous people in the public domain. As discussed more fully below, this pertains especially to the years surrounding the Bicentenary of the non-Indigenous settlement in 1988, the Sydney Olympics in 2000, and the intense media coverage of several incidents relating to interracial Australian history in the early and mid 1990s. These incidents included a landmark court decision on Indigenous land rights in 1992 (the Mabo decision), the publication of the reports on 'Aboriginal Deaths in Custody' in 1991, and the release of the 'Bringing Them Home' report in 1996 that investigated the forcible abduction of Indigenous children from their families.

The bibliography reveals that while the first book-length Indigenous

⁴ It should be noted that (private and public) funding also played a vital role in the production and subsequent proliferation of Indigenous autobiographies. Significantly, there has been a perceptible increase in government funding of Indigenous literature and arts since the 1980s (Hoegh Gulberg 97), which has coincided with the emergence of a systematic pattern of publication of Indigenous autobiographies at the time.

Australian autobiography was published in the 1950s, David Unaipon's *My Life Story* (1951), the first period of a systematic (i.e., year-to-year) pattern of published Indigenous autobiographies did not emerge until the late 1970s.

Fig. 1. Published Indigenous Australian Autobiographies--Year Specific (1970s-2004)



As Figure 1 illustrates, the period surrounding the Bicentenary of the non-Indigenous settlement in 1988 and the mid 1990s witnessed significant increases in publication. It is possible to infer from the bibliographic data that the Indigenous (anti)-celebrations surrounding the pageants of the Bicentenary and the public debates in the course of the Stolen Generations did, for good or ill, generate a greater demand for Indigenous views of Australia's past, which in turn provoked the awareness of the mainstream publishing industry.

This bibliographic evaluation backs the hypothesis described above concerning the correlation between an increased visibility of Indigenous people, a greater demand for stories, and the publishers' interests in Indigenous autobiographies. Such a correlation has already been proposed by Adam Shoemaker in a comparison

between the rise in Indigenous Canadian and Australian literatures. Shoemaker contextualizes the proliferation of Indigenous literatures within a framework of broader socio-political incidents:

It is that major social upheavals involving Native people have been accompanied by an explosion in literary production. This happens for a wide variety of reasons: international media exposure, government funding for special projects, changing school syllabi, the readiness of publishers to test and develop markets, and, above all, the ever present talent of indigenous writers. The interplay of these factors is fascinating. They can be observed peaking in importance at various times since the early 1980s: in Australia during and following the Commonwealth Games of 1982 and the Bicentenary of 1988. (75)

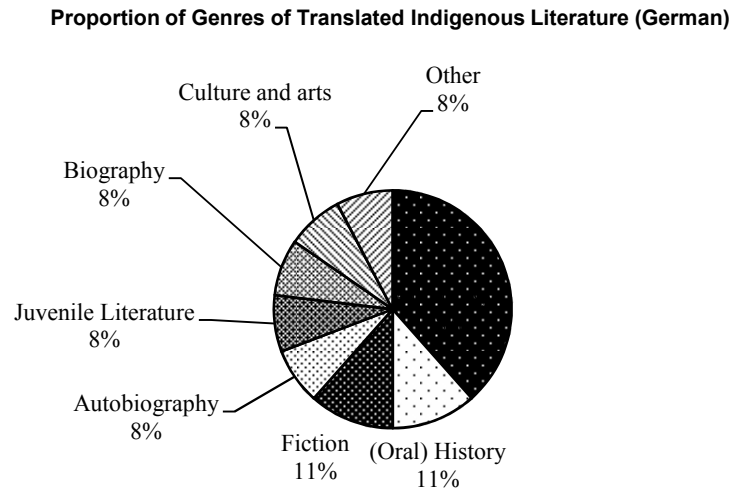
Indeed, particularly in the period immediately preceding the Bicentenary, (Indigenous) Australian autobiography became an increasingly popular genre (Korporaal 12-13). Another year of proliferation was, as Figure 1 demonstrates, in 2000 when the Olympic Games were held in Sydney. As Shoemaker surmises, there is indeed an obvious correlation between periods of specific socio-political and popular cultural relevance, such as national anniversaries, and the increase in publications. Publishers concentrated on these periods of a broader demand in Australia to produce Indigenous autobiographies.

Significantly, a scrutiny of the dustcover texts of published Indigenous autobiographies also reveals that Indigenous autobiographies were directly marketed as truthful and authentic histories: "Mabel Edmund's true-life stories begin with her happy childhood spent among Aborigines and freed slaves" (Edmund); "*Very Big Journey* provides an extraordinary insight into the modern history of indigenous Australia. It is a story of oppression, of injustice, of courage, and of achievement against all odds" (Jarman Muir); and, the blurb on the 2003 edition of Sally Morgan's *My Place* reads, "the sort of Australian history which hasn't been written before, and which we desperately need". Australian publishers have conceived of, and advertised, Indigenous autobiographies as historical, enlightening and authentic. The genre of the autobiography is a central vehicle in this very advertisement, for it

comes closest (among literary genres) to such claims of authentic history.

German Translations

Indigenous literature has drawn increasing interest not only within Australia, but also overseas, particularly in Germany⁵. As a result of another research project, I compiled a comprehensive bibliography of translated Indigenous Australian literature and conducted a statistical survey based on this bibliography (Haag 2009). Overall, between 1977 and 2008, 81 books were published in 17 continental languages. The European language into which the works were most frequently translated was German (32%), followed by French (19%), and Dutch (9%). German-speakers comprise the largest market for this literature within continental Europe. As the following figure shows, the genre of Indigenous literature that is most often translated into German is the anthology, followed by fiction and history.



Compared to the frequency with which the autobiographic genre is published within Australia, the Indigenous autobiography is far less popular in the German-speaking market. The German translations do not mirror the Australian trends in terms of the popularity of

⁵ Germany is by far the largest of all German-speaking markets for translated Indigenous Australian literature. As far as the involvement of translation presses is concerned, the markets in German-speaking Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, and Austria are numerically miniscule.

specific genres.

In some instances, the German translation presses have even marketed the original autobiographies as a different genre. For example, the German version of Sally Morgan's *My Place* (1987), *Ich hörte den Vogel rufen* (1991), was published with the genre-specific subtitle 'a novel' (German: 'ein Roman'). In contrast, the original version does not include a subtitle indicating a genre. Hence, while German publishers have published more translated Indigenous books than any other European press, and have thus shown the largest interest in this literature in continental Europe, this interest does not apply to the genre of autobiography.

As has been elaborated above, Indigenous Australian autobiographies are shaped by a discourse that identifies their historical value as well as their portrayal of a (counter-) historical perspective. This discourse has emerged within a specifically national context; it surfaced within Australia, where Indigenous voices had been sidelined and largely unheard by the broader community before the first nation-wide Indigenous protest movements and the final end to the policy of assimilation around the 1970s. The Australian interest in the Indigenous people has been influenced by a specifically national history. In contrast, this interest has not been moulded by such historical moments in German-speaking countries, but rather by romantic and exotic imaginings of Indigeneity that conceive of Indigenous people as traditional and close to nature, hence the term *Naturvolk* (lit. 'people of nature'; Erckenbrecht; Haag 2009; Hanstein). The exoticizing interest explains the large numbers of German translations in the genres of 'culture and arts' and 'anthology', the latter of which contains mostly mythological and what is called traditional stories. Together, these genres of Indigenous Australian literature constitute 45% of all works translated into German and, quite obviously, meet the spectrum of the interest in Indigenous cultures and literatures in German-speaking countries. There has not been a comparable desire in German-speaking countries to know more about the historical experiences of Indigenous Australians as has been the case within

Australia, for the Australian demand for these autobiographic stories has been unique and could not be translated easily into overseas contexts.

Furthermore, the Indigenous Australian autobiographies, in stark contrast to the body of fictional literature, have a very regional and local focus. This focus is partially a result of the Indigenous ethics of not speaking about unrelated people, which potentially prohibits the telling of another person's life story, especially someone to whom the narrator is not related. Another more obvious reason for the local focus is the perceptions of place and the telling of place, which are integral parts of Indigenous autobiographies. For example, the (re)connection with ancestral land is a common theme discernable in contemporary Indigenous autobiographies (e.g., Huggins and Huggins; Nannup et al.; Morgan 1987). Julie Finlayson remarks about authors of Indigenous Australian autobiographies: "What they do have is an ability to read the landscape as text wherein the stories of their own biographies are contained" (36). In this context, place can be comprehended as a text wherein social or collective memory is embedded, as the following extract from Ruby Langford Ginibi's *My Bundjalung People* (1994) illustrates:

The north coast of New South Wales is a sacred place for me because it is the tribal home of my people, the Bundjalung people. Through my experiences and what I have been taught by the elders I am now able to teach other people about the different areas and customs in the Bundjalung land. To begin with, the name Wollumbin means cloud catcher or weather maker in the Nganduwal dialect group. It is a very sacred place to the tribes of that area. Only initiated men could go there; it wasn't a woman's place. The wuyan-gali went there to hold their sacred ceremonies....

Here are the names of some of these sacred sites. Tooloom Falls or Dooloomi, which means "headlice". It is said that headlice abound in the deep pools beneath the falls. Nimbin Rock is another sacred area. Only initiated men could go there, and it was a very sacred place, where the wuyan-gali taught the initiates how to throw their spirits and to levitate. They had much power in the physical world and this area is well-guarded by the spirits even today. The name Nimbin comes from the name Nyumbunji, which is the name of a little spirit man who has great supernatural powers. Mount Lindesay, tribal name

Julbootherlgoom is the sacred home of the hairy men spirit. Julbootherlgoom is a lonely mountain in dense forest far from the cities. If you go there, be warned that Nimbunji may be angered if he is disturbed. (194, 196-197)

Knowing her place is, to the author, the essence of who she is: a Bundjalung elder, custodian of her lands and the past. Writing about that place is both a personal history (autobiography) and simultaneously a broader regional history. This history includes the (re)naming of country, the warning of restricted sites, the documentation of the Bundjalung language, spirituality, and, most importantly, the meaning of place. However, the scope of this autobiographic history is geographically narrow, rendering it difficult to market to international audiences, most of whom are probably completely unaware of New South Wales. The particular characteristics of Indigenous Australian autobiographies, especially locality and the focus on the family, make them difficult for translation and publication abroad. This difficulty is also emphasized in interviews with German editors and translators.

I interviewed three German translators, critics and editors of Indigenous literature, including those who had previously rejected submitted translations.⁶ One representative of a smaller publishing house directly stresses the difficulty in selling Indigenous autobiographies on account of their 'parochial' character:

I haven't read that many books by Aborigines yet. I know Sally Morgan and another writer because we once got a manuscript that was an autobiography. The main problem was that the subject was too limited to attract interest in readers. Nobody here is interested in what has happened in some small town on the other side of the world. And the book was just focussed on these narrow events; it didn't look beyond, so that readers could connect.

⁶ The interviews took place between 2009 and 2010. Upon request, the names of interviewees (employees with German publishers and freelance translators) have been rendered anonymous to protect their privacy. The interviews have been recorded in German; all translations from German into English are the author's.

When asked why the translation of a book that was originally published under the genre autobiography had been issued as a novel, a translator replied:

The dialogues suggest it is rather a novel than an autobiography ... how is it possible to remember so many dialogues? This is clearly not an autobiography. Readers wouldn't expect something like that from an autobiography. I think that's why it was called a novel. You have to know that many readers are well-acquainted with literary forms and styles; they know how a novel and an autobiography look like. So they might have asked, "what has been published here under the label of autobiography?" ... But I'd also say that it was the story rather than the genre why the publisher had been interested in publishing the book.

The translator believes that the dialogues in the Indigenous texts would render the Indigenous book not autobiographic, but rather fictional. Indeed, many Indigenous autobiographies do not meet the formal genre characteristics of the autobiography, especially in terms of what the respondent refers to as the 'dialogic structure,' a characteristic that stems from the oral heritage of Indigenous storytelling. However, in an Indigenous context the dialogue is not an indicator of truthfulness or fiction (Muecke 95); rather, it is a particular narrative technique. This culturally specific background was not considered by the press when issuing the book as a novel. Instead, the publisher tried to domesticate a genre and narrative technique that seemed unfamiliar, and adapted the original genre to a genre that was thought to be more familiar to their readers. The publishers' expectations of German-speaking readers reigned supreme. Another respondent further described these readers thus:

Many people are very interested in Aborigine culture, but they aren't interested in reading about a life story of an unknown person, living 20,000 kilometres away. They want to read more general things, about traditions and customs, and not when and where an author was born, how school was, and all that autobiographic stuff. This you only have with well-known personae, say, [Rigoberta] Menchu or Mandela and so on, but not with unknown persons.

This answer suggests that an author's publicity and locality have a bearing on the publication of an autobiography. From this, it is possible to infer that the publication of an Indigenous autobiography becomes increasingly difficult if locality and popularity are considered 'unfamiliar' and 'low' to German-speaking readers. The close relationship between author and story, so central within the Indigenous Australian context, seems to hinder rather than promote the publication of Indigenous Australian autobiographies in German-speaking countries.

Moreover, the exotic interest in Indigenous cultures and literatures in German-speaking countries appears to be directed towards culture and tradition rather than the personal life experiences of individuals. Says one respondent:

For many readers it is certainly new and interesting to read about legends, and living out in the desert, and stuff like that. Even if this is one-sided, I know that, it's a fact...We know that there is also a problem with racism in Australia, but I think few readers would be interested in reading a political story of an Aborigine. I don't know about any such person, though I'm sure there are those, but they are too far away from Europe. You know, not geographically, but they are not in our consciousness. This is different from America. And then with daily life experiences of ordinary people, oh my God, even less people would be interested in that. When you read about adventures in the outback and culture and all that, this is different from reading about an individual.

The mentioning of political issues, especially the 'problem of racism in Australia,' is worth discussing more fully. The respondent, well aware of racism in Australia, thinks this topic may be of less interest to German-speaking readers than racism in the United States. The reason for this supposition is the assumption of racism in America being more widely recognized in German-speaking countries than racism in Australia. Therefore, German-speaking readers are thought to be interested in 'adventure' and/or 'exotic' stories involving the desert. The use of the term 'outback' further corroborates the exotic interest surrounding Indigenous literature in German translation. This answer reveals how German-speaking readers of Indigenous

literature (autobiographies included) are believed to be primarily interested in cultural contexts that are severed from contemporary socio-political issues. Autobiographic accounts are not deemed appropriate to convey this repository of cultural knowledge, for they are thought to be too personal and individualistic. However, in actuality, Indigenous autobiographies can hardly be deemed 'individualistic' because they draw on family experiences and genealogy (Moreton-Robinson 1, 16; Jones 209-210). Thus, this attitude is informed by a narrow concept of the autobiography as a completely individualistic story without a broader societal value.⁷ The interest in a specific topic is linked to its level of familiarity, meaning that because Germans' socio-political knowledge of Australia is thin, autobiographies from this region are less likely to be published by German-speaking presses. This problem in particular applies to the genre of the autobiography because it is seen to be individualistic and local, without any autobiographies of globally renowned Indigenous Australians and political leaders.

Yet another factor rendering the publication of autobiographies abroad difficult is the lack of the momentum of national identity in translated works; in presenting the life stories of 'ordinary' as well as 'exceptional' members of the nation, the autobiography is a genre that easily lends itself to a re-imagination of national identity. Australians can read about other Australians—daily and ordinary heroes—and thus re-imagine and re-construct Australian identity. This momentum loses its significance once a book is produced and disseminated within another country. It makes little sense for German-speaking readers to identify with Australian authors as members of the same national community.

The Indigenous autobiography seems to be quite unattractive for German publishers. They have published very few Indigenous Australian autobiographies and sometimes pursued a strategy of translating and publishing Indigenous autobiographies under different genre designations, which, in their eyes, seem to be more

⁷ For a critique of the European, white, and androcentric understanding of autobiography, see, e.g., Anderson 86; Stanford-Friedman 34-36.

appealing to German-speaking readers, possibly due to the following reasons: Indigenous autobiographies do not meet the conventional criteria that define the autobiography but rather cross different genres, such as history and fiction; in the context of Indigenous Australia, German publishers do not deem the autobiography suitable for German-speaking readers, as their knowledge of Australia is limited; and the highly regional bias of Indigenous Australian autobiographies renders them difficult to engage overseas interest and marketing.

Conclusion

As I have argued in this article, the autobiography can be ideal for an oral-based literature that is becoming increasingly literal, allowing the author to 'translate' oral narrations into a literary genre. It is ideal both for authors and for publishers in a specific context—in this case, the national or local context of Australia in the 1980s, 1990s and early 2000s. At the same time, the autobiography can also be far less ideal, if not problematic, in a more global context, as is the case with German translations of Indigenous Australian books. While genre categories exert a considerable sway on publishing, the importance of particular genres differs, quite obviously, from region to region as well as from context to context.

Works Cited

- Anderson, Linda, 2001. *Autobiography*. London: Routledge.
- Attwood, Bain, 1989. *The Making of the Aborigines*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin.
- Brock, Peggy, 2004. "Skirmishes in Aboriginal History", *Aboriginal History*, 28, 207-225.
- Cooper, Judi et al., 2000. *To Tell My Story. A Study of Practising Professional Indigenous Writers of Australia. Research Report*. Sydney: Australia Council for the Arts.
- Cowlshaw, Gillian, 2004. Personal interview. 23 Sep. 2004.
- Edmund, Mabel, 1992. *No Regrets*. St Lucia: University of Queensland Press.
- Erckenbrecht, Corinna, 1999. "Bestseller über die australischen Aborigines—eine kritische Bestandsaufnahme aus ethnologischer Sicht", *Newsletter*, 13, 37-50.

- Finlayson, Julie, 1994. "Landscape As Text: Hegemonic Control and Manufacture of Readings of Meaning and Value", in: Sandy Blair, ed., *People's Places: Identifying and Assessing Social Value for Communities*. Canberra: The Commission, 35-37.
- Haag, Oliver, 2004. "Talking about Indigenous Auto/Biography and History. A Selection of Interviews Conducted in the Course of a Field Study in Australia". Vienna: University of Vienna Library.
- Haag, Oliver, 2008. "From the Margins to the Mainstream: Towards a History of Published Indigenous Australian Autobiographies and Biographies", in: Peter Read, Frances Peters-Little and Anna Haebich, eds., *Indigenous Biography and Autobiography*. Canberra: Australian National University Press, 5-28.
- Haag, Oliver, 2009. "Indigenous Australian Literature in German. Some Considerations on Reception, Publication and Translation," *Journal of the Association for the Study of Australian Literature*, Special Issue. 19 Nov. 2015
><http://192.102.239.53/openpublish/index.php/jasal/article/viewFile/853/1745><
- Hanstein, Brit-Susann, 2009. "Aboriginal Art-Selling out Aboriginal Culture: Yesterday, and Today?" 06 Nov. 2015
><http://www.eniar.org/news/art11.html><
- Healy, J.J., 1988. "The True Life in Our History': Aboriginal Literature in Australia", *Antipodes*, 2(2), 79-85.
- Heiss, Anita, 2003. *Dhuuluu-Yala. To Talk Straight. Publishing Indigenous Literature*. Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press.
- Hemming, Stephen, 2003. "Changing History: New Images of Aboriginal History", in: Colin Bourke and Bill Edwards, eds., *Aboriginal Australia. An Introductory Reader in Aboriginal Studies*. St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 16-37.
- Hoegh Gulberg, Hans, 1992. *Artburst! Growth in Arts Demand and Supply over Two Decades*. Redfern: Australia Council.
- Huggins, Jackie, 2004. Personal interview. 18 Aug. 2004.
- Huggins, Rita, and Jackie Huggins, 1996. *Auntie Rita*. Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press.
- Jarman Muir, Hilda, 2004. *Very Big Journey. My Life As I Remember It*. Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press.
- Jones, Jennifer, 2004. "Indigenous Life Stories", *Life Writing* 1(2), 209-218.
- Klüger, Ruth, 1996. "Zum Wahrheitsbegriff in der Autobiographie", in: Magdalene Heuser, ed., *Autobiographien von Frauen. Beiträge zu ihrer Geschichte*. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 405-410.
- Korporaal, Glenda, 1990. *Project Octopus. The Publishing and Distribution Ownership Structure in the Book Industry, in Australia and Internationally. Implications of the Changes for Australian Authors*. Redfern: Australian Society of Authors.
- Kurtzer, Sonja, 2003. "Wandering Girl: Who Defines 'Authenticity' in Aboriginal Literature?", in: Michele Grossman, ed., *Blacklines: Contemporary Critical Writing by Indigenous Australians*. Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 181-188.

- Langford Ginibi, Ruby, 1994. *My Bundjalung People*. St Lucia: University of Queensland Press.
- Langford Ginibi, Ruby, 2004. Personal interview. 18 Sep. 2004.
- Lejeune, Philippe, 1996. *Le pacte autobiographique*. Paris: Seuil.
- Lovett-Gardiner, Iris, 1997. *Lady of the Lake. Auntie Iris's Story*. Melbourne: Koorie Heritage Trust.
- Lucashenko, Melissa, 2004. Personal interview. 17 Aug. 2004
- McBryde, Isabel, 1996. "Perspectives of the Past: an Introduction", in: Valerie Chapman and Peter Read, eds., *Terrible Hard Biscuits. A Reader in Aboriginal History*. St Leonards: The Journal of Aboriginal History and Allen & Unwin, 1-15.
- McCooley, David, 2006. "Going Public. A Decade of Australian Autobiography", *Australian Book Review* 281(5), 25-31.
- McDonell, Margaret, 2005. "Locating the Text: Genre and Indigenous Australian Women's Life Writing", *Life Writing* 2(2), 55-74.
- McGrath, Ann, 1995. "Contested Ground: What is 'Aboriginal History'?", in: Ann McGrath, ed., *Contested Ground. Australian Aborigines under the British Crown*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 359-399.
- Moreton-Robinson, Aileen, 2002. *Talkin' Up To The White Woman. Indigenous Women and Feminism*. 2000. St Lucia: University of Queensland Press.
- Morgan, Sally, 1987. *My Place*. London: Virago-Time Warner Books.
- Morgan, Sally, 1991. *Ich hörte den Vogel rufen. Roman*. Trans. Gabriele Yin. Berlin: Orlanda Frauenverlag.
- Muecke, Stephen, 1983. "Ideology Re-iterated. The Uses of Aboriginal Oral Narrative", *Southern Review* 16(1), 86-101.
- Nannup, Alice et al., 1992. *When the Pelican Laughed*. Fremantle: Fremantle Arts Centre Press.
- Peters-Little, Frances, 2004. Personal interview. 12 Aug. 2004.
- Reynolds, Henry 1986. "The Breaking of the Great Australian Silence. Aborigines in Australian Historiography 1955-1983," in: Peter Quartermaine, ed., *Diversity Itself. Essays in Australian Arts and Culture*. Exeter: Exeter University Press, 39-50.
- Rowse, Tim, 2009. "Indigenous Autobiography in Australia and the United States", *Australian Humanities Review* 33. August-October (2004). 14.10.2015
><http://www.australianhumanitiesreview.org/archive/Issue-August-2004/rowse.html><.
- Ryan, Lyndall, 1986. "Reading Aboriginal Histories", *Meanjin*, 45(1), 49-57.
- Sareen, Santosh, 2003. "Aboriginal Identity and Representation: Ruby Langford's *Don't Take Your Love to Town*", in: Bruce Bennett et al., eds., *Resistance and Reconciliation. Writing in the Commonwealth*. Canberra: ACLALS in association with The School of Language, Literature and Communication, University of New South Wales at ADFA, 278-287.
- Shaw, Bruce, 1982-1983. "Writing Aboriginal History for the East Kimberley: Methodology and Themes", *Oral History Association of Australia Journal*, 5, 75-83.

- Shoemaker, Adam, 1995. "Does Paper Stay Put? The Politics of Indigenous Literature in Canada and Australia", in: Penny van Toorn and David English, eds., *Speaking Positions. Aboriginality, Gender and Ethnicity in Australian Cultural Studies*. Melbourne: Department of Humanities, Victoria, 73-89.
- Stanford-Friedman, Susan, 1988. "Women's Autobiographical Selves. Theory and Practice", in: Shari Benstock, ed., *The Private Self. Theory and Practice of Women's Autobiographical Writings*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 34-62.
- Stanner, W.E.H., 1968. *After the Dreaming*. Sydney: Australian Broadcasting Commission.
- Unaipon, David, 1951. *My Life Story*. Melbourne: Aborigines Friends Association.
- Venuti, Lawrence, 1995. *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation*. London, New York: Routledge.
- Watson, Christine, 2001. "'My Own Eyes Witness': Australian Aboriginal Women's Autobiographical Narratives." PhD thesis, University of Queensland.
- Westphalen, Linda, 2002. "Deadly Lives. Palimpsests in Aboriginal Women's Life-Histories". PhD thesis, Flinders University of South Australia.
- Westphalen, Linda, 2004. Personal interview. 09 Aug. 2004.
- Zwar, Jan, 2009. "Cultural Value and the Role of Books in Public Debate in Australia in 2004." Literature and Politics, Third Annual Conference of the Australasian Association for Literature. University of Sydney, Sydney, 7 July 2009.

Fiona Duthie

Life, Love and Art: Representations of the Artist in the Novels of Alex Miller

Love is like faith. It does you good to have it, but it usually has a
price to it.

Alex Miller, *Coal Creek*

In most Australian fictions of previous decades, romantic love is a glaring and deliberate absence. In 1981, Chris Wallace-Crabbe observed that “when we cast an eye back over our most significant works of fiction we find in the first place remarkably few treatments of passionate or romantic love” (2). Instead, we see “a capacity to stick on, bear up, bustle around and hold things together” (2). Relevant examples include Christina Stead, Katherine Susannah Pritchard and Miles Franklin. Christina Thompson argues in a similar vein, observing that though the Australian exploration narrative “is a romantic narrative . . . there is certainly little that looks like love.” Instead there is “desire protracted, fulfilment denied” and “success in the form of surrender or death” (163). Recent years, however, have seen a resurgence of interest in romantic love amongst several leading Australian authors as the valuable contributions of Peter Carey’s *The Chemistry of Tears* (2012), Kate Grenville’s *Sarah Thornhill* (2011) and Elliot Perlman’s *Seven Types of Ambiguity* (2003) can attest. This emerging trend signifies a new and gentler aspect of the Australian literary character that is less focussed on individual endurance and independent achievement and instead promotes collaborative effort. Alex Miller’s work pertaining to the subject of love is one of the most wide-ranging with regard to both culture and placement in time and space. As Brenda Walker observes, Miller approaches questions of love across a variety of cultural backgrounds and this “illuminates what is foundational in love while respecting diversity in the most intimate of human connections” (42). Miller’s vision and definition of romantic love in its ideal form can be derived from his aptly titled novel *Lovesong* (2009). The novel’s principal lovers, the Australian John Patternner

and his Tunisian wife Sabiha exist within a confluence of differences and thrive on a continual reciprocal learning process. Her Arabic remains alien to him as English presents difficulties for her and so they communicate in French. The two are inseparable but as John acknowledges to himself even years after their first meeting: "What strangers they really were to each other. Strangers to each other's language. To each other's childhood. Strangers to each other's tribe. He loved her helplessly" (192-193). There is a bond between them that runs deeper than cultural differences. Indeed, though never cloying, an atmosphere of warm good-natured humanity pervades much of the novel. It is towards love of this kind, this infrangible bond deepened by continual learning and acceptance of difference, that many of Miller's characters aspire. However, the romantic aspect of Miller's work is yet to receive extensive critical attention in an exemplary study. Miller's representations of love are widely various but a salient feature is his consistent conjoining of love and artistic expression. The aim of this article is to draw out Miller's dynamic force of love between life and art in the novels where it is most prevalent and to discuss his concept of this relationship according to the current state of research. It is a case study in which 'love' is defined as a profound affection or passion for another person which is often, but not always, accompanied by sexual attraction. 'Art' is defined as an expression of creativity in a painting, sketch or sculpture.

Though his treatment of love has been neglected, Miller's questioning of the divide between art and 'real' life, a divide which is often complex and unfixed, have generated significant critical interest. As Geordie Williamson observes, Miller has "spent the last twenty-five years pondering the relationship between art and life" (2012: 233). Robert Dixon has contributed an invaluable wealth of scholarship to this aspect of Miller's work which he contends is "one of the most sustained examples of ekphrasis (or writing about art) in Australian literature" (2012: 12). Dixon expounds at length upon Miller's depictions of the personal aspects of artistic creation such as "friendship" and "hospitality" (2014: xi), particularly the friendships entwined within artistic collaborations. Of equal importance,

however, is the role of romantic and familial love within and across the divide between art and life and the striving to find a point of balance between the two that occurs across the majority of Miller's novels. There is no instance of artistic aspiration that is not inextricably linked with the secrets of love and emotion. These themes appear in several of Miller's novels but are dominant in *The Sitters* (1995), *Prochownik's Dream* (2005) and most recently in *Autumn Laing* (2011). New love burgeons or wanes according to the fluctuations of artistic inspiration as children are nurtured or shunned. Several marriages are made or broken on the altar of art. Unless an artistic sympathy is established within the marriage, the artist's creative inspirations will invariably lead him or her to seek love and passion elsewhere. Furthermore, the technical aspects observable in each artist's oeuvre are mirrored in the nature of the protagonist's personal relationship. Thus Pat Donlon's competitive aspect incites Autumn Laing to compete with his wife for his affections. In *Prochownik's Dream*, Toni Powlett's collaborator in art is also his partner in an illicit love affair and Jessica Keal becomes as absent in life as she is in the principal portrait of *The Sitters*. In each of these novels, love potentially enables the artist to compromise and merge his or her artistic independence with the modern concept of collaboration. This theme will form the core of the analyses in this article. On a deeper level, as this article will further demonstrate, the desired compromise between fierce independence and loving collaboration is reminiscent of the need for a postcolonial nation that has established cultural independence, to form new political and cultural alliances with an ancestral country loved by a new generation of responsible-minded Australians. This analogy is progressively evident, it is complicated by Powlett's more complex heritage and it culminates in *Autumn Laing*.

To achieve compromise between love and art involves a struggle which few are able to overcome. Few couples are as fortunate as *Lovesong's* John and Sabiha. Love is presented as a form of art in itself and therefore while often beautiful, is rarely pure or perfect, open always to interpretation and is liable to be as destructive as it is creative. Though few fail entirely, the greatest artists, and those

with the potential to become great, are those who achieve a centre point between life, art and the gentler forms of love. *The Sitters*, *Prochownik's Dream* and *Autumn Laing* do not advocate the view that the creative individuality of an artist requires that he or she be as experimental and unrestricted in romance and marriage as in art, a view recently espoused as typical of many of the more romantically inclined artists in modern history (Bullen 16). Instead, while in the throes of romantic love, each artist turns to his or her family and cultural heritage, lovingly acknowledges its worth and collaborates with it.

The Sitters

The Sitters investigates the complex and ambiguous relationships that may form between an artist and the subject of his portrait. As the artist says: "It takes two to make a portrait. And one of them's always yourself" (40). Contrarily though, much of the novel is preoccupied by the dilemmas of solitude. Peter Pierce notes that "the inescapability of aloneness" is a common preoccupation across Miller's work (310) and indeed, the unnamed protagonist of *The Sitters* is, for the most part, a solitary man having been rejected by his father, estranged from his wife and son and having drifted from contact with a much loved sister. It has also been argued that the bereft characters in Miller's novels harness their solitariness to drive their artistic endeavours. Bernadette Brennan writes of "the creative power of loss" (107) in *The Sitters* and argues that "death is represented through the unsaid, the absent" (103). Certainly, as the narrator muses: "We paint portraits from our alienation from people. It's nostalgia for company we don't have and can't have. Absence and loss" (110). However, the advent of Jessica Keal into the life of the protagonist heralds a renewal of creative effort clearly demonstrating that love or even the beginnings of an attraction that will never come to fruition are equally powerful agents in the creative process. The narrator, who is commissioned to make a series of sketches featuring the staff at a nearby university, offers to paint Jessica's portrait as a private project. As she sits for him, confidences are exchanged and childhoods are revisited. In the

process, the artist learns more of himself than he does of his subject. Nevertheless, an unspoken bond forms between them, both wanted and mistrusted, which will resonate in the memories of the artist for many years to come. As Veronica Brady cogently argues:

It points us to the real subject, a ceremonious introspection, at once profoundly intimate and yet paradoxically impersonal, as the artist pursues her in himself and himself in her through the labyrinthine ways of memory as well as of the unfolding of ambiguous relationships. (43)

Despite numerous preliminary sketches, when the portrait is complete, the figure of Jessica is missing. It seems that the artist's incipient and partially suppressed love for Jessica, while providing the inspiration and the motivation for the work, renders him incapable of representing the object of his love in art. Though his urge is to continue his partnership with her by including her in the painting, the artist cannot compromise. Rather than balancing his technical skill with his burgeoning tenderness he is silently overwhelmed by a love he never communicates and, as a result, he cannot complete the painting that may have been his greatest work. For him, love is accompanied always by the knowledge of pending loss and therefore, he creates a study of Jessica's "absence" (107). Love, as well as what Brennan intuits as death and loss, is represented through the absent in this novel. At some level, Jessica seems to understand and shortly afterwards, artist and muse part for many years. The absence in art becomes an absence in life with love as the proximate cause.

Earlier Australian authors have explored the division between art and life and the interconnectedness of artistic pursuit and the personal lives of the artists. Perhaps most notably, in Patrick White's *The Vivisector* (1970), Hurtle Duffield's paintings make manifest the agonies and imperfections of others as cruelly and for as little purpose as the vivisectionists in the novel eviscerate animals for public display. As Duffield's adoptive mother cries despairingly: "You were born with a knife . . . in your eye" (146). Similarly, in David Malouf's *Harland's Half Acre* (1984), a hermetic but not unfeeling

artist creates scenes of “traffic accidents, small wars, marriages, deaths, perverse gropings and slashings and assaults” (189) and thereby reveals his incomprehension of the suffering he conveys. Harland is neither insensate nor unaffected by the tragedies marring his own life, many of which inspire his paintings but he is incapable of incorporating such feeling into his painting. From the first, he is aware of this lack and declares: “People do suffer, it’s terrible. Only it’s not all . . . we were meant to be happy” (83). Similarly, the artist in *The Sitters* has a history of creating unconventional and deliberately disturbing portraits. Following the sudden death of a close friend, he captures “the likeness of a dead man” (61) to the consternation of the man’s family. Similarly, despite her absence in the original picture, the painter will eventually portray Jessica in art. Years later, as Jessica lies dying, “crippled in mind and body” (129), her portrait is painted. Where before the artist painted Jessica’s absence in fear of collaborating with her presence, now he captures her in death as he feared to depict her in life. The first portrait of Jessica is technically accomplished but bereft of obvious feeling and the second is equally suggestive of cowardice. Like the paintings of White’s Duffield and Malouf’s Harland, this work is clinical. This approach to art was briefly explored and derided in Miller’s *Lovesong*. The narrator’s wife, Marie, both as a social worker and as an artist, scorns “professional detachment” arguing that “it’s just a way of refusing to feel” (110).

Despite his troubled history, the protagonist’s path towards enlightenment as an artist has not yet ended. The family life the artist endured in England before departing to his Australian wife and son was disjointed and often acidic. His earliest memories are tainted by a father suffering the ravages of war trauma. He must nonetheless affirm and consolidate his intrinsic connection to it and his latent love for his English family before he can build upon his Australian loves and connections. At the beginning of the novel, he is incapable of painting portraits of family members and acknowledges it as a terrible shortcoming:

This blindness with regard to my intimates always struck me as a severe limitation of my vision, a real handicap, and even as

something that might finally cripple me and invalidate altogether my entire work as a painter of portraits. (8)

Ultimately, he is able to attempt likenesses of some of his relatives on canvas but, true to his usual form, only of those who are dead, namely his father and sister. Only in this way can he attempt reconciliation with them. Sadly, this old man is unlikely to rise to the challenges he has set himself. This is an artist of extremes whose activities on canvas reflect precisely the turmoil in his heart. He is unlikely ever to achieve resolution or balance in either and consequently, his art will remain punctuated by absence and loss. However, that he becomes an artist of note is not to be gainsaid. Even when the journey remains incomplete, art that has been touched by love retains its own resonance.

Prochownik's Dream

In contrast to the secluded atmosphere of *The Sitters*, *Prochownik's Dream* is a novel deeply immersed in family life. The novel centres on the artist Toni Powlett and Teresa, his volatile and fiercely maternal wife. Procreation is to Teresa what artistic creation is to Toni. Family pervades every aspect of Teresa's world: "Everyone needs a family" (189). Toni's home is, at least at first, peaceful and contented. However, Toni has been suffering a dearth of artistic inspiration since the death of his father. He has been reduced to constructing installations in memory of him and is otherwise content simply to assist in the home and to care for Nada, his little daughter. Always though, Toni yearns to reconnect with something beyond his newly established family and he turns to its antecedents. Artistic inspiration returns abruptly and simultaneously with the return of former instructors and fellow artists Marina Golding and Robert Schwarz to the district. Spurred also by the promise of inclusion in his friends' exhibition, Toni is motivated to paint not only Marina but also her entire family; his "Other Family" as the portrait is titled.

Miller's artists are unable to work productively in isolation. Marina is vociferous on the subject: "We're all collaborators. All of us. None of us does this completely on our own" (156). Like John and Sabiha,

Toni and Marina advance together. Marina poses for Toni, proffers advice and ultimately finishes the principal painting for him, a tremendous concession on the part of Toni, an artist accustomed to working alone. Marina becomes, in effect, Toni's muse (Ley). Collaboration in art swiftly becomes collaboration in love. Toni and Marina's artistic alliance is satisfactory to both and as Adrian Caesar observes, "the erotic consummation of Toni's relationship with Marina follows the artistic consummation" (111). For Toni, it is open to question whether this is an act of betrayal. It is as though he loves Marina in furtherance of his art and in a sphere entirely separate from his life with his wife and daughter. It is his wish at this moment to isolate his art entirely from his life:

Did he feel he had betrayed Teresa? He was not sure. Surely it had been something beyond those ordinary things, betrayal and trust, something belonging to another realm, to another dimension altogether. (239)

Nevertheless, an element of doubt remains. Marina's status as a former mentor also adds an oedipal aspect to Toni's dilemma. The protégé becomes intimate with the nurturer, raising the spectres of unnaturalness and sterility. For these reasons, the connection is transitory, but the seeds of Toni's inspiration have in fact been sown. He has absorbed the lessons bequeathed by his 'parents' in the world of Australian art. He must now make his peace with the legacy of his beloved Polish father whose injunction to "paint what you love" (236) resonates within him. Toni undergoes an introspection similar to that which was begun in *The Sitters*: he must find his father in himself and himself in his father. Toni now realises that as an artist he is "a stranger to himself" and so must paint a self-portrait to "satisfy his sense of his own moral worth" (224). As he gazes into his own reflection, he sees himself both narcissistically and objectively, thus distinguishing between his artistic persona and his practical perception of himself. At this juncture, Toni makes the decision to paint under the name Prochownik the name which his father feared to use in Australia. In the eyes of his father's former employers, the Prochowniks were refugees and not immigrants. The Polish were not 'parents' of Australian culture and therefore worthy

of at least a grudging respect. They were barely tolerated cuckoo brothers within the new Australian culture, easy to dislodge, dismiss and despise: "*Prochownik is not a name in Australia*" (226). In assuming the name Prochownik, Tony acknowledges "the deepest level of his identity" (Riemer). He experiences doubleness: it "was as if he had become two people" (226). He will continue to seek an identity which is neither Australian nor Polish but something broader, something new. Furthermore, Tony will live the dream of the elder Prochownik, to pursue a form of art destined to "give meaning to a man's life" (Modjeska 72).

As Miller wishes to demonstrate, life and art cannot be separated nor can they merge. They are interdependent and entwined by the dictates of the heart. Toni has progressed far further than the narrator of *The Sitters*. He is able to see, appreciate and capture in art the constantly fluctuating natures of his loved ones where his predecessor in *The Sitters* restricted himself to the passivity of form and feeling imposed by death. Toni has achieved the requisite compromise and duality of perception and is ready, now, to paint portraits of Teresa and Nada, a task he feared until this moment. Unlike the artist of *The Sitters*, Toni now has the courage to execute portraits of such intimacy, baring his new and affectionate interpretation of others.

Though Toni has found his way and his affair with Marina has been concluded, family life is as intrusive into the world of art as it is inspirational to it. While still in the throes of passion, Toni works on a painting of Marina in a state of undress which is masterly in technical terms and strikingly sensual. Teresa later discovers this painting and attempts to destroy it in a scene reminiscent of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. The artwork reveals the truth of Toni's relationship with Marina as Toni's living face and manner did not. Under Teresa's assault, the still wet paint becomes "slewed and creamed across Marina's likeness, streaked across her features and twisted into a vivid carmine and yellow candy spiral down her back" (281) but Toni acknowledges the change as another truth, another compromise to be made, and retains it. Just as Toni accepts the

irreparable marring of his painting so too does Teresa write eventually to Toni: "Our love is not as simple or as nice or as straightforward and perfect as I thought it was, but it is still real and it is still love" (296). Compromise invariably incurs loss. Within Miller's representations, collaboration between love and art may leave neither unscathed, yet both will be wiser for the merging.

Autumn Laing

The most recent of Miller's novels featuring artists explores love, or more specifically lust, in its most damaging form. *Autumn Laing* investigates the absolute, exclusive imperatives of sexual passion. Much of the novel is a fictional recreation of Sidney Nolan's affair with Sunday Reed. Sunday was Nolan's "muse, patron, lover, mentor, artistic collaborator and studio assistant" (Burke 186). However, as Miller has stated in his article, the "real" Reed and Nolan are not to be found in his novel (2011: 120). He is interested rather in the representation of "private intimacy", specifically the "absurd and irrational behaviours driven by the almost hallucinatory power of lust" (121), representations which may be wrought only through fiction. Nonetheless, despite significant differences in the lives and characters of Autumn and Sunday, Sunday's biographer, Janine Burke, discerns in her subject a capacity to love that was "demanding and possessive, even destructive in its imperiousness" (298), the same as that which may be found in Autumn.

The novel is narrated retrospectively by Autumn as she suffers the torments and debilitations of advanced age. As such, hers is the voice of wisdom in hindsight as she recounts the story of the young artist, Pat Donlon, whom she and her husband, as patrons of the arts, fatefully took under their wing. Her tale is in effect two love stories, one of constancy and stability and one of tempestuousness. Autumn's love for her husband Arthur, whom she loves simultaneously with Donlon, is gentle and tender, he is her "refuge" (20) and remarkably, he remains so despite the ricochets flung by Autumn's other, more passionate encounters. In contrast, from its inception, her relationship with Donlon is marked by violence and

envy, even “hatred” (361). The pair are ill matched; their passion is refracted towards Donlon’s art but it remains unfocused and ungovernable. As Autumn later acknowledges: “Love and art combined in Pat and me to make each of us greater than either of us had ever been or ever would be again. And neither he nor I understood it” (174). Similarly, though progressive and in truth at the avant-garde of a new era of Australian art, Autumn comes to realise that their philosophies of art are as limited as their understanding of each other: “Our view of life and art required a narrowing of everything to the single dimension of our own orthodoxies” (102). This narrowness is reflected in Donlon’s work. Autumn, Donlon and several of their compatriots are protagonists of modernism. However, Donlon’s striving for innovation and thereby the complete displacement of traditional art is viewed coldly even by his fellow artists. His creations, like his relationship with Autumn, are perceived as juvenile, vacuous and needlessly competitive. Unlike Miller’s ideal couple in *Lovesong*, Autumn and Pat will learn nothing from each other. There will be no maturation whether personal or professional. Similarly, Donlon resists the teachings of his artistic forebears. It is in Donlon that the underlying struggle for compromise between Australian and British values becomes overt and it is made clear that he is an unworthy combatant:

You’ve rejected the conventional training of the artist not from some high disciplined principle as you seem to claim . . . but from the commonplace need of youth to effect some kind of revolt against the elders. What you are doing is utterly traditional . . . You have nothing with which to replace what you’ve rejected. (301)

Donlon is portrayed as notorious and controversial rather than famous. Albeit commercially successful, his work is portrayed as lacking in important respects.

Donlon’s work is contrasted with that of his wife, Edith, whom Autumn once sought to displace having imbibed Donlon’s competitive spirit. Retrospectively however, Autumn acknowledges the fact that Edith possessed the makings “of the very few truly gifted women artists of her time” (118). Unlike her husband, Edith is

dismissive neither of traditionalism nor modernism. Her goal is to be "liberated from prejudice" (329). In this, she emulates her Scottish grandfather for whom the world of art was "large and generous and warm, embracing all the strong and good feelings of what it is to be human" (329). The old man aspires to the "cosmopolitan" (329). Love for her grandfather and for her Australian husband as well as her sense of calm amidst various perceptions of life combine to make her achievement the greater. However, Edith's artistic career is abruptly curtailed. Immediately upon discovering her husband's affair with Autumn, Edith flees with her unborn, unnamed daughter whom Donlon apparently never sees. Where Autumn fights to retain Donlon, Edith, though deeply hurt, will not engage in futile competition.

Throughout the descriptions of Edith's life, recurrent allusions are made to Guy de Maupassant's *A Woman's Life* (1883) which Edith is reading even as her own dramas unfold. The allusions invite the reader to compare and contrast Edith with Maupassant's heroine. Jeanne, a young French woman of the nineteenth century enters the novel as an innocent young girl brimming with hope for love and fulfilment. However, immediately upon her early marriage the "long, weary evenings and the dull monotonous days" (131) and then the unrelenting treacheries of her philandering husband soon reduce her to a state "almost indifferent" (136) to life. Edith has a greater resilience. She will find love again, she is in fact the only one of Miller's principal characters definitively to do so, and its comfort and permanence will salve the wounds rent by Donlon's betrayal. Sadly though, her creative urge dies with her first love. There is a poignant parallel between her life and Jeanne's. Jeanne remains unfulfilled because she is denied a partner in life. Similarly, circumstance robs Edith of a collaborator in art. At the last, she herself admits that if her friendship with Arthur had "matured" (435) both might have pursued their own artistic endeavours. An accord was evident between Arthur and Edith that lacked the brashness of Donlon's insularity. Edith remains no more or less than the artist with the greatest potential in the entirety of *Autumn Laing*.

In conclusion, love plays a consistently pivotal role in the complex interplay between art and life in the novels of Alex Miller. Many of the paintings intrinsic to the novels represent life as perceived by love. Love is examined in various forms. *The Sitters* investigates unconsummated love and the pain of absence, *Prochownik's Dream* is concerned principally with family while the life of Autumn Laing is dictated by the extremes of sexual energy. No form of love is idealised but its more destructive manifestations are censured. Though only Prochownik can ultimately be defined as successful, each artist is driven by love with its myriad complexities, obligations, tragedies and fulfilments, to find a point of balance with the uncertainties, torments and raptures of art. This occurs on two levels. Firstly, the artist must balance technique and individuality with the call to collaborate with a loved subject or fellow artist. Secondly, the issue of inheritance is entangled in the interplay between love and art, most often in the form of a philosophy of art that is inherited from a loved immigrant parent or grandparent. Across Miller's work, Australian artists are enjoined to produce work that is conglomerate, art that encapsulates the creative individuality of the artist within his or her Australian milieu but which also acknowledges with love the deeper cultural inspirations from which the work has germinated. In these ways, the 'ancient phenomenon' of love, and the often neglected relationship between love and art, is given a particular significance in the work of Alex Miller.

Works Cited

- Brady, Veronica, 1995. "A Portrait of Absence and Silence", *Australian Book Review*, 170, 43-44.
- Brennan, Bernadette, 2008. "Literature and the Intimate Space of Death", *Antipodes* 22(2), 103-115.
- Bullen, Daniel, 2011. *Love Lives of the Artists: Five Stories of Creative Intimacy*. New York: Counterpoint.
- Burke, Janine, 2004. *The Heart Garden: Sunday Reed and Heide*. Sydney: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Caesar, Adrian, 2012. "An Artist in the Family: Reconfigurations of Romantic Paradigms in *Prochownik's Dream*", in: Robert Dixon, ed., *The Novels of Alex Miller: An Introduction*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 101-113.
- Dixon, Robert, 2014. *Alex Miller: The Ruin of Time*. Sydney: Sydney University Press.

- Dixon, Robert, 2012. "Disestablished Worlds: An Introduction to the Novels of Alex Miller", in: Robert Dixon, ed., *The Novels of Alex Miller: An Introduction*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1-28.
- Ley, James, 19 Nov. 2005. Rev. of *Prochownik's Dream* by Alex Miller. *The Age*, retrieved 19 August 2013 from <http://www.theage.com.au/news/book-reviews/prochowniks-dream/2005/11/18/11320>
- Malouf, David, Reprint 1985. *Harland's Half Acre*. Ringwood. Melbourne: Penguin.
- Maupassant, Guy de. N.d. *A Woman's Life*. London: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Miller, Alex, 2011. *Autumn Laing*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin.
- Miller, Alex, 2011. "How I Came to Write Autumn Laing", *Meanjin* 70(4), 116-121.
- Miller, Alex, Reprint 2011. *The Sitters*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin.
- Miller, Alex, 2009. *Lovesong*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin.
- Miller, Alex, 2005. *Prochownik's Dream*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin.
- Modjeska, Drusilla, 2005-2006. "Betrayals of Faith: The Writings of Alex Miller", *The Monthly* 8, 71-73.
- Pierce, Peter, 2004. "The Solitariness of Alex Miller", *Australian Literary Studies*, 21(3), 299-311.
- Rierner, Andrew, 5 Nov. 2005. "Fidelity to Family and a Calling to Paint Collide in a New Novel About the Melbourne Art World. Rev. of *Prochownik's Dream* by Alex Miller. *The Sydney Morning Herald*, retrieved 19 August 2013 from <http://www.smh.com.au/news/book-reviews/prochowniks-dream/2005/11/03/113083>
- Thompson, Christina, 1987. "Romance Australia: Love in Australian Literature of Exploration", *Australian Literary Studies*, 13(2), 161-171.
- Walker, Brenda, 2012. "Alex Miller and Leo Tolstoy: Australian Storytelling in a European Tradition", in: Robert Dixon, ed., *The Novels of Alex Miller: An Introduction*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 42-54.
- Wallace-Crabbe, Chris, 1981. *Three Absences in Australian Writing*. Townsville, Queensland: Foundation for Australian Literary Studies, James Cook University of North Queensland.
- White, Patrick, Reprint 1994. *The Vivisector*. London: Vintage.
- Williamson, Geordie, 2012. "Bright Treasures of Deception: Writing Art and Painting Words in *Autumn Laing*", in: Robert Dixon, ed., *The Novels of Alex Miller: An Introduction*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 231-244.

FORSCHUNG IM ERGEBNIS / RESEARCH REPORT

Chrischona Schmidt

In the Absence of an Art Centre – Utopia, Central Australia

Abstract

Indigenous-owned and -run Art Centres are an important cultural hub in remote Indigenous communities. They fulfil a variety of social and cultural tasks together with providing economic opportunities to their members. The function, role and scope of an art centre are particularly highlighted in its absence. Thus, through comparison of a region with an art centre and a region without an art centre it becomes possible to understand the unique role of an art centre in a remote Indigenous community. Indigenous art centres are grass-root level organisations across Indigenous Australia, yet not present in all remote Indigenous communities. In this article I draw, on the one hand, on my doctoral research on the 40-year history of art-making in the Central Australian community of Utopia (2008-2012), and, on the other hand, on my experience as art centre manager at *Ikuntji Artists*, Haasts Bluff (ongoing since 2012). Both regions have a long history of art making and engagement with the Indigenous art world.

This article sheds light on a variety of interconnected questions, including the role, function and scope of art centres in Indigenous communities. It asks: 'what happens in the absence of this intermediary or brokering organisation?' 'Who takes on the responsibility and role of an agent?' Throughout my doctoral research, which I conducted from 2008-2012, I investigated the question of agency of Indigenous artists from the Utopia region in its 40-year history of art making. This was the first research in Indigenous Australian art to look into a region without an art centre, without an archive and without any form of ongoing organisation within the community. In addition to this, it deals with one of the

most successful and most renowned Indigenous art movements nationally and internationally.

What is an Indigenous art centre?

In the context of Indigenous Australia an art centre is a community-owned and -run Indigenous incorporation, which is incorporated under *Office for the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations (ORIC)* and is obliged to report to *ORIC* on an annual basis. It is not only a non-government-organisation and not-for-profit, but often as well registered as a *Public Benevolent Institution (PBI)*, which means a charity¹ and thus reports to the *Australian Charity Association*. Art centres are grass-root level organisations in mostly remote Indigenous Australia² and run by a board of directors or committee of local members. Art centres are member-based organisations and funding is contingent upon the existing member base and participation in activities at the art centre. Operations at the art centre are always run in accordance with the rule book or the constitution of the art centre.

Literature about the significance of art centres in communities, their roles and their particular governing systems is very rare. In fact, each art centre has its particularities in terms of its governance, incorporation status and funding levels. An industry standard for Indigenous art centres across Australia does not exist, which is partly due to the fact that there is such variation across the board. The first review of the Indigenous arts industry was conducted from 1988-89 by Jon Altman. The only broad survey of art centres was undertaken by Felicity Wright and Frances Morphy for *DesartInc*³ from 1996 (Wright and Morphy 1999). Since then there has been an

¹ Not every art centre has *PBI* status and is registered as a charity in Australia. Art Centres vary significantly across Australia, some being charities, some being incorporated businesses and some being part of larger councils and not-for-profit but not a charity.

² A very small percentage of non-remote art centres exists across Australia, however, I will not discuss their particularities further here.

³ *DesartInc* is the umbrella organisation for Central and Western Desert based Indigenous art centres in Central Australia. Its current member base entails 45 art centres.

upsurge in the establishing of art centres across Australia and a Senate Inquiry into the entire Indigenous Arts Sector in 2007. In the original survey 39 art centres were considered, but latest figures from *Ninti One – Cooperative Research Centre for Remote Economic Participation* show that at least 85 art centres exist currently across remote Australia.⁴ *Ninti One* focuses particularly on the economic aspects of art centres. All other functions and roles taken on by art centres are less frequently discussed.⁵ However, as I highlight in the next part, art centres play an integral part in the everyday life of remote Indigenous communities.

What is the role of the art centre in a community?

Art centres provide a space, in which its members can create art that is subsequently sold for them on a commission basis through the art centre (in most cases it is 50% for the artist and 50% for the art centre; often it may also be 60% for the artist and 40% for the art centre). The board negotiates the commission percentages with the manager. Thus, the main role of the art centre is to generate an independent income source through art-making for the local Indigenous population. However, an art centre provides much more than that for a community: it functions as the heart of the community (everyone gathers at the art centre and visitors often come here first in order to ask some general questions), and as a cultural centre (ritual paraphernalia are often kept in safe custody here, but also trips to country are organised by the art centre, reconnecting artists to country through the art centre). It is in many cases the only or one of two businesses in the community, and thus provides a welfare-independent income to mainly welfare-dependent residents in the community.⁶ Beyond that, the art centre gives

⁴ See <http://www.nintione.com.au/>.

⁵ Most recently a doctoral study about the importance of art centres for the health sector has been conducted, yet the results have not been published (<http://caama.com.au/community-art-centre-looks-at-good-health-for-aboriginal-people>, last sighted 26/07/2015).

⁶ In 1973 MacKay already stated: "Most of the arts and crafts produced for sale come from communities with limited opportunities for earning money apart from community associated work and training allowances. In some communities, it is

anyone from the community an opportunity to engage and create artworks for a national and international art market. The art centre is open to any Indigenous person residing in the community.

According to field studies, such engagement can prevent inadvertently a range of chronic health as well as mental health problems, including boredom and many problems arising through boredom, such as alcoholism, substance abuse, and domestic violence to name a few accompanying effects of boredom (Schmidt 2005; Musharbash 2009). The very existence of an art centre means a drop in alcoholism, violence and domestic violence – a long-term survey was recently completed in Mt Magnet in Western Australia, which documented the changes to the community through the establishment of an art and culture centre (Cooper et al. 2012). Furthermore, a study about the importance and influence of Indigenous art centres on the health state of the local population is currently being conducted by Alex Craig.⁷

In recent decades government funding has had increasingly given an impetus to economic outcomes and self-sustainability of art centres (Healy 2005:3). However, in the majority of art centres other more social and community-oriented tasks dominate the everyday functioning of the art centre, which was particularly highlighted by Felicity Wright (Wright et al. 1999). For example, art centres assist at funerals, art centre vehicles are used to drive artists and family members to ceremonies. Other organisations that have no permanent representation in the community often use the art centre to convene meetings. Some art centres provide lunches to their members and run dog programs (see: Warlukurlangu Art Centre's dog program⁸) or help in other aspects of the daily living in a remote

the only source of income outside social security payments" (MacKay 1973:2); and as Healy notices this is still a characteristic of the industry (Healy 2005:29).

⁷ Tim Acker, Lisa Stefanoff and Jess Booth, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Economies project. Exchange/meeting for researchers working in the ATSI arts/cultural area, Canberra 2012. Also: <http://caama.com.au/community-art-centre-looks-at-good-health-for-aboriginal-people>, last sighted 26/07/2015.

⁸ See the website of the art centre: <http://warlu.com/about/special-projects/dog-program/>, last sighted 26/07/2015.

community.⁹

The role of the art centre manager includes the everyday financial operations of the art centre, the sales of art, the maintenance of vehicles and buildings, and most importantly the individual development of each member artist's style and oeuvre. This includes the promotion of the artist's works and marketing through group and solo exhibitions, but also the introduction of new media or techniques through a series of workshops offered throughout the year. If the art centre is medium sized or even large, this role might be the one of a studio manager or arts coordinator (Pascoe 1981:31). Often the studio manager comes to the art centre with a fine art background and applies his/her skills and knowledge about art, mixing paint and colour theory to the studio situation. Studio managers particularly focus on prolific artists with an often established career, since through their solo shows and sales the majority of income is generated for the art centre. This group of high-end artists is fairly limited per art centre (generally not more than five) and consists of a group of elderly artists.¹⁰

This art centre structure, including staff, means that art from the communities is distributed across Australia and overseas on an even level. Art centre managers ensure that the market is not 'saturated' with art from one art centre or one artist in order to keep the demand and supply in balance.¹¹ Furthermore, they build the profiles of the artists and choose the appropriate galleries (depending on the market and the price bracket the artworks are sold in). Thus, art centre managers work with a variety of audiences, markets and galleries to successfully sell artworks from each member of the art centre. The art centre is the direct agent for the artists and liaises

⁹ It is fair to note in this context that Indigenous communities in Australia receive funding through a variety of aid programs, such as *World Vision*, the *Fred Hollows Foundation*. Indigenous Australians living in remote communities are considered living below the poverty line in Australia and in most cases the only ways out of this poverty are through sport and arts.

¹⁰ Personal conversations with a variety of art centre managers since 2012.

¹¹ Tim Acker and Alice Woodhead, 2015: *The Economy of Place - A Place in the Economy: A Value Chain Study of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Sector - Summary Report*. Alice Springs: Ninti One Limited.

for the artists on all levels of the business. Therefore, artists can focus on art-making at the art centre and are not involved in any aspect of sales, marketing, promotion or even record-keeping of the art. This 'alienation' of the creative process and the sales process can lead to a variety of problems in the art centre, such as constant queries by artists about their artworks and any sales thereof, which Myers clearly identified as "considerable cultural gulfs" (Myers 2002:165). Thus, it positions the art centre coordinator or manager at the "interface between the artists and the market" (Healy 2005:45), in which she/he constantly has to negotiate with the artists and the market.

In the following, I examine how the situation differs if there is no continuous art centre or arts coordinator in a region. What influence does such a lack have on artists, the art production and the sales of it?

The Utopia case

Utopia is situated about 230 kilometres north-west of Alice Springs, along the Sandover Highway, which used to run along the Sandover/Urapuntja¹² River. The Utopia homelands consist of 21 outstations, of which 16 were inhabited during my doctoral field research (from 2009-2012). Larger family groups live in outstations, thus populations vary from as low as ten to up to 50 people in an outstation at any time. Distances between the outstations differ as the Utopia homelands stretch for more than 80 kilometres along the Sandover Highway. Throughout my field research I spent considerable amounts of time with a variety of artists in the Utopia homelands. I observed their art-making processes and interactions with several art dealers. Furthermore, I interviewed them and went on a number of bush trips with them to experience the country that was subject of their art. In this article, I discuss the circumstances

¹² *Central & Eastern Anmatyerr to English Dictionary* (2010) is the guideline to which I adhere in this article for the spelling of any Central & Eastern Anmatyerr words. However, names of some artists may be spelled in accordance to how they are commonly used.

that artists from Utopia find themselves in the absence of an art centre and how they have developed skills and mechanisms to effectively be their own agents.

The Utopia art movement has been spanning over four decades and started off as adult education classes, in which batik-making was taught along with driving lessons and literacy and numeracy skills (Green 1981, 1998; Murray 1998). Throughout the four decades of art-making in Utopia there have been many attempts to establish a form of art centre: the various models included an arts coordinator living in one of the outstations (Julia Murray 1978-1982), a roving arts coordinator (Rodney Gooch 1986-1990), an art centre focused on batik-making (1992-1997), and the attempt to have a combined art centre for Utopia and Ampilatwatja (1999-2002). All of these models and various structures depended on the coordinator or manager at the time and their interests as well as the governing and funding bodies involved. Despite this history being so fractured and showing a great deal of change and inconsistency over the four decades, one thing never changed throughout it all: members of the Utopia community created art; art which received recognition on an international level, in particular through the celebrated Emily Kame Kngwarreye. Art was created in all of these outstations throughout my research. It was sold to a variety of dealers as well as anyone who was interested in it, drove by, worked temporarily in the community or visited someone in the homelands.

Creating art and distributing it from a remote community in Central Australia to the rest of the world is challenging if an art centre represents the artists (Morphy 2005), however, without an organisation like that it is almost impossible. The variety of tasks fulfilled by an art centre is very difficult for many art centre managers to maintain.¹³ Yet how can artists who often lack literacy and numeracy as well as English language skills negotiate the local, national and international art scene, and how do they create artworks for these various markets?

¹³ See Geoff Bardon's personal accounts about his time in Papunya.

What happens in the absence of an art centre?

The art centre acts as the direct agent for an artist as well as the supplier of all materials, including canvas, paint and brushes. At the same time, Indigenous artists in remote communities have to become their own agents for their art.

As outlined, Utopia artists have not experienced the continuity of an art centre within their homelands, instead they have been exposed to a variety of art centre models and to a great diversity of art dealers. Since 1988 and the introduction of painting with acrylic paint on canvas and linen through 'A Summer Project' convened by Rodney Gooch, a large number of art dealers have slowly but incessantly made their way into the Utopia homelands (Schmidt 2012). This arguably peaked through the demand for Emily Kame Kngwarreye's artworks in the mid-1990s. However, the stream of art dealers travelling to Utopia, setting up art camps for a week or a fortnight, has never ceased. It has only weakened since the Global Financial Crisis and the downturn in the art market from 2009 onwards. During my research there would have been at least 20 dealers working with artists from various Utopia outstations at any one week. Some art dealers only worked with one artist from one outstation, others bought art directly from entire families across the homelands, and others again bought from anyone who offered them artworks. Some art dealers supplied the artists with materials, including paints, linen and canvas, and marked it with their business or gallery names, others did not provide anything but just came in to buy it directly from the artist. As the Utopia homelands are surrounded by various cattle stations, each of which having its own store, sometimes artists went shopping there and paid with an artwork. All of these stores stocked and sold art supplies, including the store at Ahalper (the service centre of the Utopia homelands). Some of these cattle stations had studios in another part of the station, where artists could paint at any time and get paid instantly after completion of the artwork.

The overarching similarity in all the transactions described is the fact

that artists would finish an artwork and sell it more or less immediately, getting an instant financial return for the work. Most art centres in Central Australia do not operate on this business model (exceptions being large operations such as *Papunya Tula Artists Pty Ltd*) but on a commission basis: the artist only gets paid when the artwork has been sold.¹⁴ This leads to a circle quite common across the non-Indigenous arts sector, in which artists wait for cash-out until the end of the exhibition, having to save the income for up to a year or even longer until the next exhibition.

However, when artists are paid upfront for each painting, rather than after the painting is sold to a customer, another kind of operation emerges: one that is more similar to art-making being as contractual work. The contractor receives payment after completion of the work and based on its 'quality'. The artist gets paid at the end of the day for the work produced and when the finished artwork is delivered the remaining amount is paid at once. If the artworks are sold together and no upfront or advance payments are issued the entire amount is paid at once to the artist. Throughout my field research some dealers drove in on a weekly basis, others much less frequently, indicating some financial resources were reliable for the artists (others much less so). Dealers ranged at the one end from the type 'fine art market gallery owner' with a discerning eye¹⁵ in urban Australia, who only operates through an agent or wholesaler. At the other end of the spectrum the occasional customer existed. Their interest was to make some quick money by buying Utopia art cheaply and often selling it on for a great profit privately or online for example.¹⁶

¹⁴ In 2005 Healy still noted that art centres paid upfront for artworks (Healy 2005:71), this has changed significantly through the Global Financial Crisis and the lack of cash flow that art centres now experience. They need to minimise their risks, which they do by paying upon receipt of payment for a sale.

¹⁵ Morphy described this discerning eye as follows: "Because Aboriginal fine art is not precisely defined, those who promote it must have the imagination and skill to recognise new works and new categories of work that may properly be described as fine art" (Morphy 1983:40).

¹⁶ These profits varied from 50% up to 200% mark-up. Such mark-ups are often found in galleries operated by dealers that are commonly coined 'carpet baggers' in the Indigenous arts industry. The investigative television program *4Corners*

A typical example of this situation that I experienced in 2010 occurred at Rocket Range outstation: a utility van drove up and stopped in the middle of the outstation. The driver did not get out of the car, but instead called one of the women sitting next to me to him. They had a chat and she went into her house, followed by her sisters. All of them came out with rolls of paintings. None of the rolls were marked by a dealer, stating that they were not the property of a particular dealer. The driver was not interested in seeing any of the works, not judging their quality or giving any statement about the works, but had in the beginning offered a price. He was given all the rolls in exchange for the cash. The rolls were put in the back of the utility van and the man left. When I enquired about the transaction, being interested in the fact that he did not even want to look at any of the paintings, I was told with a bright smile by Lucky Morton: "They were all rubbish paintings", and everyone around us starting chuckling and breaking out into loud laughter.

This situation exemplifies not only the disinterested and ignorant dealer but also the particular negotiation tools and skills developed by Utopia artists: thus their acting as their own agents. The absence of an art centre has a veritable effect on artists in a remote Indigenous community: all structures, including networks with art dealers, getting art materials, the marketing and promotion of their works to art dealers and possible customer travelling through the community as well as residing within it, have to be either organised on a one-on-one-basis between artist and dealer/customer or the artist has to be in charge of everything, which is the common situation in the non-Indigenous art world in Australia as well as in the urban Indigenous art world. This is very different in the context of the remote Indigenous community. Artists have to learn a great deal about the quality of brushes, paints, canvas and linen as these are keys to the art dealers' market: if the dealer supplies the artists

looked into this in one of their programs and found a great group of businesses operating on this level in Alice Springs alone (<http://www.abc.net.au/4corners/content/2008/s2314182.htm> last sighted 26/07/2015).

with the highest quality acrylic paint and the highest quality brushes as well as Belgian linen¹⁷, the art dealers expect a product to match the quality of the materials. However, if an art dealer supplies the artist with student paints and cheap cotton canvas that is pre-primed¹⁸ their market is in general towards the lower end and tourist market. The quality of materials given to the artists is one of the factors how they distinguish the quality of the artwork expected from the art dealer. Thus, an artwork painted with inferior materials for a dealer who only works with tourists as clients will not be paid the same amount as an artwork painted for a high-end fine art dealer. Both art dealers have very different markets and are thus looking for different kinds of artworks, furthermore they will pay substantially different amounts for these artworks. The size of the commissioned painting can be another indicator for the amount of money a dealer is willing to pay.

Working with various art markets and art dealers

These factors (quality of materials, amount of materials and sizes of canvases and linen) all give an indication to the artist at the beginning of the relationship as well as throughout it what target audience the artworks are for and what price range they are looking at. Together they determine the quality and thus the price of the artwork.¹⁹ I have discussed these quality markers in great length in my doctoral dissertation (Schmidt 2012); however, I outline them here to give an insight into how Indigenous artists in Utopia decide

¹⁷ Belgian linen is renowned for being the highest quality linen in the world, some of the linen ranging from \$42-\$48 per metre.

¹⁸ Pre-primed cotton canvas is one of the most cost effective ways of supplying materials to artists.

¹⁹ However, as Eric Michaels (1994:162) sums up "[The work] is the product of too many discourses: the painters' attempts to have their designs (and themselves) acknowledged seriously in the contemporary market, the market's requirements for exchange-value fodder, and the consumer/collectors' own interests, which may well include the desire to be associated with auras of authenticity as well as investment speculation." The interaction of these discourses determines, in which end of the art market artworks are being sold. My observations describe how much of this the artists in Utopia understand and negotiate.

to sell artworks to a countless number of art dealers.²⁰ Similarly to a manager of an art centre, artists in Utopia deal with the entire spectrum of the art market, very few artists limit themselves to selling to only a couple of art dealers and no one only works with one: this would mean limiting viable income sources and cash flow streams. Angelina Pwerl, for one, chooses to paint not only with a single stick in a monochrome style for her high-end fine art dealer; Bill Nuttall from Melbourne, limiting herself to one topic, “Bush Plum – Anweketey”²¹, but also calls him ‘one stick Bill’. Pwerl uses in all her other artwork several sticks at once, in a bundle, whereas larger tip sticks and the ‘roughest’ and ‘quickest’ works are done with a brush depicting a completely different topic, but not her personal Dreaming²², Bush Plum. When being asked about this approach, Pwerl sees it as her technique to sell to a variety of people at the same time as maintaining relationships with a network of art dealers and different customers. An important factor when talking about the quality of the artwork is, not only for Pwerl but for every artist from Utopia who participated in my doctoral research, the time invested in creating the artwork.

A ‘quick’ artwork equals therefore a ‘sloppy’ or ‘rushed’ artwork and is subsequently not considered “good and not worth good money”.²³ Again this comparison, similarly to being paid upfront before being sold to a customer, evokes behaviour towards art-making according to the principles of a work ethic: one, in which the time and the care invested equal the amount being paid for the artwork. This is contrary to the high-end fine art dealer’s concept of art-making, in which the creative and innovative process is at the core of the artwork and its value lies in its aesthetics rather than in the process

²⁰ During the entire time of my research, I was not able to determine the exact number of art dealers travelling to Utopia to purchase artworks, nor how many have worked with Utopia artists over the past four decades.

²¹ See note 12.

²² *Altyerr* (Anmatyerr) or the *Dreaming* describes the belief-system and ontology for Indigenous Australians. The country and the people are from the Dreaming. The “Dreaming may refer both to the specific stories and to the whole creative epoch of which the stories are part” (Myers 1991: 48).

²³ Personal conversations with Utopia artists (2009-11).

of production.²⁴

In her article about 'working' and 'working for' Diane Austin-Broos (2005) shows that for Arrernte people from Ntaria/Hermannsburg in Central Australia a definite relationship exists between *ritual* and *work*. Through *ritual* meaning is created and relationships are reaffirmed within the community. The preparation and celebration of ritual is meaningful *work*, in which people work for the successful performance of the *ritual*. Austin-Broos notes that in Arrernte there is no word for 'work' or 'business', the closest word in meaning being 'working for ritual or preparing for ritual'. Both 'work' and 'business' therefore have a connotation with ritual. The time spent for preparing the ritual, organising it and travelling to the performance place; the length of the ceremony itself and the question of how many people attended and were involved highlight the importance of the ritual. Time is a crucial factor in ceremonial work.

Despite Utopia artists being Anmatyerr and Alyawarr speakers, which are both languages within the Eastern Arandic language group, therefore similar in many ways to Arrernte, their colonial experience varies greatly to that of the Arrernte in Ntaria, which became a mission in the 1880s. Utopia residents were never moved from their country nor did they ever experience the presence of a permanent mission, i.e. only temporary missionaries. In fact, they lived in and around cattle stations that were set up on their homelands since the 1920s. Their understanding regarding 'work' and the quality of a product would therefore be influenced by their many years of engagement with the cattle industry as stockmen and house maids, combined with their traditional understanding of 'work' as ritual business.

Art-making is thus a meaningful activity, similarly to ritual as it

²⁴ Throughout my doctoral research I interviewed curators, gallery owners, collectors, wholesalers who 'interacted' with artists from Utopia, and artists from Utopia. I was able through these interviews to highlight in particular two kinds of art dealers: fine art dealers who often have a background in fine art, such as painting and/or being a collector, and dealers who have made their way into the industry by chance.

evokes country and Dreaming stories associated with it, and the longer it takes to create it the higher the quality of the artwork. On the other hand, art-making is work in many aspects similar to working on a cattle station²⁵ as the better the work one delivers to one's superior or station owner the more one raises in status and prestige amongst the workers. One gets paid after having delivered the work, sometimes in kind and sometimes in cash²⁶ and the amount an artist gets paid depends not only on the hours worked but also on the quality of the work, for example, when putting up a fence. Interestingly, this combination of time and effort or labour involved is one that artists from Utopia now apply when determining the quality of their artwork.

Fred Myers (1999; 2002) argued that for the Pintupi the price expected for an artwork by a Pintupi artist depended on different factors: importance of the Dreaming story or site depicted, seniority of the artist and his/her knowledge about the place, and status within the community of the artist. None of these factors relate to the actual aesthetics of the artwork, the artwork is an expression or embodiment of the person and has to be paid in accordance to the importance of the person in the community. During my doctoral research in Utopia this discussion about the seniority of the person who created the artwork being important for the price of the artwork never arose. However, many artists found a link between the Dreaming story or site depicted and the market or audience which that particular story attracted. Rather than understanding the style of the person and the aesthetics of the painting as the important aspects for high-fetching prices of artworks, the power and significance of the Dreaming story are considered crucial in their success in the contemporary art world.

²⁵ Utopia used to be a station and many of the artists and their families used to work on Utopia station as well as surrounding stations. This was their first exposure to the notion of working for money.

²⁶ Note that some art dealers still pay artists in kind rather than in cash, recreating an economy prior 1967 when equal pay rights for Indigenous workers were achieved through the Wave Hill Station 'Walk Off' (August 1966).

Conclusion

The particular situation in Utopia highlights that artists in this region operate with various art markets and their representatives, that is, art dealers. By combining their traditional knowledge about ritual and ceremonial business with their knowledge about work on cattle stations, artists negotiate successfully all different kinds of markets and become their own agents. This unusual situation developed through the absence of an art centre and the need for artists to comprehend the various markets and their specific demands in terms of quality of artworks as defined by art dealers. Materials provided by dealers are now a key indicator for artists: pointing them in the direction of the market, for which the works are intended to be and for the pay they can expect for these.

Despite the fact that artists from Utopia are able to successfully negotiate this wide spectrum of art markets, their artistic development is limited by the lack of an art centre. Only two wholesalers that I encountered throughout my research invested into the artistic development of the small group of artists they worked with. Unfortunately, through the absence of an art centre there is no facility or institution that can adequately replace this constant dialogue between an artist and a studio manager, for example. In Utopia the *Batchelor Institute for Tertiary Education* tried to take on the role of inspiring the artists. Over the past five years, it has on several occasions provided workshops in the community – ranging from batik workshops to print making and stop motion animation film making. However, these are one-off workshops, which have an adult education background. The aims of these workshops are not towards creating commercial exhibitions.

Art centres operate similar to fine art schools in the non-Indigenous art world. Within that context artists have the advantage of constant feedback and discussions about their works, however, in the absence of it, there are only the peers to discuss it and who have similar limitations in regards to understanding art markets. In some instances in Utopia, this situation led to very close one-on-one

artist-dealer-relationships, which saw a similar success and fame as known amongst international, non-Indigenous artists, for example, in the cases of Emily Kame Kngwarreye and Gloria Petyarr. However, these relationships need to be nurtured and not interfered with. Otherwise the value of the artworks may diminish in the market through an oversaturation.

The absence of an art centre and an agency where artists exert influence points to a major deficiency: the lack of important services for Indigenous artists. Unfortunately, there are no classes or courses for Indigenous artists in remote Australia educating them about materials, best practice in art dealing, copyright, resale royalty or even agreements between art dealers and artists. All these tasks are also executed by an art centre – leaving artists without an art centre in very vulnerable positions. The only technique to counter that, Utopia artists found, is to vary the quality of the artwork.

Works Cited

- Acker, Tim, and Alice Woodhead, 2015. *The Economy of Place – A Place in the Economy: A Value Chain Study of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Sector - Summary Report*. Alice Springs: Ninti One Limited.
- Acker, Tim, Lisa Stefanoff, and Jess Booth, 2012. *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Economies Project. Exchange/Meeting for Researchers working in the ATSI Arts/Cultural Area*. Canberra.
- Austin-Broos, Diane, and Gaynor Macdonald, eds., 2005. *Culture, Economy and Governance in Aboriginal Australia*, Conference of the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia held at the University of Sydney/ 30 November-1 December 2004. Sydney: University of Sydney Press.
- Austin-Broos, Diane, 2005. " 'Working for' and 'Working': Articulating the Person among the Western Arrernte". Manuscript. To be published.
- Cooper, Trudi, Sue Bahn, and Margaret Giles, 2012. *Investigating the Social Welfare Indicators of Aboriginal Regional Art Centre: A Pilot Study*. Perth: Edith Cowan University and Department of Indigenous Affairs, Western Australia.
- Department of Aboriginal Affairs, ed., 1989. *The Aboriginal Arts and Crafts Industry. Report of the Review Committee (Altman Report)*. Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service.
- Green, Jennifer Anne, 2010. *Central & Eastern Anmatyerr to English Dictionary*. Alice Springs: Institute of Aboriginal Development Press.

- Green, Jennifer Anne, 1998. "Singing the Silk: Utopia Batik", in: Judith Ryan and Robyn Healy, eds., *Raiki Wara – Long Cloth from Aboriginal Australia and the Torres Strait*. Melbourne: National Gallery of Victoria, 38-49.
- Green, Jennifer Anne, 1981. *Utopia Women, Country and Batik*. Alice Springs: Utopia Women's Batik Group.
- Healy, Jacqui A., 2005. "A Fragile Thing: Marketing Remote Area Aboriginal Art", PhD thesis. Melbourne: The University of Melbourne/ School of Art History, Cinema, Classics and Archeology.
- Loveday, Peter, and Peter Cooke, eds., 1983. *Aboriginal Arts and Crafts and the Market*. Darwin: The Australian National University/ North Australia Research Unit.
- Mackay, Machmund, 1973. "Marketing and Aboriginal Arts and Crafts: A Preliminary Report on the Production, Distribution and Marketing of Aboriginal Arts and Crafts in Australia". Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service.
- Michaels, Eric, 1994. "Bad Aboriginal Art", in: *Bad Aboriginal Art – Tradition, Media, and Technological Horizons*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 143-164.
- Morphy, Howard, 2005. "Indigenous Art as Economy", in: Diane Austin-Broos and Gaynor Macdonald, eds., *Culture, Economy and Governance in Aboriginal Australia*, Conference of the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia held at the University of Sydney/ 30 November-1 December 2004. Sydney: University of Sydney Press, 19-27.
- Morphy, Howard, and Margo Smith Boles, eds., 1999. *Art from the Land: Dialogues with the Kluge-Ruhe Collection of Australian Aboriginal Art*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia.
- Morphy, Howard, 1983. "Aboriginal Fine Art: Creation of Audiences and Marketing of the Art", in: Peter Loveday and Peter Cooke, eds., *Aboriginal Arts and Crafts and the Market*. Darwin: The Australian National University/ North Australia Research Unit, 37-43.
- Murray, Julia, 1998. "Utopia Batik: The Halycon Days 1978-82", in: Judith Ryan and Robyn Healy, eds., *Raiki Wara – Long Cloth from Aboriginal Australia and the Torres Strait*. Melbourne: National Gallery of Victoria, 50-55.
- Musharbash, Yasmine, 2009. *Yuendumu Everyday – Contemporary Life in Remote Aboriginal Australia*. Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press.
- Myers, Fred R., 2002. *Painting Culture - The Making of an Aboriginal High Art*. Durham/London: Duke University Press.
- Myers, Fred R., 1999. "Aesthetic Function and Practice: A Local Art History of Pintupi Painting", in: Howard Morphy and Margo Smith Boles, eds., *Art from the Land: Dialogues with the Kluge-Ruhe Collection of Australian Aboriginal Art*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia, 219-259.
- Myers, Fred R. 1991. *Pintupi Country, Pintupi Self – Sentiment, Place, and Politics among Western Desert Aborigines*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

- Pascoe, Timothy, 1981. *Improving Focus and Efficiency in the Marketing of Aboriginal Artefacts (The Pascoe Report)*. Canberra: Arts Research Training and Support Ltd.
- Ryan, Judith, and Robyn Healy, eds., 1998. *Raiki Wara – Long Cloth from Aboriginal Australia and the Torres Strait*. Melbourne: National Gallery of Victoria.
- Schmidt, Chrischona, 2012. “‘I paint for Everyone’ - the Making of Utopia Art”, PhD thesis (unpublished). Canberra: Australian National University, Research School of Humanities and the Arts.
- Schmidt, Chrischona, 2005. “Beyond Suffering: The Significance of Productive Activity for Aboriginal Australians”, BA Honours (unpublished). Sydney: University of Sydney.
- The Senate, Standing Committee on Environment, Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, 2007. *Indigenous Art - Securing the Future - Australia’s Indigenous Visual Arts and Craft Sector*, 20 June. Canberra: Senate Printing Unit, Parliament House, (available online: http://www.aph.gov.au/binaries/senate/committee/ecita_ctte/completed_inquiries/2004-07/indigenous_arts/report/report.pdf).
- Wright, Felicity, 1999. *The Art & Craft Centre Story, Volume 1: Report, A Survey of thirty-nine Aboriginal Community Art and Craft Centres in Remote Australia*, undertaken by DesartInc, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, Canberra.
- Wright, Felicity, and Frances Morphy, 1999. *The Art & Craft Centre Story, Volume 2: Summary and Recommendations, A Survey of thirty-nine Aboriginal Community Art and Craft Centres in Remote Australia*, undertaken by DesartInc, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, Canberra.

RETROSPECT

Henriette von Holleuffer

An der Grenze zum Dasein

Die Aborigines und das Wasser –

Mythenbildung und Wertschöpfung im frühen Australien



In einem inhaltlich weitreichenden Essay exemplifiziert der britisch-australische Historiker und Philosoph Paul Carter am Beispiel europäischen Handelns in Australien die Risiken, die ein in der westlichen Philosophie fest verankertes "trockenes Denken" für die Nutzung der Ressourcen Land und Wasser hat: "Die tiefere Unfähigkeit beruht auf der Tatsache, dass wir oder zumindest unsere Meinungsbildner noch immer nicht an Wasser als *Quelle* denken können. Und eine Quelle fließt, im Gegensatz zu einer Ressource, anders durch unser Leben" (80). Diese Erkenntnis, so folgert der Philosoph, kollidiert mit der "kartesischen Vernunft, die unbeirrbar in einer geraden Linie voranschreitet". Mit dieser Verknüpfung zwischen der Wertschöpfung des Wassers und der

Wahrnehmung geschichtsmächtiger Kräfte auf dem australischen Kontinent gibt Paul Carter Anstoß zu weiterem Nachdenken.

Geschichte hat eine Vorzeit. Der Bericht über die Vorzeit Australiens, die primär eine Geschichte der Aborigines¹ und ihrer Umwelt ist, überschreitet die Grenzen traditioneller historischer Darstellung. Die Betrachtung von Geschichtsverläufen in Abhängigkeit von der Natur und ihren Einflüssen auf den Menschen stellt eine Herausforderung an die historische Wissenschaft dar. Hier erweist es sich als günstiger Umstand, dass die internationale Historiographie innovativ agiert und verstärkt Interdisziplinarität bei der Beleuchtung von Inhalten zeigt, die lange am Rand der historischen Wissenschaft gehandelt wurden. Die Wertschöpfung zentraler Naturelemente, wie die des Wassers, war durchgängig Teil der uralten Überlieferung der australischen Aborigines. Letztere repräsentiert einen wichtigen Aspekt der Geschichte auf dem Fünften Kontinent – und sollte daher gelegentlich, im zeitlichen Intervall des wissenschaftlichen Diskurses über die gleichberechtigte Würdigung von Natur (Umwelt) und Kultur als geschichtsmächtige Kräfte, ins Bewusstsein gerückt werden.²

Die Fragen der modernen Historiographie reichen weit und sind interdisziplinär angelegt – sie berühren auch den Ursprung der australischen Menschheitsgeschichte. Wie haben sich die vorgeschichtlichen Kulturen ihrer Wahrnehmungssinne bedient, um Geschichte im Kontext von Natur und Umwelt zu schaffen und zu

¹ Hier soll der Begriff "Aborigines" in der wertneutralen Übertragung aus dem Lateinischen benutzt werden: "die, die von Anfang an da waren". Der australische Terminus umfasst eine Völkerschaft mit bis zu 600 Sprachvarianten, die das vielschichtige kulturelle Bild der indigenen Einwohner Australiens konturieren; s. Nicholas Evans, "Aboriginal languages", 7. – Der Untertitel des Titelbildes (um 1898 von einem unbekannten Künstler illustriert) lautet: "Suddenly an enourmous mass of water came rushing down."

² Protagonisten dieses Ansatzes sind u.a. Michael Cathcart, oder, in anderem Kontext, Mitchell Rolls. Letzterer argumentiert in seiner historischen Analyse (17) über die Darstellung von Natur (und Kultur) im australischen Magazin *Walkabout*: "Considering the integral position of flora and fauna in Aboriginal epistemologies and the specialised knowledge that Aborigines possess of their environment, the pertinence of facilitating settler knowledge (and imagining) of place inclusive of these other presences (flora and fauna) cannot be underestimated."

gestalten (Jay 309-310)? Auf welche Weise erklärten sie sich Naturphänomene und Veränderungen der Umwelt? Welche Konstellation ermöglichte es Menschen Zuwanderer nach Australien zu werden? Wie agierten diese Menschen, als sie vom Rand des erdzeitgeschichtlichen Geschehens ahnungslos in das Zentrum historischen Handelns auf dem Kontinent gelangten? Welche Denkmuster bestimmen Annäherung an Geschichte und Rekonstruktion der Vorzeit aus Sicht der Aborigines? All diese Fragen werden zugespitzt in der Überlegung, ob vorzeitliche Vergangenheit auch rekonstruierbar ist über die sinnliche Wahrnehmung oder nur aus Einsicht in das Archiv archäologischer Artefakte. Die Antworten auf diese Fragen finden sich in ungewöhnlichen Themen und im Kontext einer vielschichtig akzentuierten *Borderlands History*: Deren Protagonisten hinterfragen traditionelle Paradigmen geschichtlicher Analyse, indem sie Randbereiche historischer Forschung in die Darstellung einbeziehen, außergewöhnlichen Quellen Aussagewert zusprechen und darüber hinaus scheinbar logische Kausalitäten der Ereignisfolge zur Disposition stellen. Rekonstruktion wird zu einem flexiblen Handwerkszeug. Dieser methodische Ansatz erscheint geeignet, um Aspekte der Vorgeschichte Australiens exemplarisch zu beleuchten und repräsentativ zu bewerten – mit dem Ziel, ungewohnte Perspektiven der Geschichtserzählung vom Rand weg in das Zentrum des historiographischen Bewusstseins zu rücken (Nieto-Phillips 337; Hämäläinen/Truett: 338-361).

Im Fall der australischen Aborigines spielen Beobachtung, Gehör, Geruchssinn, kurzum die sensorische Wahrnehmung der Umwelt, eine wichtige Rolle bei der Rekonstruktion der Vorzeit. Die Wahrnehmung mit den Sinnen ist im vielfältig gestalteten Weltbild der Aborigines ein fest verankertes Mittel der Annäherung an Geschichte und Vorzeit. Aborigines und moderne Geschichtswissenschaftler begehen zunehmend gemeinsame Wege, um zu neuen Erkenntnissen und gegenseitigem Verständnis zu gelangen. Die sensorische Wahrnehmung der Umwelt als quasi-quellenkritische Methode historischer Deutung stellt eine ungewohnte Annäherung an Geschichte dar. Diese bietet gleichwohl eine Erweiterung des Bewusstseins für prähistorische Sachverhalte

und Mythen. Es ist eine Annäherung an das Vergangene, das noch gegenwärtig ist. Hierin liegt die Besonderheit und Authentizität in der Deutung australischer Geschichte.

Prähistorische Funde, die über Australiens Vorgeschichte Auskunft geben, sind zahlreich vorhanden, doch nicht in jedem Fall zweifelsfrei einzuordnen. Dieser Tatbestand lässt Raum für Spekulationen und Theorien – und befördert zugleich das interdisziplinäre Arbeiten der Wissenschaft. Geologen, Biologen, Anthropologen, Archäologen und Historiker bemühen sich seit langer Zeit um die Klärung der zentralen Frage, wann sich Leben in der Hemisphäre regte und welche Form intentionalen Handelns den Beginn der australischen Geschichte markiert. Jede Fachdisziplin beantwortet diese Frage mit dem Entwurf von Modellen. Die als Beleg angeführten Zeugnisse sind vielschichtig in Charakter und Aussagewert. In der Beschäftigung mit der Vergangenheit Australiens zeigt sich, dass für eine ausgewogene Darstellung das Arbeiten mit nachvollziehbaren Chronologien ebenso wichtig ist wie die Berücksichtigung nicht schriftlich fixierter Quellen: Australiens Geschichtsschreibung ist nicht ausschließlich in Aktenschränken aufzufinden. Die traditionelle Historiographie stößt im Umgang mit Australiens Geschichtswerdung an ihre methodischen Grenzen. Anhand der folgenden Analyse, die zugleich auch Darstellung der Fakten ist, wird deutlich, dass mündlich überlieferte Mythen als Mosaiksteine auf dem Weg zur Rekonstruktion australischer Geschichte ebenso wichtig sind wie die Auswertung archäologischer Funde und schriftlicher Quellen – aber auch visueller Beobachtungen und sensorischer Wahrnehmungen der Umwelt.

Es waren nicht allein Feuer und Winde, die über Jahrmillionen in machtvoller Wechselbeziehung zu Flora, Fauna und Mensch standen. Wasser in all seinen Erscheinungsformen erweist sich bis in die Gegenwart als gestaltender Faktor im Werden Australiens. Im Zentrum der folgenden Ausführung steht die Suche nach Erinnerung in Form von mündlicher Überlieferung, bildgestalterischer Darstellung und wissenschaftlichem Beleg über die umweltgeschichtliche Interaktion von Mensch und Wasser. Auf Grundlage dieses exemplarischen Aspekts von Erinnerung können

Hinweise auf gestaltende Kräfte in der australischen Frühgeschichte abgeleitet werden. Dabei stehen drei Bezugspunkte im Mittelpunkt der Recherche: die Natur in Gestalt des Wassers als Lebenspendende Kraft des Universums, die Erinnerung als bewahrendes Wissen über die Schöpfung und der Mensch als Akteur von geschichtlichem Geschehen. Konkret formuliert: Die vorliegende Ausführung zielt darauf, (a) eine darstellende Geschichtsstunde zu geben, und zwar auf Grundlage (b) eines Plädoyers für die gleichrangige Einsichtnahme in die überlieferte Erinnerung der Aborigines und in die wissenschaftlichen Befunde der Neuzeit. Im Ergebnis soll das interkulturelle Forschen Gewissheit darüber schaffen, warum die Bedeutung des Wassers in der Lebensgestaltung des vorgeschichtlichen Australiers von fundamentaler Bedeutung für das geschichtliche Werden dieser Hemisphäre war. Der Schlüssel zum Verständnis der australischen Geschichte liegt in der Symbiose moderner Forschungsmethodik und tradierten Wissens über das Zusammenspiel von Natur und Mensch – von Wasser und ersten Bewohnern (Bowler 1995). Dabei gerät das Bild von dem vermeintlich trockenen Kontinent Australien als geschichtliche Größe ins Wanken.

Auch wenn die Überlieferung nur begrenzt Auskünfte zu geben vermag über eine ausgewählte Region, ihre Bewohner, deren Mythen und deren Erinnerung, so lassen sich universale Wertschätzungen und Wissensstände ableiten, die spezifisch australisch zu nennen sind. In der hier fokussierten Rückblende legt die Überlieferung Zeugnis ab von einer urzeitlichen Landmasse, deren von Erosion zerklüftete Felsen ein Alter von mehreren Milliarden Jahren aufweisen. Dieser sich ausformende Kontinent war von frühester Zeit an von Wasser umgeben. Doch auch in seinem Inneren verbarg das Land Wasserressourcen. Der Mensch suchte und fand: Er folgte der Quelle des Lebens und gestaltete einen Lebensraum für sich und seine Nachkommen.

Australiens Urzeit spiegelt sich noch heute in der Landschaft, ihren Erscheinungsformen und in der Natur. Dem Historiker erschließt sich die früheste Geschichte aus archäologischen Funden, geologischen Erkenntnissen und aktueller Hilfestellung bei der Deutung

überlieferter Artefakte und Mythen durch die Nachkommen der ältesten Bewohner Australiens.³ Die Erforschung der frühen australischen Besiedlungsgeschichte zeigt gleichwohl Probleme auf, die nur zum Teil Ergebnis unzureichender technischer Bemessungsmethoden sind. Die eigentliche Herausforderung bei der Rekonstruktion der Geschichte Australiens liegt darin, anzuerkennen, dass bei den frühen und späten Siedlerströmen auf den Fünften Kontinent unterschiedliche Ansätze der Wahrnehmung von Vergangenheit vorlagen. Daraus ergibt sich die Notwendigkeit, lineare Zeitmessung und nicht-lineare Zeitwahrnehmung als gleichwertige Komponenten in der Chronologie der Ereignisse zu erkennen (Macintyre 7). Das Ergebnis ist ein Dilemma, das die besondere Problematik der australischen Historiographie ausmacht.

Letzteres resultiert zum einen aus dem Zusammentreffen unterschiedlicher Siedler-Kulturen auf dem australischen Kontinent. Zum anderen entspringt es der Dominanz europäischer Forschungstradition in der Geschichtsschreibung. In der Summe verengen beide Vorkommnisse das analytische Denken: Dieses verharrte lange in der Deutung australischen Werdens und Seins als Entwicklung von Geschichte aus dem Dunkel der Vorzeit in eine lichte Moderne. Ideologische Vorbehalte gegenüber der indigenen Bevölkerung Australiens, die sich im Zuge der europäischen Landnahme seit dem 18. Jahrhundert zu Formeln der Rechtfertigung ausdeuteten, um die Zurückdrängung der ersten Australier zu untermauern, etablierten eine Geschichtsschreibung, die nach europäischer Forschungstradition Entwicklung linear deutete und am vermeintlich progressiven Verlauf der Zivilisationsgeschichte maß. Doch Australiens indigene Überlieferungen, die von einer zeitlosen Gültigkeit universaler Werte sprechen, kollidieren mit dem Ansatz linearer Zeitmessung. Seit den 1970er Jahren, und erneut seit dem Mabo-Urteil von 1992, gelangten archäologische und historiographische Projekte, die eine Symbiose linearer und nicht-

³ Auswahlweise sei hier die Darstellung von Josephine Flood, *Archaeology of the Dreamtime*, genannt. Die Autorin favorisierte schon in den 1980er Jahren einen interdisziplinären Ansatz, der die Mythen der Aborigines in die archäologische Analyse einbezog.

linearer Denkansätze in der Deutung der frühen Besiedlungsgeschichte umfassten, in die Diskussion. Hier lag die Innovation: Allein die Addition beider Blickwinkel, so lautete die Erkenntnis, nicht die Abgrenzung europäischer und indigener Deutungsansätze voneinander, gewährte eine authentische Darstellung australischer Geschichte.

Ein Beispiel für eine solche Erweiterung der Perspektive ist die Forschungsarbeit des australischen Geomorphologen Jim M. Bowler, der seit den 1980er Jahren in herausragender Weise daran arbeitete, die Methoden der modernen Wissenschaft und die Wahrnehmung indigener Überlieferung bei der Deutung der frühen australischen Geschichte zusammenzuführen. Jim Bowlers Annäherung indigener und europäischer Wahrnehmungshorizonte kann Maßgabe sein für eine ausgewogene Geschichtsbetrachtung auf dem australischen Kontinent.

Im Mittelpunkt der vorliegenden Studie steht die Frage, in welcher Weise der Kontinent Australien als Lebensraum, das heißt als Ort zum Leben wahrgenommen wurde. Die These fußt auf dem Forschungsinteresse von Jim M. Bowler. Australien veranschaulicht in besonderer Weise, dass die Natur, genauer gesagt die Wirkung ihrer Elemente auf die Umwelt, auch das Verhalten des Menschen bei der Erschließung des geologischen Raumes beeinflusst(e). Geschichtsmächtig, so formulierte es Jim M. Bowler 1987, wirkt bis in die Gegenwart ein Element: schon in der Vorzeit belebte das Wasser (oder beeinträchtigte sein Fehlen) die Umwelt (25-45). Der Zugang zu Wasser, sein Vorhandensein und die verfügbare Menge bestimmten bereits vor Jahrmillionen das Leben auf dem Fünften Kontinent. Wasser als gestaltende Kraft gewährt Leben in seiner Vielfalt; es trennt Landmassen, Pflanzen, Tiere und Menschen; es gewährt gleichwohl auch Begegnung zwischen Lebensgemeinschaften; es erlaubt die Umrundung und paradoxerweise auch die Durchquerung des Kontinents und seiner verschiedenen Klimazonen. Von den Anfängen bis heute kommt dem Element Wasser universale Bedeutung zu – in Australien lässt sich nachlesen, wie die geschichtsmächtige Bedeutung des Wassers

Umwelt-Geschichte schrieb und die Entwicklung von Kultur und Ökologie gestaltete. Hier nahm Wasser in seinen vielgestaltigen Funktionen als Ressource, Barriere und Brücke Einfluss auf Geschichtsverläufe. Von prähistorischer Zeit an bis heute bestimmen Meeresspiegel, artesische Quellen, Regenzeiten, Flusspegel und Grundwasserreserven das Leben und Gestalten auf dem Fünften Kontinent. Flora und Fauna entstanden, Menschen wanderten ein, Lebensgemeinschaften formten sich und Landschaften veränderten ihr Aussehen in Abhängigkeit vom Stand der Wasserflut und dem Wechsel der Flussläufe. An diesem Punkt der Ausführung über bekanntes Wissen stellt sich die weiterführende Frage, wie die ersten Bewohner Australiens das Element Wasser als vorhandene Option deuteten und wie sie es nutzten, um auf dieser Landmasse zu leben. Zuvor sei kurz skizziert, welche erdzeitgeschichtliche Konstellation den australischen Kontinent entstehen ließ.

Vor etwa 500 Millionen Jahren umschloss Wasser den Superkontinent Gondwana. Als sich Gondwana über weitere Millionen von Jahren durch die Drift der Erdoberfläche in Fragmente aufteilte, regte sich bereits seit langem primitives Leben auf dieser Erdmasse. Der Geologe Phillip Playford erbrachte 1956 in der westaustralischen Shark Bay den Beweis für die Existenz von primitiven Lebensformen, die zu stummen Zeugen der prähistorischen Entwicklung in der australischen Hemisphäre wurden. Phillip Playford dokumentierte die bis dahin erstmals lebend (und fossil) aufgefundenen Stromatoliten. Dem Fund kam außergewöhnliche Bedeutung zu: Stromatoliten sind Mikroorganismen, die Zeugnis ablegen von der Leben bringenden Symbiose von Wasser, Luft und Licht, der Photosynthese. Konkret formuliert: Lebende Stromatoliten trugen zur Erhöhung des Sauerstoffgehalts im Ozean und in der Folge in der Erdatmosphäre bei. Bis 1956 hatten sich Stromatoliten nur in fossiler Form gefunden.⁴ Nun ließen sich zwei

⁴ Umfassend informiert: Playford, u.a.: *The Geology of Shark Bay*. Fossile Stromatoliten, die bis zu 3,5 Milliarden Jahre alt sind, fanden Forscher überdies im Pilbara-Gebiet in der Hamersley Range; s. Monroe, "Australia: The Land Where Time Began – A Journey Back Through Time", <http://austhrutime.com/journey.htm>. Hier findet sich eine chronologische Übersicht über bedeutsame geologische und entwicklungsphysiologische

Dinge belegen: (1) In Australiens frühester Erdgeschichte existierte primitives Leben vor bereits mehr als drei Milliarden Jahren; (2) Australiens Küsten konservieren diese frühen Zeugnisse des Lebens auf der Erde als virulente Organismen. An der Westküste Australiens, beispielsweise, überdauert die Urgeschichte der Erde die Neuzeit, denn vor allem hier auf dem südlichen Kontinent haben urzeitliche Stromatoliten überlebt. Bis in die Gegenwart vermehren sich diese Kleinstlebewesen in dem stark salzhaltigen Wasser vor der westaustralischen Küste und formen marine Gemeinschaften von Mikroorganismen. Die Stromatoliten Westaustraliens säumen prähistorische Küstenlinien, die sich über Jahrtausende in ihrer geologischen Form, in Abhängigkeit von der kontinentalen Drift und der Höhe des Meeresspiegels veränderten. Der Wechsel von feuchten und trockenen Klimazeitaltern schuf vielfältige geologische Formationen und Biotope in der australischen Hemisphäre, die, ähnlich anderen Erdregionen, durch alternierende klimatische Zyklen und wechselnde Pegel von Inlandgewässern und Meeresspiegeln verändert wurden.

Vor etwa 80 bis 45 Millionen Jahren bewegte sich der archaische Erdteil Sahul, Fragment des Superkontinents Gondwana, von der antarktischen Erdmasse nach Norden weg (Garten 3). In geologischer Hinsicht entstand erst am Ende dieses Zeitraums eine australische Hemisphäre, die die Erdflächen des heutigen Australien, Neu Guineas, Tasmaniens und weiterer Eilande umfasste: Die urzeitliche Landmasse Sahul trennte sich von der antarktischen Sphäre. Mit dieser räumlichen Trennung kündigte sich die erdzeitgeschichtlich separate Entwicklung des australischen Kontinents, der nun schemenhaft zu erkennen war, an. Die Datierung von Zäsuren in der Erdzeitgeschichte des archaischen Australien ist problematisch und bleibt Hypothese. Dennoch gehen Erdkundler davon aus, dass klimatische Veränderungen ebenso wie geologische Erdbewegungen Zäsuren der Entwicklung setzen, da diese die Höhe des Meeresspiegels und damit die Formationen von Landmassen und deren Lebensräumen beeinflussten. Schwankungen

Vorkommnisse, die das Entstehen von Leben auf der australischen Landmasse aus erdzeitgeschichtlicher Perspektive dokumentieren.

des Meeresspiegels erfolgten beispielsweise durch Vereisungen der globalen Wassermassen oder Abtauperioden. Die Vorstellung, dass Sahul einen Kontinent umfasste, an dessen Rändern die Höhe des Meeresspiegels in erdzeitgeschichtlichen Intervallen Landerhebungen zwischen Australien und den umliegenden Eilanden trockenlegte oder flutete, ist ein Modell. Dieses Modell hat zunächst den geographischen Raum und seine Form im Auge. Schon Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts brachten Forscher die Theorie sinkender und steigender Meeresspiegel als Folge von Eiszeiten und Tauperioden in die Diskussion. Bereits Anfang des 20. Jahrhunderts wurde die Hypothese zeitweilig existenter und später versunkener Landbrücken verworfen.

Neben die Erforschung von Gestalt und Größe des Raumes und seiner erdzeitgeschichtlichen Veränderung tritt die interdisziplinäre Suche nach Antworten auf die Frage, wann sich erstmals eine Besiedlung desselben vollzog.⁵ Diese Forschungsdiskussion dient dem Zweck, Kriterien zu finden, die eine Zäsursetzung rechtfertigen zwischen prähistorischer Erd- und Klimageschichte und historischer Gestaltung des Kontinents durch den Menschen. Die heutige Forschung stützt die Vorstellung, dass weniger Landbrücken als Wasserstände den Beginn einer Kolonisierung des australischen Kontinents durch den Menschen begünstigten. Dabei handelt es sich um ein komplexes Modell, das drei Faktoren berücksichtigt: das Niveau des Meeresspiegels; die Existenz einer intellektuellen Intention, trennendes Wasser zu überwinden; sowie die handwerkliche und nautische Kompetenz des Zuwanderers aus Übersee, Wasser zielorientiert zu befahren oder anderweitig zu meistern. Auf der Grundlage dieses Modells setzt die Forschung den Beginn einer Kolonisierung Australiens durch den Menschen in den Zeitraum vor 42.000 bis 45.000 Jahren (O'Connell/ Allen 835). Durch die Verwendung unterschiedlicher Datierungsmethoden bei der Bestimmung archäologischer Funde wird der zeitliche Rahmen

⁵ Einen Überblick über den derzeitigen Forschungsstand geben: Jim Allen und James F. O'Connell, "Getting from Sunda to Sahul", 31-46; hier: 32. Und: J.F. O'Connell und J. Allen, "Dating the Colonization of Sahul (Pleistocene Australia-New Guinea)", 835-853.

dieses Modells gleichwohl flexibel gehalten: Vor allem Archäologen, die die radiometrische Messung auf Lichtbasis als aussagekräftige Datierungsmethode bevorzugen, halten einen Zeitraum der Zuwanderung weit davor, und zwar bis vor 60.000 Jahren für möglich.⁶ Aktuell verweist der neueste Forschungsstand auf einen Ort in Arnhem Land, der als derzeit ältester Beleg für das Leben eines Menschen auf dem australischen Kontinent gilt: Die Nutzung der Felshöhle Malakunanja II im heutigen Northern Territory wird auf eine Zeit vor rund 55.000 Jahren datiert (Australian Museum Webpage). Jene Menschen, die hier Schutz fanden, haben den Archäologen zwar nur eine Koordinate ihrer Wanderung auf dem Kontinent hinterlassen. Zweifelsfrei ist immerhin, dass sie oder ihre direkten Vorfahren über See auf das australische Festland kamen, da auch in Zeiten der globalen Vereisung das Meeresniveau an den australischen Küstenlinien so hoch lag, dass es keine durchgängigen Landverbindungen nach Übersee herstellte. Die Zuwanderung erfolgte aller Wahrscheinlichkeit nach von Nord-Westen kommend über eine Wasserenge, die die prähistorischen Landmassen Sahul und Sunda voneinander trennte. Wann sich menschliche Intention, gezielte Planung oder der bloße Zufall als Begleiterscheinung der Neugier mit dem Naturphänomen des Monsoon-Windes zu einer Bewegung nach Australien verdichtete, lässt sich auch mit präzisen Methoden der Wissenschaft nicht rekonstruieren. In der Substanz bleibt die Erkenntnis, dass über Tausende von Jahren Menschen bis in die südlichsten Regionen der Landmasse vordrangen. Am nordwestlichen Zipfel Tasmaniens, auf Hunter Island, fanden Archäologen in einer Höhle Spuren menschlichen Lebens, die vermuten lassen, dass sich hier spätestens vor 23.000 (frühestens vor 35.000) Jahren Aborigines aufhielten (Robson 11; Gilligan 555).

Im Fokus der Beobachtung durch den Menschen stand seine Umwelt. Über Jahrtausende suchten Menschen Veränderungen der Umwelt zu deuten. Die Frage nach den Ursachen mögen sich heutige Wissenschaftler ebenso stellen wie dies vermutlich auch die

⁶ Jim Allen, "Archaeology", 32-33 bietet einen Abriss über die archäologische Forschung in Australien. Peter Read, "Aborigines", 13 datiert die obere Zeitgrenze auf "not more than 100.000 years".

Betroffenen selbst getan haben. Über Mythen und Messungen lässt sich ein prähistorisches Zeitalter rekonstruieren, in dem Land, Tier und Mensch den Einflüssen des globalen Klimas 'ungeschützt' ausgesetzt waren. Landformationen und Lebensformen veränderten sich über lange Zeiträume unter dem Wechsel kalter und warmer Klimaperioden sowie als Ergebnis geologischer Entwicklungen. Eine globale Eisschmelze ließ Wasser zur Raum abgrenzenden Kraft in der australischen Hemisphäre werden. Zuletzt vor etwa 15.000 bis 10.000 Jahren begannen die Wasserstände um Australien dramatisch zu steigen (Hallam 49-50). In die Enge zwischen Tasmanien und den Kontinent drangen vor etwa 13.000 Jahren Wasserfluten ein; diese erdzeitgeschichtliche Entwicklung setzte sich über Jahrtausende fort. Als Ergebnis wiederholte sich vor etwa 8000 bis 7000 Jahren im Norden, was im Süden schon Gestalt genommen hatte. Wasser begann die Torres Strait zu bedecken und New Guinea vom großen australischen Festland zu trennen. In diesem geologischen Zeitraum formten die Wasserstände der Ozeane, die Australien umgeben, den Umriss des Kontinents (Garden 3). Das Leben am Rande des Kontinents veränderte sich. Menschen suchten nach Erklärungen. Die Überlieferung von Mythen ist ein Beleg für die Reflexion über die ökologische Veränderung der eigenen Umwelt durch Menschen, die am Ort des evolutionären Geschehens lebten. Überliefert ist der Glaube einer Gruppe von Aborigines in Westaustralien, der besagt, dass Rottnest Island durch eine Naturkatastrophe vom Festland abbrach. Tradierte Erinnerungen berichten über einen riesigen Wald, dessen Untergrund unter einem ausufernden Feuer einbrach, so dass das Meer in die Senke stürzte und die Insel abtrennte (Moore 8: "Bidjigurdu").

Oft folgte das Wasser dem Menschen als Naturgewalt. Der Mensch wich dann von den Küsten oder Flussmündungen zurück ins Inland. Doch immer suchte er das Wasser als Ressource zum Leben. Bei dieser Suche nach trinkbarem Wasser begegneten Australiens erste Zuwanderer ihrer neuen Umwelt aus dem Antrieb heraus, den Raum, der Leben gewährte, zu gestalten. Der Mensch veränderte seine Umwelt mit jedem Schritt, den er durch das Land ging. Fern der Küste, weit im Inneren des kontinentalen Raumes, speicherte

Australien Wasser. Dieses lag verborgen unter dichter Vegetation oder in tiefen Erdschichten. Im Inneren des Landes bedienten sich Wanderer des Feuers, um zu gestalten. Kontrolliert entfacht Feuer legte beispielsweise Wasserlöcher frei und ermöglichte die dauerhafte Anlage von Quellzugängen (Hallam 51). Die Wasserressourcen im Inneren des Landes waren von jeher von besonderer Bedeutung. Menschen nutzten Quellen und Wasserstellen, um zu überleben. Nutzung und Deutung bedingten einander, sodass Schöpfungsmythen entstanden. Die Aborigines kreierten ihre Sicht auf die Umwelt bei dem Versuch, zu erklären, wie die Quellen des Lebens entstanden.

Die irisch-australische Forscherin Daisy Bates veröffentlichte 1938 in einem Buch über ihr Leben unter den Aborigines eine Auswahl mündlicher Überlieferungen zur mythischen Entstehungsgeschichte des Kontinents. Wohl erstmals schriftlich legte die Autorin die hier überlieferte Erzählung über den Schöpfungsakt von *Yuria Gabbi* nieder, einer alten Wasserstelle der Aborigines nördlich von Fowler's Bay in Südaustralien (Bates Kap.14 & Anhang). Daisy Bates bestätigte, dass sich in den ariden Zonen Australiens um Wasserstellen, die den Aborigines als nicht versiegende Quellen bekannt sind, Schöpfungslegenden ranken. Solche Überlieferungen berichten über mythische "Wasserbringer", deren Werden, Wesen und Wandlung als gegeben erscheinen, deren Gestalt und Name Metapher bleiben und deren Geschichte einer inneren Logik des kreativen Handelns entspringt. Im Fall von *Yuria Gabbi* ist es ein mythischer Habichtsadler, *Walja*, der das Wasser auf die Erde bringt und diese Wasserstelle zu einem Versammlungsort der Aborigines macht. Die Überlieferung berichtet, dass der Habichtsadler *Walja* das Wasser aus dem "weiten, weiten Westen" brachte, um es am Fuß eines Felsens zu hinterlassen. Die Erzählung berichtet weiter über die Verfolgung eines kleinen Falken durch den mächtigen Adler: der Falke nahm *Walja* seine Frau. Daher sammelt *Walja* alle Regenwolken des Westens, um im dichten Regen seinen Rivalen aufzulauern und zu vernichten.

Die überlieferte Geschichte von *Yuria Gabbi* ist in ihrer Bildhaftigkeit

typisch für die Sicht der Aborigines auf die Welt und ihre Entstehung. Charakteristisch ist zudem die Einbindung von Umwelt und Landschaft in das Denken der Aborigines über Werden und Sein: Orte wie *Yuria Gabbi* besitzen spirituelle Bedeutung über die Zeit hinaus. Die Erzählung zeigt hinsichtlich ihrer Gestaltung und Tradierung die Regeln des indigenen Lebens auf. Für die Bewahrung des Schöpfungsmythos wichtig ist die mündliche Überlieferung. Über die Weitergabe von Schöpfungsgeschichten an die nachfolgende Generation erfolgt die dauerhafte Bewahrung von Wissen über das Land, dem sich der Mensch zugehörig fühlt: die tradierte Erzählung über die Entstehung eines bedeutsamen Ortes illustriert diese Form von Erinnerung. In dem hier geschilderten Fall handelt es sich, geologisch gesehen, um einen Fels, einen offen liegenden Schichtenkopf aus Granit, der inmitten einer trockenen Region auf Grund einer Wasserstelle von dichtem Bewuchs umgeben ist. Die indigene Überlieferung erklärt nicht, sondern beschreibt einen Ort, den die Aborigines traditionell für Zeremonien und die Jagd nutzten. Diese verankert den Schöpfungsglauben im Jetzt und Immer: die Schilderung der Schöpfung von *Yuria Gabbi* ist eine mythenhafte, symbolkräftige Geschichte über das Entstehen von Naturphänomen. Eine solche Naturerscheinung ist der Zyklus von Trockenzeiten und Monsunregen, der über das Jahr große Teile des australischen Kontinents erfasst. Des Weiteren gibt die Entstehungsgeschichte von *Yuria Gabbi* Hinweise auf markante Felsformationen und Naturerscheinungen, die mit dem Tun der Schöpfungswesen in Verbindung gebracht werden. Zeit und Raum, Geschichte und Lebensumwelt gelangen zueinander, werden zu einer Einheit. Aus europäischer Sicht wird hier Erdzeitgeschichte zur Vorgeschichte des Landes und dessen Bewohnern. Aus Sicht der Aborigines ist diese jedoch nicht Prähistorie auf einer Zeitleiste. Vielmehr spiegelt dieselbe universale Zeitdichte, die in der Chronologie keinem Zeitwert entspricht und daher keine Zeitfolge ist, sondern eine Wirklichkeit umfasst, die allein der intuitiven Logik kreativer Schöpfung folgt. Bis in die jüngste Vergangenheit fand sich für dieses Phänomen einer Zeitimagination die irreführende Bezeichnung *Traumzeit*.⁷

⁷ Die Forschungsdiskussion zu Deutung, Entstehungsgeschichte und Problematik

Die mündliche Überlieferung der Aborigines skizziert eine imaginäre Zeit, die von den europäischen Siedlern in der Bedeutung missverstanden und daher unwissend als *Traumzeit* übersetzt wurde. Die narrative Beschreibung der Umwelt durch die Aborigines, deren Entstehungsmythen sich vielfältig und breitgefächert in Geschichten der/einer Erinnerung widerspiegeln, entzieht sich bis heute Denkmustern, die die europäisch geprägte Moderne auf den fernen Kontinent brachte.⁸ Unwissen und Unsicherheit vieler europäischer Forscher führten seit dem 18. Jahrhundert zu lange währenden Falschdeutungen der indigenen Kultur. In besonderer Weise spiegelt dies das Zustandekommen des Kunstwortes *dreamtime*. Der von englischsprachigen Forschern geprägte Begriff umreißt pauschal und beschreibt ungenau – und zwar das vermeintlich in der Vorzeit beendete Wirken von spirituellen Kräften aus der Schöpfungsgeschichte der australischen Aborigines. Im Kern verdeutlicht sich am Begriff *dreamtime* die interkulturelle Diskrepanz in der Wahrnehmung von Zeit, Vergangenheit und Gegenwart.⁹

Spencer und Gillen sahen sich auch mit Aspekten der Sprachforschung konfrontiert. Dabei spielte das Aranda-Wort *Alcheringa* (*altyerrengge*) eine wichtige Rolle. Bei der Übertragung aus dem lokalen Dialekt der Aborigines bemühten sich die Forscher um Deutung, wenngleich ihnen der tiefere Einblick in die indigene

der Verwendung des Begriffs *dreamtime* ist umfangreich und komplex. Als geeignete Einführungslektüre sei u.a. empfohlen: Gerhard Leitner, *Die Aborigines Australiens* und Howard Morphy, "Dreamtime". S. insbesondere auch: Elisabeth Strohscheidt, "Über die Auswirkungen der britischen Eroberung auf das Leben von Aborigines und Torres Strait Islanders", 106-107.

⁸ Colin Simpsons Übersetzungsversuch spiegelt das Spektrum missverständlicher Deutung; *Adam in Ochre*, S. 220: "From the *dream* meaning of the Arunta tribe's *Alchera* (which means also *beginning-time*)."

⁹ Der bis heute verbreitete Begriff *dreamtime* geht auf eine Expedition des britischen Anthropologen und Biologen Walter Baldwin Spencer und seines Forschungskollegen, des Sub-Protector of the Aborigines in Alice Springs Francis James Gillen, zurück. Im Jahr 1894 unternahmen beide unter der Führung von W.A. Horn eine Studienreise zum Volk der Aranda (Arrernte) in Zentralaustralien. Den Schwerpunkt der Feldforschung legten Baldwin und Spencer auf die Gruppe der Arunta. Daher wird an dieser Stelle verkürzt auf die *Arunta People* Bezug genommen. Die Autoren verstanden ihren 1899 und in revidierter Fassung 1927 veröffentlichten Expeditionsbericht als "Studie eines Steinzeit-Volkes".

Sprachgeschichte verwehrt blieb. Sie wollten herausstellen, dass die Arunta durch die Akklamation des Wortes *Alcheringa* (*altyerreng*) Schöpfung und Vorzeit beschworen. Der im Kern richtige Ansatz stieß naturgemäß an die Grenzen linguistischen Wissens und semantischer Deutung, vor allem auf Grund mangelnder Kenntnis der lokalen Sprachwurzeln. Beide Forscher tendierten dazu, den Begriff in das europäische Denkmuster zu übertragen: "eine weit entfernt liegende Vergangenheit, auf die die frühesten Stammes-Traditionen Bezug nehmen" und "in welcher die mythischen Ahnen des Stammes" lebten, erschienen als geeignete Umschreibungen des Phänomens.¹⁰ Eher unbedacht als beabsichtigt bahnten diese Annäherungen an Kultur und Sprache der zentralaustralischen Aborigines den Weg zu irreführender Verallgemeinerung. Dies geschah, obwohl Baldwin und Spencer die Vielschichtigkeit aboriginaler Tradition im Auge hatten. Es ist anzunehmen, dass die Publikation ihrer Forschungsarbeit half, den simplifizierenden Begriff *dreamtime* zu prägen (Strohscheidt 106-107). Der erst in der Folge der Datenaufnahme unternommene Versuch, in der europäischen Semantik eine Deutungsparallele zu finden, die das Weltbild der zentralaustralischen Arunta People abstrakt widerspiegeln sollte, um dieses auf andere Stammeskulturen zu übertragen, gilt als gescheitert. Irreführend wirkt der Begriff auf die meisten Aborigines auch deshalb, weil das Kunstwort *dreamtime* deren – grundsätzlich nicht evolutionäre – Deutung der Schöpfung ausblendet und diese zudem in das Reich phantastischer Dichtung rückt. In der Sicht der Aborigines bilden Vorzeit und Gegenwart gleichwohl keinen Gegensatz und sind in der Symbiose reales Sein. Daher benutzen viele Aborigines eigene, regional spezifische Termini, um ihren bildreichen Glauben an das unentwegte Dasein der Schöpfung zu bezeichnen.¹¹

¹⁰ Spencer und Gillen, *The Native Tribes of Central Australia*, S. 73, Anm.1 und Wortliste, 645.

¹¹ Mittlerweile hat sich die interkulturell aufgeschlossene Öffentlichkeit der Diskussion gestellt: Heute gilt das Pidginwort *dreaming* als akzeptierte Begriffsvariante, um einen Zustand der Sensibilität und Rezeptionsbereitschaft eingeweihter Aborigines zu bezeichnen, in dem sich diesen das verborgene Sein, d.h. das Dasein der Schöpfungswesen in Natur und Umwelt offenbart (Morton 3 und: "Dreaming" 122). In dem komplexen Konzept des *dreaming* verdichtet sich tradiertes Wissen über Werden und Sein der Umwelt. Mehr noch: Es verdichtet

Mythologie der Aborigines und Geschichtsdeutung durch die europäischen Forscher komplettieren sich zum Bericht über Werden und Sein Australiens. Für die Aborigines bleibt Erinnerung eine Deutung des *Daseins*. Trotz fachlicher Defizite definierten Baldwin Spencer und Francis Gillen ihre Rolle 1896/7 richtig: Sie zeichneten Geschichte auf, die nicht geschrieben stand, sondern präsent war – somit gelebt wurde. Als außerhalb der indigenen Kultur stehende Forscher erkannten sie, dass es sich bei dem Bericht der Aborigines über Werden und Dasein ihrer Umwelt um eine virulente Form nicht abgeschlossener Erinnerung handelte. Während der anthropologischen Expedition in das Gebiet um Alice Springs wurden Spencer und Gillen *Zeit*-Zeugen in der weitesten Bedeutung des Wortes. Die Arunta People ließen die Forscher (ohne sie gleichwohl in Details einzuweißen) partizipieren an der Gewissheit, dass ihre Völker Teil einer ungebrochenen Verbindung zwischen Schöpfung und Sein seien. Spencer und Gillen protokollierten Zeremonien an Orten, "wo (diese durch Aborigines) im Alcheringa wie jetzt" vollzogen wurden.¹² Mit dieser Formulierung im Expeditionsbericht brachten beide Forscher zum Ausdruck, dass sie, im Prinzip, das Denken der Aborigines verstanden hatten. Das Werden *und* Sein indigener Kulturgeschichte erwies sich für Spencer und Gillen als untrennbares Geschehen, das gleichwohl schwer zu umschreiben war. Daisy Bates' zitierte Überlieferung zum Wasserloch *Yuria Gabbi* verdeutlicht dies ohne Deutungsversuche.

Es ist erlaubt zu fragen, welchem Denkansatz die Erzählung über *Yuria Gabbi* folgt: Standen diffuser Schöpfungsglaube oder konkrete Beobachtung am Beginn der Überlieferung? Klar erkennen lässt sich ein Verständnis für das Prinzip von Ursache und Wirkung: die Aborigines, die sich über Jahrtausende am Wasserloch *Yuria Gabbi*

sich hier lokale und regionale Kenntnis über jene alle Zeiten überdauernden Netzwerke heiliger Orte, an denen die Schöpfungskräfte im Jetzt und Immer verweilen. Dazu gehören Orte, an denen Wasser zu finden ist. Zum übergeordneten Aspekt indigener Religion informiert umfassend das Standardwerk von Corinna Erckenbrecht.

¹² Spencer und Gillen, *The Native Tribes of Central Australia*, 188: "(...) where in the Alcheringa, as now, the final act of the ceremony was performed".

versammelten, sahen Abdrücke von Habichtskrallen auf Felsen, hörten charakteristische Vogellaute und erkannten den Wechsel von Trocken- und Regenzeiten als markante Zeichen ihrer unmittelbaren Umwelt. Hier suchten sie Erklärungen. Doch schnell wird klar, dass sich die beschriebenen Geschehnisse außerhalb linearer Zeitleisten dartun. Überall dort, wo die in sich vielfältige indigene Kultur der Aborigines ihre lokal gebundenen Schöpfungsgeschichten überliefert hat, sahen sich die Europäer, die Jahrtausende später einwanderten, konfrontiert mit einem diametral entgegengesetzten Verständnis von geschichtlichem Werden. Rationales Denken, die Suche nach Kausalität, logische Analyse und das lineare Zeitmuster kollidierten in der Gesamtheit mit dem alle Bereiche des Lebens durchdringenden Weltbild der Aborigines, das besagt, Vergangenheit und Gegenwart bilden keinen Gegensatz, da die Kräfte der Schöpfung in Flora, Fauna, Mensch, Erde und Wasser als lebendige Wesen verweilen. In dieser Sicht auf das Dasein gibt es keine Entwicklung weg vom Schöpfungsakt.¹³ Im Verständnis der indigenen Kulturen Australiens ist es die *Zeitlosigkeit* universaler Werte, die das nur scheinbar Vergangene in der Gegenwart präsent werden lässt. In dieser Wahrnehmung der Umwelt, die auch der kulturellen Vielfalt der Aborigines Rechnung trägt, spiegelt sich das Werden und Wesen des Kontinents und seiner Bewohner nicht als historische Entwicklung, sondern als facettenreiches Sein im Universum: Ein Sein in einem nicht zu messenden Raum, ein Sein ohne metrische Zeit. Ein Sein auf der Erde, in der Luft, im Wasser und dank des Wassers.

Wasser ist die Voraussetzung allen Lebens. Die Wertschöpfung des Wassers durch den Menschen ermöglichte sein Kommen und Bleiben in Australien – aber auch sein Wandern durch den Kontinent. In den mündlichen Überlieferungen der Aborigines finden sich unzählige Hinweise auf das als Realität wahrgenommene Wirken der Schöpfungswesen. Der daraus abgeleitete Totemkult nimmt in

¹³ Zum Ansatz des linearen Zeitdenkens in der britischen Kultur vgl.: Harold Mytum, "Materiality and Memory", 381-396.

vielfältiger Weise Bezug auf die Natur.¹⁴ Dem Wasser kommt in diesem Kontext zentrale Bedeutung zu: Als Ahnen verehrt werden Tiere des Wassers, der Regen als Naturerscheinung und Wasserlöcher. Bekannt ist der nur unvollständig erhaltene *Frosch-Gesang-Zyklus*, der von Teilen der nördlichen Arabana Sprachgruppe überliefert wird.¹⁵ Der sogenannte *Frosch-Gesang* hat seinen Ursprung in der Region um Oodnadatta (Südaustralien). Es handelt sich bei dieser Überlieferung im Kern um die Rekonstruktion einer Wanderung. Die großen und kleinen Frösche, die in dieser Gegend von einzelnen lokalen Stämmen als Ahnen verehrt werden, brachen einst auf, um von ihrem heimatlichen Wasserloch zu anderen Wasserstellen zu wandern. Dabei verdrängten diese Frosch-Ahnen fremde Völker von ihren Wasserstellen und ließen diese zu Gestein verzaubern. Es ist die Interpretation erlaubt, dass das Wissen der wahrscheinlich als Totem verehrten Ahnen vorgibt, welchen Weg diese Wanderung von Wasserloch zu Wasserloch nimmt. Am Ende dieses Zugs der großen und kleinen Frösche durch Wasserlöcher, Bäche und Sumpflöcher steht die Ankunft in einem ariden Land, wo sich die klein gewordenen großen und kleinen Frosch-Völker im feuchten Untergrund eingraben. Die hier zitierte Überlieferung lässt vermuten, dass die Urheber der Geschichte ein für das Inland Australiens seltenes Wetterphänomen beschreiben: Wenn der große Regen im Inneren Zentralaustraliens nach Jahren der Trockenheit fällt, überschwemmen die Wassermassen das Land und füllen die trockenen Bachläufe.¹⁶ Unter dem Einfluss der wiederkehrenden Sonneneinstrahlung weichen die gewaltigen Wassermassen nach kurzer Zeit. Wenn sich das Wasser zurückzieht, brechen im feuchtsumpfigen Untergrund Saaten auf und Tiere aller Art, auch Frösche, unterbrechen ihr Dasein im Verborgenen, um an das Tageslicht zu kommen. Seit Jahrmillionen erwacht unter der Kraft des Wassers

¹⁴ Spencer und Gillen, *The Native Tribes of Central Australia*, 73: "Every Arunta native thinks that his ancestor in the Alcheringa was the descendant of the animal or plant, or at least was immediately associated with the object the name of which he bears as his totemic name."

¹⁵ Der Gesang findet sich veröffentlicht und übersetzt in: White und Lampert, "Creation and Discovery", in: *Australians: To 1788*, 3-23, hier: 4-7

¹⁶ Spencer und Gillen, *The Native Tribes of Central Australia*, 4 stellen ihrem Forschungsbericht die Beschreibung solcher Wettereinflüsse auf das Land der Aranda (Arrernte) voran.

Leben in ansonsten ariden Gebieten Australiens. Der *Frosch-Gesang-Zyklus* nimmt Bezug auf dieses für Australien typische Wetterphänomen. Mehr noch: Der indigene Gesang rekonstruiert Wanderungen von Stämmen und veranschaulicht das totemistische Glaubenssystem, wonach der Mensch mit Rücksicht handelt, um die *daseienden*, d.h. ruhenden Kräfte der Schöpfung in Wasser und Erde nicht zu verletzen.

Die umfassende Bedeutung, die Wasser als Quelle für das Überleben sowie als metaphysische Quelle im Leben der australischen Aborigines besitzt, greift tief in ihre Kultur und verbindet die unterschiedlichsten Sprachgruppen. D.J. Mulvaney beschreibt, das "in einem riesigen Kontinent, der von Fußgängern bewohnt wurde, Entfernung sich nach der (Lauf)Zeit zwischen Wasserlöchern bemaß" (Mulvaney 92). Edward John Eyre fand dieses Denkmuster bestätigt während seiner Expedition nach Westaustralien 1840/41, als ihm Aborigines bei der aussichtslos erscheinenden Suche nach Wasser halfen (Report). Orte, an denen die Erde verborgen Wasser speicherte, Flüsse sich teilten oder Bachläufe saisonal Ströme von Regenwasser führten, erhielten im Namen einen Hinweis darauf. Zahlreiche australische Ortsnamen, die auf Benennungen durch Aborigines zurückgehen, verraten in der Gegenwart, dass in der Vorzeit (oder wiederkehrend) an diesen Plätzen Wasserlöcher, Fluss- oder Bachmündungen, Wasserkaskaden, Quellen oder Sümpfe lagen (oder liegen), Wassertiere zu sehen oder der Klang des nahen Meeres zu hören war. Über unterschiedliche Sprachgruppen und deren uneinheitliche Wortfindungen hinweg lässt sich eines resümieren: Vor allem Orte, an denen Wasser aus der Erde hervorquellt(e) oder über Mündungen hinweg flutet(e), waren/sind traditionelle Orte der Begegnung. Mandurah in Westaustralien deutet in seinem Ortsnamen auf eine alte Wasserstelle hin und damit verbunden, auf einen frühen Versammlungsplatz der lokalen Aborigines.¹⁷ Meekatharra ist dagegen die Bezeichnung für einen Ort

¹⁷ Vgl. hierzu in Aplin, u.a., Hg., *Australians: Events and Places*, die historisch kommentierten Einträge zu folgenden, exemplarisch ausgewählten Ortsnamen aus ganz Australien: Beltana (351), Benalla (410), Ceduna (346), Cootamundra (250), Mandurah (451), Mareeba (326), Meekatharra (442), Milparinka (226), Narrogin (467), Parramatta (271), Wollongong (264) und Yarrawonga (417). In

in Westaustralien, an dem "keine gute Wasserstelle" lag. Sprache als Quelle der historischen Erinnerung rekonstruiert in diesem Kontext frühe australische Umwelt-Geschichte. Zeremonien und ihre Tradierung durch Praktizierung stellen eine weitere Quelle zu diesem Aspekt dar.

Eine wichtige Zeremonie der zentralaustralischen Aborigines dient der Hervorbringung von Regen über dem ausgetrockneten Land. Der detaillierten Beschreibung, die Baldwin Spencer und Francis Gillen über einen solchen Ritus niederlegten, lässt sich entnehmen, dass gerade in einem der trockensten Gebiete Australiens eine Untergruppe der Arunta People das Wasser als Totem trägt (Repr. 1968: 189-193). Arunta, die das Wasser als Totem verehren, besitzen nach der Überlieferung die Gabe des Regenmachens. Das Stammesgebiet, das in der Sprache der Arunta als Land des Regens bezeichnet wird, dient als geweihter Ort der Zeremonie. Das überlieferte Wissen um die geheime Kraft des Regenmachens in der Hand des Eingeweihten; der Glaube an Ahnen, die die Naturerscheinung des Regens symbolisieren; die Vielzahl differenzierter Bezeichnungen für unterschiedliche Erscheinungsformen von Wasser: All dies belegt die universale Bedeutung des Wassers für die Aborigines nicht allein in Zentralaustralien.

Noch zu Beginn der 1990er Jahre lieferten archäologische Funde die wichtigsten Erkenntnisse über die Vorzeit Australiens. Heute dient die Auffindung der Hinterlassenschaften menschlichen Lebens als eine Quelle des Wissens unter anderen. Für die Rekonstruktion frühen Lebens auf dem Fünften Kontinent, das zeigen Forschung und Quellenlage von heute, ist ein möglichst breit gefächelter interdisziplinärer Analyseansatz erforderlich. Doch noch immer lässt sich mit der ergänzenden Auswertung archäologischer Funde, d.h. jener Hinterlassenschaften oder Orte, die auf menschliche Handlungen in der Vorzeit hindeuten, Wichtiges an Erkenntnissen

allen genannten Ortsnamen spiegelt sich die indigene Erinnerung an Orte, an denen bereits in archaischer Zeit Wasserressourcen gefunden wurden, der Klang des Wasser verhallte oder Wasservögel zu sehen waren.

über die Inbesitznahme Australiens durch die Vorfahren der heutigen Aborigines gewinnen. Mit der Klassifizierung und Datierung von zeremoniell beerdigten Skeletten, Steinwerkzeugen, Schleiffurchen an Wasserlöchern, geritzter Felskunst, Farbpigmenten, Essensabfällen von Schalentieren aus Flüssen und Muschelperlmutter aus dem Ozean vervollständigen moderne Wissenschaftler die prähistorischen Koordinaten, mit denen sie die Orte der Zuwanderung nach Australien sowie einer Durchwanderung des Kontinents bestimmen und zeitlich vermessen.¹⁸ Dabei werden Archäologen, Anthropologen, Historiker, Geologen und Klimaforscher zu Berichterstattem über mythische Wanderungen, erdzeitgeschichtliche Entwicklungen, und interethnische Kulturberührungen. Wer Veränderungen des Klimas oder den Wechsel der Jahreszeiten in die Kausalität seiner Darstellung einbezieht, wird erkennen, dass es die sensorische Wahrnehmungsfähigkeit des indigenen Menschen für seine Umwelt war, die zu Migrationen über weite geographische Distanzen 'bewegte'. Standortwechsel innerhalb dieses Bewegungsrasters erfuhren einen wichtigen Impetus immer auch aus der lebenswichtigen Suche nach Wasser.¹⁹

Bei der Recherche nach Belegen bleibt zu berücksichtigen, dass eine nicht kalkulierbare Zahl von relevanten Relikten heute unter dem Meeresspiegel ruht, da sich seit der Zuwanderung der ersten Menschen nach Australien die kontinentalen Küstenlinien veränderten. Der Anstieg des Meeresspiegels, der sich über

¹⁸ D.J. Mulvaney verweist auf Funde von Perlmutter, die weitab von ihren Ursprungsorten an der Kimberley Küste im Inland aufgetan wurden. Ähnliche Artefakte, die Nutz-, Tausch- oder Kultzwecken dienten, gelangten auch von Cape York in das Innere des Kontinents: "In this manner, products from the Indian and Pacific Oceans moved gradually across Central Australia (...)"; Mulvaney, 93. Vgl. zu Funden in Westaustralien folgenden Aspekt, den Balme und Morse, 799, herausstellen: "Whether they were brought in land by the manufacturers, or by specially ornamented people, these beads provided a symbolic language that somehow kept the early peoples of Australia in touch with the sea."

¹⁹ "Water is indeed the most critical resource, so the desert people plan their movements according to its availability. They frequently follow well-defined waterhole routes, which are often said to mark the paths of ancestral beings who created the water sources in the course of their Dreaming adventures"; Tonkinson, 200.

Jahrtausende um weit mehr als 100 Meter hob und erst vor rund 6000 Jahren das heutige Niveau erreichte, hat die Spuren menschlichen Daseins an den prähistorischen Küsten verschwinden lassen (Aplin/Events and Places: Time Line, o.S.). In der Gegenwart lokalisierten Forscher hinter den vorzeitlichen Küstenlinien Orte, an denen in frühester Zeit Menschen kürzer oder länger verweilten. Dem Zugriff des Wassers, jedoch nicht dem austrocknenden Wind entzogen, hat sich ein anderer Fundort: In ihrer Übersicht von 1987 kartierten J. Peter White und Ronald Lampert weniger als fünf Orte, an denen die aufgefundenen Relikte menschlichen Daseins ein Alter von über 30.000 Jahren aufwiesen (White und Lampert 16). Es waren dies u.a. Fundorte in der Region des Swan River in Westaustralien und an den vorzeitlichen Willandra Lakes im Inneren des Landes. Es gilt als bewiesen, dass der prähistorische Australier ursprünglich ein Küstenbewohner war, der aus tropischer Breite kam. Neugier oder Notwendigkeit ließ ihn unbeirrbar in das Inland vordringen. Entlang des Pfads zu Wasserreservoirs folgten diese Menschen einer Flora und Fauna, die entlang derselben Wege wuchs, wanderte und vom Wasser abhängig überlebte, die der Mensch beschritt. Auch im küstenfernen, einst fruchtbaren und fischreichen Seengebiet des vorzeitlichen Willandra (New South Wales) lebten in prähistorischer Zeit Menschen. Einer von ihnen war "der Mann vom Lake Mungo". Als er starb, gab ihm sein Clan ein rituelles Erdbegräbnis. Mit rotem Ocker zierten sie seine sterblichen Überreste.²⁰ Das fast vollständig erhaltene Skelett ist eines der ältesten Zeugnisse der Menschheit. Die Grabstätte, in dem das männliche Skelett 1974 von dem Geomorphologen Jim Bowler und seinem Forschungsteam entdeckt wurde, datiert vermutlich auf ein Alter von 28.000 bis 30.000 Jahre. Noch hat sich die Wissenschaft, die an der Optimierung der DNA-Analyse arbeitet, im Fall des Fundes am Lake Mungo auf kein endgültiges Ergebnis geeinigt.

Seit Jahrtausenden hinterließen die Aborigines Spuren ihrer Existenz in Regenwald- und Wüstenzonen, an Meeresküsten und

²⁰ Weblink

http://www.cap.nsw.edu.au/bb_site_intro/specialplaces/special_places_st3/LA;
Artikel: "Lake Mungo"; <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/science/nature/2776697.stm>

Flussmündungen. Vor etwa 15.000 Jahren zogen sich beispielsweise am East Alligator River im heutigen Arnhem Land Menschen in Höhlen zurück, die zu diesem Zeitpunkt noch rund 500 Kilometer von der offenen See entfernt lagen. Erdzeitforscher wie Sylvia J. Hallam vermuten, dass sich das Meer den Schutzgrotten über die Jahrtausende näherte und bereits vor 6000 Jahren auf nur 40 Kilometer herangerückt war (55). Dies veränderte nicht nur den Charakter der Landschaft und damit die Orte des Lebens, sondern ebenso das Nahrungsangebot: die neuen Küstenbewohner dieser Breite, deren Vorfahren einst den Kontinent an anderen Küstenverläufen betreten hatten, fanden Geschmack nicht nur an der Süßwurz, sondern ebenso an Schalentieren des Meeres. Das Wasser und der sich verändernde Pegel an den kontinentalen Rändern sowie im Inneren des Landes ließ Menschen, Tiere und Pflanzen Anpassungen vornehmen, die deren Überleben in Australien über die Jahrtausende ermöglichten. Die heutige Forschung geht gleichwohl davon aus, dass der archaische Australier – auch hinsichtlich seines sozial und ethnisch differenzierten Erscheinungsbildes – kein reines Nomadendasein führte (Denham u.a. 634-648).

Darstellungsinhalte vieler Artefakte deuten darauf hin, dass Wasser, seine Erscheinungsformen und das Leben mit der lebenswichtigen Ressource relevante Aspekte in der Wahrnehmung der frühen Bewohner Australiens waren – auch jenseits seines Werts als Trinkwasser. An diesem Punkt einer historischen Darstellung, die der Wertschöpfung des Wassers durch die ersten Australier als Mittel und Zweck der Gestaltung früher australischer Geschichte auf der Spur ist, gilt es, eine weitere Tür in das schriftlose Archiv indigener Erinnerung zu öffnen. Mündliche Überlieferungen, archäologische Alltags-Funde und geographische Erkenntnisse stützen als relevante Quellen die Rekonstruktion des Geschehenen. Doch das schriftlose Archiv der australischen Vorzeit enthält mehr: Kunstvolle visuelle Darstellungen sind greifbare Spiegel mentaler Reflexion – die Vorfahren der heutigen Aborigines gaben ihr Ausdruck in Bildern. Mit ihrer kreativen Imaginationskraft schufen Australiens Aborigines seit jeher Bilder – in Erzählung und darüber

hinaus in visueller Darstellung. Metaphern gingen ein in die bildliche Darstellung. Dabei konstruierten sie archaische Archive umweltgeschichtlicher Erinnerung. Sie entwarfen figürliche Abbildungen von Wesen, die Wolken und Regen bringen, formten schablonenartige Abdrücke von Tieren des Meeres und der Flüsse oder verewigten Wetterphänomene in Symbolen wie das Zucken des Blitzes im Monsun. Wasser als Metapher des Lebens floss (und fließt) in vielfältiger Betrachtungsweise und Darstellungsart ein in den materiellen Beleg der Erinnerung – in entlegenen Gegenden des Kontinents der Nachwelt verwittert, doch beständig auf Stein hinterlassen; in erreichbaren Aborigines-Communities von heute dagegen aussagekräftig präsentiert in zeitgenössischen Gemälden, die eine Symbiose von aboriginaler Gedächtniskultur und zeitgenössischer Kunstdeutung durch die westliche Moderne bilden. Diese Gedankenwelt des frühen Australiers, die im Gedächtnis der modernen Aborigines-Kultur virulent ist, gehört in die historische Betrachtung.²¹

Eine große Anzahl von bildlichen Darstellungen findet sich auf der Cape York Halbinsel, in Arnhem Land und in den Kimberleys. Auf Grund der Vielfalt der verwendeten Materialien, dem wechselhaften Einfluss des Klimas und der regionalen Verteilung weit auseinander liegender Funde sowie der Überlagerung von Bildinhalten an einzelnen Fundorten besteht für Forscher die Möglichkeit, in die Tiefe zeitlicher Vorgeschichte und räumlicher Geschichtsdichte zu dringen. Dabei lassen sich (nur vordergründig im Widerspruch zum indigenen Zeitverständnis) Chronologien kultureller Artikulation rekonstruieren, Galerien mentaler Wahrnehmung auffinden und evolutionäre Veränderungen der Umwelt nachvollziehen. Wie nahmen die ersten Bewohner Australiens über eine lange Zeit die sich stetig wandelnde Umwelt wahr? Mit welchen Mitteln schufen sie bildliche Darstellungen? Nahmen sie Felsritzungen vor? Arbeiteten sie mit Zeichenschablonen? Die prähistorischen Künstler schufen mythische

²¹ Elisabeth Bähr liefert in unzähligen Analysen Belege für die Einbindung der aboriginalen Gedächtniskultur in die Kunst der australischen Moderne; s.u.a. Bähr, 49: "Within the Indigenous concept of country certain physical places are inseparably connected with spiritual practice. At these sites, where ceremonies were and are performed, the human world connects with that of the ancestors."

Symbole und realistische Darstellungen. Bezüge auf den Zyklus der Monsunzeiten finden sich beispielsweise in den weitgehend undatierten *Wan(d)jina* Felsmalereien in der Kimberley Region West-Australiens (Mulvaney 107-112). Auch wenn die Datierung der prähistorischen Darstellungen für die moderne Forschung problematisch bleibt, so stellen die Bildinhalte für die Aborigines einen zeitlosen Wert dar, weil diese Bezug nehmen auf die Entstehung ihrer Umwelt. Erst in der Gegenwart respektiert die Politik diesen Denkansatz weitestgehend. Im Jahr 2004 verhandelte das *National Native Title Tribunal* über die Anerkennung des *Native Title* für eine Region in den nördlichen Kimberleys. Als Mindestalter der hier vorhandenen *Wan(d)jina* Felsmalereien legten Experten einen Zeitraum von wenigstens 600 bis 100 Jahren fest. Historische Relevanz gewann eine Argumentation jenseits der Zeitachse: Für die Anerkennung eines Titels, der das Land als indigenes Erbe auszeichnen sollte, suchten Befürworter ein Gewohnheitsrecht abzuleiten, das auf dem Glauben der hier ansässigen Aborigines an die Schöpfung des "Landes und der Wasser und was darauf und darin lebt", fußt (Proposed Determination 9,12,18).

Hinweise auf eine Mythenbildung, die den Kontext der Lebenspendenden Macht des Wassers aufnimmt, reichen zeitlich unendlich weiter. Die Gegend der Kimberleys gilt als eine der frühesten Siedlungsgebiete, in die die Vorfahren der heutigen Aborigines aus nördlichen Regionen einwanderten. Felsmalereien dieser westaustralischen Landschaft erzählen die Geschichte von Wolkengeistern, die nach der Überlieferung die Schöpfung von Wasser, Land und Kreatur vornahmen (Mehling 225-227). Kennzeichnend für die figürlichen Darstellungen der *Wan(d)jina* sind die stilisierten mundlosen Gesichter, die sich vor weißlichem Hintergrund abheben. Strahlenkränze umgeben die Köpfe. Symbolisieren solche Darstellungen Geister, die machtvoll über die Wolkenmassen regieren, aus denen zuckende Blitze donnern und dem Land den Monsunregen bringen? Jede Antwort bleibt Vermutung. Klar ist: Darstellungen dieser Art finden sich nicht auf der Cape York Halbinsel, deren Lebensraum in historischer Zeit dauerhaft von Wasser umgeben war. Die Entstehung von starken

Gewittern, die häufig durch Strahlenkränze symbolisiert werden, kennzeichnet dagegen typischerweise den Beginn der Regenzeit im trocken gefallenem Hinterland des Kontinents.

Darstellungen auf Felsen finden sich an ungezählten Orten Australiens. Der Kontinent besitzt mit wenigstens 100.000 Fundorten eine der größten Konzentrationen vorgeschichtlicher Felskunst. Australiens kontinentale Galerie der Felskunst spiegelt unterschiedliche Techniken und Formen der Bildkomposition (Taçon u.a. 419). Archäologen und Ethnologen dringen immer tiefer in das Gedächtnis der Vorzeit und die Erinnerung der Aborigines. Im Jahr 2009 entdeckte ein Forscherteam im Gebiet der Wellington Range in Arnhem Land schablonenartige Abdrücke, die jeweils einen Vogel abbilden. Vergleichende Untersuchungen deuten auf ein Mindestalter dieser Vogeldarstellungen von 9000 Jahren hin (424). Der Fundort, der von den hier ansässigen Aborigines der Maung Sprachgruppe als *Djulirri* benannt wurde, weist weit über 3000 Bilddarstellungen auf (416). Zum heutigen Zeitpunkt gilt *Djulirri* als größter australischer Fundort von Pigmentbildern auf Fels. In Rot, Gelb und Weiß hinterließen Aboriginal-Künstler aus verschiedenen Epochen bis in die jüngste Zeit hinein mit solchen Bildern Beschreibungen ihrer Umwelt. Die ortsansässigen Aborigines, Angehörige des Lamilami Clans, die 1952 erstmals einem Nicht-Indigenen, dem Photographen Axel Poignant, Zugang zu dem Felskunst-Komplex gewährten, deuten diesen Ort als "Geschichtsbücher" und "Bibliotheken", in denen sich der Bericht über "wechselnde Zeiten, Beziehungen zum Land und zu anderen Kreaturen" findet (418).

Die als äußerst selten geltenden Vogel-Darstellungen und die Analyse ihrer Entstehungszeit lassen vage Vermutungen über das Vorkommen (oder Verschwinden) von Tieren in Zeiten vor und nach einem Klimawechsel in einer bestimmten Region zu. Die älteste Datierung der frühesten Felskunst in Arnhem Land ist schwierig vorzunehmen, wenngleich die heutige Wissenschaft davon ausgeht, dass ein flexibles Zeitspektrum von 4000 bis höchstens 15.000

Jahren anzusetzen ist (Hallam 54, 68).²² Trotz der schwierigen Deutungslage sind für diesen Zeitraum zwei eigenständige Erkenntnisse zulässig. Erstens: Australiens ältesten Zuwanderern war es gelungen, an entlegene Orte des Kontinents zu gelangen, sich über weite Regionen des Landes zu verteilen, mit der Folge einer sich verdichtenden Bevölkerung. Zweitens: In den gleichen Zeitraum fällt der individuelle Entschluss eines Menschen, einen Vogel auf Stein zu verewigen. Ob Gegenstand und Regung Bestandteile eines Rituals, einer vorzubereitenden Mahlzeit oder einer spontanen Freude an der Kunst waren, lässt sich nicht rekonstruieren. Es bleibt das Wissen um Menschen, die in Wechselbeziehung zu einer von anderen Kreaturen belebten Umwelt standen (Taçon 2010: 426). Diese Umwelt war ein Lebensraum, der ohne Wasser nicht denkbar war.

Am Ende der Geschichtsstunde bleibt festzuhalten: Der Metamorphose des Wassers gleich geben sich die Hinterlassenschaften über die Wertschöpfung desselben durch die ersten Bewohner Australiens – variantenreich. Dabei kristallisieren sich folgende Aspekte der Wahrnehmung heraus, die überregional relevant sind: Die mündliche Überlieferung berichtet im Wesentlichen über die Schöpfung des Wassers und des Landes; des Menschen; der Flora und Fauna; daneben finden sich Anspielungen auf Migrationen über Wasser und Land, die nicht zuletzt durch die Belege der modernen Wissenschaft verifiziert werden. Eine etwaige Erinnerung an die Begegnung mit den Europäern tritt trotz der historischen Relevanz dieses Akts für die Aborigines in den Hintergrund²³ – der universale Anspruch des Werden und Seins in der australischen Umwelt wirkt in der indigenen 'Erinnerung'

²² Die Wissenschaft arbeitet mit flexiblen (zeitlichen) Chronologien: Dabei kristallisiert sich die Erkenntnis heraus, dass etwa 18.000 Jahre vor der Zeitrechnung Menschen überregional auf dem australischen Kontinent zu finden waren; die Entwicklung zu einer dichteren Bevölkerung wird in den Zeitraum zwischen 15.000 und 6000 Jahren gelegt.

²³ Inwieweit Darstellungen von Wasserfahrzeugen Erkenntnisse über die Perzeption des Meeres, seiner Beherrschung und die seiner Küsten durch den vorzeitlichen Australier zulassen, kann hier nur als Option der Forschung angedeutet werden. Immerhin brächten solche Darstellungen Informationen über Orte einer küstennahen Besiedlung und den möglichen Einsatz von maritimen Transportmitteln: O'Connor und Arrow, 397-409.

übermächtig. Es ist ein interdisziplinär belegter Tatbestand, dass Menschen im Australien vor unserer Zeitrechnung in enger Wechselbeziehung mit der Natur standen. In seiner unmittelbaren Umgebung suchte der frühe Australier die Quellen des Lebens zu nutzen, zu schonen und zu dokumentieren: das Auffinden, Bewahren und Erinnern an Orte, die durch das Vorhandensein der Ressource Wasser einen besonderen Schutz genossen, erwies sich als fundamental wichtige Vorgabe für die Gestaltung von Geschichte auf dem australischen Kontinent. Es ist solche Erkenntnis, die sich in imaginärer Vorzeit die ersten Zuwanderer, die aus Übersee auf die australische Landmasse kamen, zueigen machten. Sie überwandten nicht allein geographische Distanzen, geologische Barrieren und ökologische Hemmnisse im Raum. In dieser frühen Phase der Entwicklung Australiens geschah mehr: Es war zugleich und primär die Wertschöpfung des Wassers, das heißt die Anerkennung und Wertschätzung desselben als Quelle *des* Lebens, und nicht die Taxierung des Wassers als ausbeutbare Ressource *im* Leben des frühen Australiers, die die mentale Grenze zum Dasein auf dem Fünften Kontinent markiert. Erst aus dieser intellektuellen Gedankenleistung konstruierte sich die Brücke zu einem realen Dasein auf dem australischen Kontinent. Oder in der Deutung Paul Carters gefolgert: Noch immer fließt die Quelle des Lebens anders durch das Land der Aborigines als durch das Land der Siedler.

Bibliographie

- Allen, Jim, 1998. "Archaeology", in: *The Oxford Companion to Australian History*, 32-33.
- Allen, Jim und James F. O'Connell, 2008. "Getting from Sunda to Sahul", in: Geoffrey Clark, Foss Leach und Sue O' Connor, Hg., *Islands of Inquiry. Colonisation, Seafaring and the Archaeology of Maritime Landscapes*. Canberra: Australian National University, 31-46.
- Aplin, Graeme, u.a. Hg., 1987a. *Australians: A Historical Dictionary*. Broadway, NSW: Fairfax, Syme & Weldon Associates.
- Aplin, Graeme, u.a., Hg. 1987b. *Australians: Events and Places*. Broadway, NSW: Fairfax, Syme & Weldon Associates.
- Australian Museum, 2015. "The Spread of People to Australia", <http://australianmuseum.net.au/The-spread-of-people-to-Australia>
- Bähr, Elisabeth, 2012. "The Impact of Christianity on Australian Indigenous Art", in: *Australien: Realität-Klischee-Vision/ Australia:*

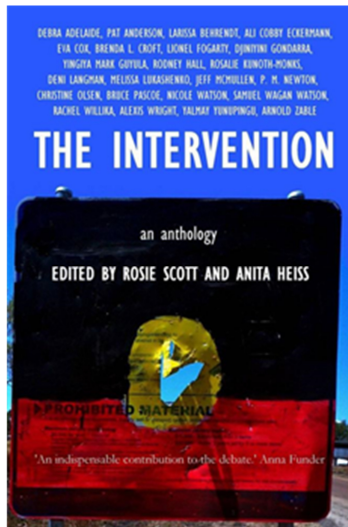
- Reality-Stereotype-Vision*, Hg., Henriette von Holleuffer und Adi Wimmer. Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag, 49-67.
- Balme, Jane und Kate Morse, 1938. "Shell Beads and Social Behaviour in Pleistocene Australia", *Antiquity* 80, 799-811.
- Bates, Daisy, 1938. *The Passing of the Aborigines: A Lifetime spent among the Natives of Australia*. o.O.
- Borchardt, D.H, Hg. 1987. *Australians: A Guide to Sources*. Broadway, NSW: Fairfax, Syme & Weldon Associates.
- Bowler, Jim M., 1987. "Water and Sand: Climate in Ancient Australia", in: Mulvaney und White, Hg., *Australians: To 1788*, 25-45.
- Bowler, Jim M. 1995. "Reading the Australian Landscape: European and Aboriginal Perspectives", Webpage (Copyright 1995): <http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:http://www.ecoversity.org.au/publications/bowler1995.htm>
- Carter, Paul, 2008. "Trockenes Denken. Vom Verlust des Wasserbewußtseins und von der Poesie des Fluiden", *Lettre International*, 83, 76-81.
- Cathcart, Michael, 2009. *The Water Dreamers: The Remarkable History of Our Dry Continent*. Melbourne: Text Publishing.
- Clark, Geoffrey, Foss Leach und Sue O'Connor, Hg., 2008. *Islands of Inquiry: Colonisation, Seafaring and the Archaeology of Maritime Landscapes*, Terra Australis 29. Canberra: ANU E Press.
- Davison, Graeme, u.a., Hg., 1998. *The Oxford Companion to Australian History*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press.
- Denham, Tim, Mark Donohue und Sara Booth, 2009. "Horticultural Experimentation in Northern Australia Reconsidered", *Antiquity*, 83, 634-648.
- "Dreaming", 1987. In Graeme Aplin, u.a., Hg., *Australians: A Historical Dictionary*, 122.
- Erckenbrecht, Corinna, 2003. *Traumzeit: Die Religion der Ureinwohner Australiens*. Freiburg: Herder.
- Evans, Nicholas, 1998. "Aboriginal languages", in: *The Oxford Companion to Australian History*, 7-8.
- Eyre, Edward John, 1841. "Report to the Chairman of the Committee for promoting the Northern Expedition", Fowler's Bay, January 30.
- Flood, Josephine, 1996. *Archaeology of the Dreamtime: The Story of Prehistoric Australia and its People*. Pymble: Angus & Robertson, Rev. Ed.
- Garden, Donald Stuart, 2005. *Australia, New Zealand, and the Pacific: An Environmental History*. Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO.
- Gilligan, Ian, 2007. "Resisting the Cold in Ice Age Tasmania: Thermal Environment and Settlement Strategies", *Antiquity*, 81, 555-568.
- Hallam, Sylvia J., 1987. "Changing Landscapes and Societies: 15.000 to 6000 Years ago", in: *Australians: To 1788*, 47-73.
- Hämäläinen, Pekka und Samuel Truett, 2001. "On Borderlands", *Journal of American History*, 98, September(2), 338-361.
- Jay, Martin, 2011. "AHR Forum: The Senses in History. In the Realm of the Senses: An Introduction", *The American Historical Review*, 116, April(2), 307-315.

- "Lake Mungo", 1998. In *The Oxford Companion To Australian History*, 372.
- Leitner, Gerhard, 2006. *Die Aborigines Australiens*. München: Beck Verlag.
- Leitner, Gerhard und Ian G. Malcolm, Hg., 2007. *The Habitat of Australia's Aboriginal Languages: Past, Present and Future*. Berlin/ New York: de Gruyter.
- Macintyre, Stuart, 1987. "The Writing of Australian History", in: *Australians: A Guide to Sources*. Broadway: Fairfax, Syme & Weldon Associates, 1-29.
- Mehling, Marianne, Hg., 1996. *Knaurs Kulturführer in Farbe Australien*. München: Droemer.
- Monroe, M.H., 2015. "Australia: The Land Where Time Began – A Journey Back Through Time", webpage: <http://austhrutime.com/journey.htm>.
- Moore, George Fletcher, 1884. *Diary of Ten Years Eventful Life of an Early Settler in Western Australia. And also a Descriptive Vocabulary of the Language of the Aborigines*. London: M. Walbrook.
- Morphy, Howard, 1998. "Dreamtime", in: *The Oxford Companion to Australian History*, 195-196.
- Morton, John, 1987. "Aboriginal Myths and Legends", in: Graeme Aplin, u.a., Hg., *Australians: A Historical Dictionary*, S. 3.
- Mulvaney, D.J. und J. Peter White, Hg., 1987. *Australians: To 1788*. Broadway, NSW: Fairfax, Syme & Weldon Associates.
- Mulvaney, D.J., 1987. "The End of the Beginning: 6000 Years ago to 1788", in: dies., Hg., *Australians: To 1788*, 75-113.
- Mytum, Harold, 2007. "Materiality and Memory: An Archaeological Perspective on the Popular Adoption of Linear Time in Britain", *Antiquity*, 81, June(312), 381-396.
- Nieto-Phillips, John, 2011. "Margins to Mainstream: The Brave New World of Borderlands History – An Introduction", *Journal of American History*, 98, September(2), 337.
- O'Connell, James F. und Jim Allen, 2004. "Dating the Colonization of Sahul (Pleistocene Australia-New Guinea): A Review of Recent Research", *Journal of Archaeological Science*, 31, 835-853.
- O'Connor, Sue und Steve Arrow, 2008. "Boat Images in the Rock Art of Northern Australia with particular reference to the Kimberley, Western Australia", in: Clark u.a., Hg., *Islands of Inquiry*, 397-409.
- Playford, Phillip E., u.a., 2013. *The Geology of Shark Bay*. East Perth, W.A.: Western Australia Geological Survey of W.A.
- "Proposed Determination of Native Title: Neowarra v State of Western Australia [2003] FCA 1402", 2004. In: *Native Title Hot Spots*, No. 8, February, 9-36.
- Read, Peter, 1998. "Aborigines", in: *The Oxford Companion to Australian History*, 13-15.
- Robson, Lloyd, 1983. *A History of Tasmania*, Bd. 1: *Van Diemen's Land from the Earliest Times to 1855*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press.
- Rolls, Mitchell, 2013. "Flora, Fauna and Concrete: Nature and Development in *Walkabout* Magazine (Australia: 1934-1978)", *Zeitschrift für Australienstudien*, 27, 3-28.

- Simpson, Colin, 1953. *Adam in Ochre: Inside Aboriginal Australia*. New York: Frederick A. Praeger.
- Spencer, Walter Baldwin und Francis James Gillen, 1968. *The Native Tribes of Central Australia*. London: Macmillan and Co., 1899; Reprint: New York: Dover Publications.
- Spencer, Walter Baldwin und Francis James Gillen, 1927. *The Arunta: A Study of a Stone Age People*. London: Macmillan.
- Strohscheidt, Elisabeth, 1996. "Über die Auswirkungen der britischen Eroberung auf das Leben von Aborigines und Torres Strait Islanders", in: Rudolf Bader, Hg., *Australien: Eine interdisziplinäre Einführung*. Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 101-124.
- Taçon, Paul S.C., Michelle Langley, u.a., 2010. "Ancient Bird Stencils Discovered in Arnhem Land, Northern Territory, Australia", *Antiquity*, 84, June (324), 416-427.
- Taçon, Paul S.C., Michelle Langley, u.a., 2011. "A Bird in the Hand: Response to Franklin and Szabo", *Antiquity*, 85, March (327), 3: http://www98.griffith.edu.au/dspace/bitstream/handle/10072/45321/74919_1.pdf?sequence=1
- Tonkinson, R., 1987. "Mardujarra Kinship", in: Mulvaney und White, Hg., *Australians: To 1788*, 197-219.
- White, J. Peter und Ronald Lampert, 1987. "Creation and Discovery", in: Mulvaney und White, Hg., *Australians: To 1788*, 3-23.

REZENSIONEN / REVIEWS

Rosie Scott & Anita Heiss, eds, *The Intervention: An Anthology*. Salisbury: Griffin, 2015. 272 + ix pp. ISBN 978-0-646-93709-0. AUD 25.00. **Reviewed by Shelley Bielefeld,** Australian National University.



Written in an engaging style, *The Intervention: An Anthology* is a captivating compilation of interdisciplinary critique of the 2007 Northern Territory Emergency Response (the 'Intervention'), and its extension for a further decade through the Stronger Futures framework. I thoroughly recommend the book to anyone interested in Indigenous social justice issues. The importance of its key themes and its diverse body of contributors make it illuminating reading for

those interested in the abuse of power inherent in Australia's ongoing colonial project. It will also be of use to those working within fields of law, history, political science, cultural studies and critical race theory.

The book commences with an account of the bipartisan support for ongoing interventionist governance of Australia's First Peoples as 'the Intervention has morphed into Stronger Futures'. As Rosie Scott makes clear, for Indigenous Australians living in the Northern Territory, this means 'the situation remains the same with only a few cosmetic touches'. The contributors point out that such bipartisanship has meant Indigenous peoples have been let down by both major political parties who have collaborated in the removal of rights for First Peoples. As part of this process, the dominant discourse has circulated benevolent language about concern for children amid horrific stereotyping of Aboriginal men as paedophiles preying upon the vulnerable. This was a crucial rationalisation for the suspension of the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* (Cth), which

removed domestic rights to be protected from racially discriminatory Intervention laws for Indigenous peoples living in the Northern Territory. The government claimed that removal of rights protection was necessary to make practical progress in targeted communities. However, as Pat Anderson, co-author of the *Little Children Are Sacred* report states, 'an approach to addressing Aboriginal disadvantage that is based on respect for our established rights is necessary because in the long term it is the only one that, practically speaking, will work'.

Significantly, *The Intervention* contains the voices of several Northern Territory elders who speak out against the Intervention and Stronger Futures, advocating policies that foster self-determination, sovereignty and autonomy, as opposed to 'top-down' governance. The book indicates that the majority of First Peoples in the Northern Territory are opposed to the Intervention. This is reflected in various chapters by eloquent elders such as Rosalie Kunothe-Monks and Djiniyini Gondarra. Such voices provide a compelling counter-narrative to the dominant government discourse about the Intervention, which will interest those who work within a framework of critical discourse analysis. Rosalie Kunothe-Monks, for example, refers to the 'tremendous trauma' inflicted upon First Peoples through the Intervention and the 'very deep sense of insecurity' fostered by this style of governance, which forces Indigenous people to experience a 'lack of control over their futures'.

In the context of the Intervention, such deprivation of control has manifested across several policy areas. Lack of Indigenous community control over day-to-day decisions can be seen in the government's compulsory five year leases of Indigenous lands from 2007 to 2012, and the stigmatising signage placed at the entrance to Aboriginal communities imposing alcohol and pornography bans. Community control is also undermined by legislation preventing judges from considering First Peoples' customary law in sentencing processes for criminal matters. Lack of individual control over day-to-day decisions is evident in the ongoing imposition of compulsory income management on thousands of Indigenous welfare recipients,

many of whom have found that the scheme greatly increases their burdens in terms of caring for their families.

A vivid illustration of such hardship is seen in the contribution by Yingiya Guyula from remote Arnhem Land. Guyula recounted in 2011 that the nearest government approved store to the Mapuru homeland that accepted income managed funds could only be reached via a \$560 return flight. Unsurprisingly, this created difficulties for those surviving on meagre welfare incomes. Recent evaluations of income management reveal that many problems persist. Nevertheless, both major political parties continue to be ideologically committed to income management, with its intrusive control over common consumer purchases. For numerous Indigenous welfare recipients this has been combined with work-for-the-dole requirements, resulting in coerced labour as a precondition for accessing income managed funds through the BasicsCard. This is chillingly reminiscent of Indigenous peoples being forced to work for rations throughout Australia's earlier colonial era.

The Intervention refers to the hollow hope emerging from the apology to the Stolen Generations, where remorse expressed over inappropriate interventionist laws and policies has been undermined by continuing like governance through the Intervention and Stronger Futures. The book also contains a healthy dose of scepticism regarding the current debate over constitutional recognition of Australia's First Peoples. Some contributors express concern that the government will be keen to propose symbolic rather than substantive changes—a far cry from recognition of sovereignty or self-determination for Indigenous peoples. Yet as the Intervention demonstrates so powerfully, more substantive constitutional change would be required to protect First Peoples from coercive and paternalistic governance. Several Northern Territory elders and community representatives remain convinced that a treaty is a far more appropriate and necessary mechanism for securing the rights of First Peoples.

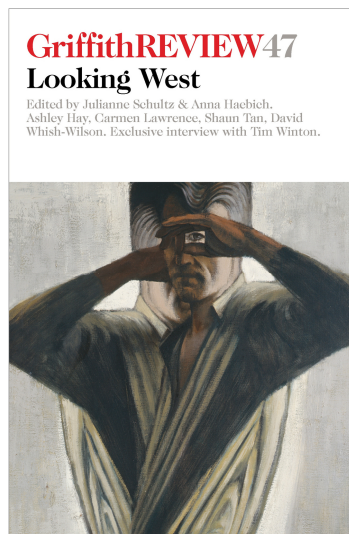
This is a book that places the Intervention and Stronger Futures

under much needed scrutiny. Many of its contributors also offer suggestions for alternative Indigenous policy directions that warrant further attention by policymakers. For example, Larissa Behrendt maintains that Indigenous policy needs to be grounded in 'a collaborative approach that seeks to include Aboriginal people in the outcomes'. She states that the unilaterally designed and imposed Intervention adopted 'approaches that went against what the research and the experts on the ground said worked'. Her contribution makes clear that increasing bureaucratic controls over Indigenous communities does not equate to redressing 'cyclical poverty' with its associated problems. A different policy approach is required, one that is grounded in genuinely respectful treatment of Australia's First Peoples. Pointedly, Bruce Pascoe contends that 'Aboriginal people need to be central to the design and delivery of remedial systems so that fly in fly out non-Aboriginal workers do not absorb all the money set aside for the solution to a problem'. Significantly, elders highlight that there needs to be a policy approach that addresses issues 'on a case-by-case basis and preferably with assistance through the appropriate community channels' rather than 'negotiating ... with the chosen few'. Culturally appropriate policy design and implementation are crucial.

While there are other excellent earlier books on the Intervention, such as *Coercive Reconciliation: Stabilise, Normalise, Exit Aboriginal Australia* in 2007 and *Culture Crisis: Anthropology and Politics in Aboriginal Australia* in 2010, *The Intervention: An Anthology* includes analysis of more recent policy developments and several current reports generated by government and other bodies. The book makes an important contribution to the existing literature on the Intervention and collects several striking voices on Indigenous policy in one highly accessible resource. It captures a vital moment in Australia's history of race relations, one that compels the reader to consider the distance between rhetoric and reality in the government's Intervention narrative.

This review first appeared in Arena Magazine

Anna Haebich & Julianne Schultz, eds, *Looking West. Griffith Review 47*. South Brisbane: Text Publishing for Griffith University, 2015. 327 pp. ISBN 9781922182678. AUD 27.95. **Reviewed by Alexander Bräuer,** Graduate School "Cultural Encounters and the Discourses of Scholarship", University of Rostock.



What does it mean to be Western Australian? "Looking West", the latest edition of the quarterly *Griffith Reviews* (number 47), and edited by Julianne Schultz and Anna Haebich, tries to give an answer to this question. After the successful publication of volumes with a geographical focus on Tasmania (number 39) and New Zealand (number 43), *Griffith Review 47* takes a closer look at the western part of the continent. As the wide array of literary forms covered in this volume makes

clear, there is no easy answer to the question of Western Australian identity. The perspectives and approaches seem to be endless: 37 contributions ranging from essays, memoirs, a reportage and interviews to poems, fiction and one photo essay (the online version contains 6 more pieces) cover specific topics like mining, sharks, urban planning, the Indian Ocean World, immigration, Aboriginal and environmental issues. In this foray of literary production, certain topics – sometimes explicit, often allusive – appear to pop up on multiple places and provide useful guidelines for the reader. Here, I want to outline some of the most important guidelines.

While reading through the various stories it becomes clear that Western Australia is still a postcolonial country that is battling with the responsibilities of its own colonial history, present and future. The complex relations between Aboriginal and white Australians are most prominent featured in the essay by Steve Kinnane, Judy Harrison and Isabelle Reinecke on compensation for stolen wages in the Kimberley; in Kim Scott's essay on the creation of children books

through Aboriginal storytelling; in the memoirs of Holly Ringland on a road trip through the Aboriginal art scene of the Western Desert; but also in the contributions by Jacqueline Wright, Ken Mulvaney or Sean Gorman. This aspect is amplified further by a photo essay on the return of the Carrolup drawings, painted by Aboriginal children of the Stolen Generation in the Carrolup Native Settlement during the 1940s and 1950s. All these contributions argue that the process of healing has just begun and that further cultural, economic and social investment is required to make Aboriginal history an acknowledged part of Western Australian identity.

Another pivotal point of this volume is the economic development of Western Australia – incorporating most prominently the mining industry – as well as the social and cultural consequences out of high-speed capitalism. Rebecca Giggs criticizes this mining boom that, according to her interpretation, follows an Australian tradition to see land largely as a resource to be exploited with disastrous consequences for human bodies and identities. Carmen Lawrence comes to a similar conclusion from her political work as a Premier of Western Australia in the early 1990s and Sarah Burnside discusses the complicated details of the ownership of mineral wealth in Western Australia. Despite the recent mining boom, not every aspect in *Looking West* is focused on mining. Andrea Gaynor gives an insight into the history of the wheat belt and argues for an economically and socially more sustainable and diversified agriculture. Pearling and its Aboriginal, Asian and white origins are the focus of Sarah Yu's, Bart Pigram's and Maya Shioji's contribution. Overall, the different articles argue not only for a diversification of the economic development that tries to avoid some of the negative developments of the recent mining boom, but actively promote a new perspective on the economy acknowledging the importance of "labor", i.e. of the labor force and Labor Party for Western Australia.

From an environmental standpoint, the Swan River colony was a disaster. It was haunted by a poor agricultural performance in the beginning and marked by constant struggling with environmental factors like water resources, epidemic plants, imported animals or

fire management. As some of the articles in this volume suggest, this struggle is far from being over and continues to be an important part of Western Australian identity: David Ritter argues for more political engagement with environmental issues; Peter Newman in contrast proposes that Western Australia has already mastered some important environmental challenges because of an active political engagement of its population; Ruth Morgan elaborates on the critical water resources; John Charles Ryan and Jessica White are both connecting endemic plants to the identity formation of Western Australia; and in an impressive piece of short fiction Shaun Tan is reminding us of the short and fragile human presence in the Western Australian habitat. What becomes clear is that the idea of managing and planning the environment is at best a precarious one. Western Australia is in search of an approach that can contribute to a unique identity while at the same time being sustainable and economically reasonable. Not surprisingly, most articles keep on coming back to Aboriginal strategies of land use that proved to be working in the challenging Australian environment for at least 60,000 years.

Looking West takes a geographical focus as its theoretical foundation and throughout the volume space – its perception and use – plays an important part in Western Australian identity formation. Even more, all of the aforementioned guidelines – colonialism, environmental issues and the economic development – are obviously connected to space, land and borders. However, some articles stress this point more than others. Samuel Carmody, for example, writes in his memoir about the role of sharks, or what he dubs “monsters of the sea,” for identity formation. The contributions of Suvendrini Perera and Caroline Fleay, Nadir Ali Rezai and Lisa Hartley are indicating the fragility of artificial borders contested by asylum seekers among others; Terri-Ann White and John Mateer widen these perspectives on the Indian Ocean World with articles on the difference between literary production in Calcutta and Perth and a glimpse into the complex history of the slave trade; Helen Trinca takes a look east on the inter-Australian migration and both contributions by the editors – Julianne Schultz and Anna Haebich – work intensively with spatial metaphors that are featured in the title

"Looking West".

In conclusion, the volume reveals a Western Australian identity drifting between isolation and globalisation. This identity is probably nowhere better embodied than in the iconic figure of the FIFO worker (Fly-in fly-out), working for global mining cooperations and transferring constantly between the isolated camps in the desert and the city of lights, Perth.

On another more subtle level, the title suggests that "looking" has to be understood as a process. Time is an integral part of identity formation and therefore of importance in nearly every article. However, Amanda Curtin delivers in her story about the history of a place in the Group Settlement of the Southwest the most impressive example of an interaction of place and time. Throughout the volume it becomes clear that the view of Western Australia is directed to both the past and the future, thus generating a very fluid picture of identity formation characterised by the feeling of being "in between". The authors of "Looking West" perceive themselves as an active part of this development, shaping and creating their own heritage and future.

Overall, *Looking West* presents a very well-made and recommendable book. The editors assembled an interesting and multifaceted team of authors who produced a collection of well-rounded and readable contributions targeting the general public and scholars interested in Western Australia. All the more it is difficult to understand why the growing economic and social inequalities, especially in the wake of the recent end of the mining boom, do not play a greater role in the contributions. Consequently, a faith in capitalism and economic success for everybody – notable exceptions here are the Aboriginal population and immigrants – seems to live on through the volume, becoming itself an important part of the eclectic Western Australian identity.

Stefanie Affeldt, *Consuming Whiteness. Australian Racism and the 'White Sugar' Campaign*. Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2014. 608 pp. ISBN 978-3-643-90569-7. EUR 64,90.
Reviewed by Anna von Rath, University of Potsdam.



STEFANIE AFFELDT
CONSUMING WHITENESS
AUSTRALIAN RACISM AND THE 'WHITE SUGAR' CAMPAIGN

LIT

RACISM ANALYSIS STUDIES 4

The 'white Australia policy' has been discussed extensively in academia and beyond, with most discussions focusing mainly on the political and legal implementation of this problematic ideology. Stefanie Affeldt's *Consuming Whiteness. Australian Racism and the 'White Sugar' Campaign* contributes an analysis of the concurrent cultural, economic and individual dimensions of the continuity of racist thinking and acting in Australia initiated by the early European settlers. Affeldt reconstructs the history of Australia's sugar production and consumption which,

according to the author, played a major part in the purposeful construction of an all-'white' ideal of Australian national identity sustaining the successful realization of an all encompassing structural (i.e. institutional, cultural and individual) racism. Her analysis moves chronologically from the inception of sugar cane cultivation to the early 20th century. Along with sugar, racism was transplanted by the Europeans to other parts of the world. Affeldt hints at the fact that racism is a kind of thinking pattern that reappears in different eras in different shapes to legitimize a ruling position. In the case of Australia, the racist nation building process had the effect that whiteness even contributed to the overcoming of other tension areas such as 'class', 'gender' and 'nation'.

After an extensive introduction, which already provides a detailed overview of the issues at stake and the book's straightforward structure, the study starts with the journey of sugar cane around the

world and its growing significance. Sugar was not only important for nutrition and the economy, it was also a symbol of power. To Affeldt, its symbolic character reflecting social hierarchies is most interesting; she identifies strong ties between sugar consumption and a person's social status shifting over time from classism to racism. Initially, in Britain sugar was a marker of class, the color of the purchased sugar which determined its quality (the whiter the better), also defined the consumer's position within the socio-economic hierarchy. Only mass production of sugar, enabled through plantation economies and slave labor, blurred the class-lines, making it an accessible commodity for all 'white' people. This change allowed even the 'white' lower classes access to a certain lifestyle and, consequently, to experience some sort of self-elevation by consuming sugar produced by people deemed even lower in social hierarchy than themselves according to the dominant discourse of the time. Affeldt refers to sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's theory of distinction based on taste and, thus, establishes the idea that sugar became a medium to signify whiteness as power. She implies that sugar can be read as the epitome of racism.

From a general introduction to the sugar phenomenon, Affeldt turns to the specifics of the Australian context where sugar became not only a symbol of a superior social status but also of an exclusive nationalism. Already the first European fleets arriving in Australia brought sugar along with the first settlers. Soon, a debate erupted on who should work on the sugar plantations fueled by a racist ideology and based on the idea of creating an entirely 'white' Australian nation. In the early years, Australia still mostly relied on Pacific Islanders to work under exploitative conditions on the plantations. A movement against the cheap 'Black' labor emerged. It was, however, not a movement calling on peoples' morals to refrain from slavery or indentured labor but a campaign for whiteness. After abolition,

'[w]hite' sugar was not only supposed to be produced by free labour but also in due consideration of nationalist ideology. In short: the 'whiter' the producer, the 'whiter' the sugar – but, once again, the 'whiter' the sugar the dearer the sugar. (Affeldt 108)

Interestingly, the European working class in Australia strongly supported the notion of whiteness as superior social position. They were able to claim whiteness by distinguishing themselves firstly from Chinese gold miners, later from Pacific Islanders by demanding better treatment on the sugar cane fields and, at all times, from Indigenous Australians. Family background, skin color and an assumed cultural superiority buttressed the whiteness claim. Affeldt states that whiteness established itself as “symbolic capital” which a person needed for making demands and convincingly describes that it secured privileges.

But not only producers of sugar, also its consumers played an important role in furthering the national project of whiteness, Affeldt argues. The consumption of sugar became the consumption of whiteness. It allowed ‘white’ consumers from all classes to assure themselves to be members of the ‘white race’ and to show their willingness to pay the price for the creation of a homogeneous, ‘white’ nation. Affeldt describes this process – which supported the exclusion of everybody deemed ‘other’ than ‘white’ – as individual responsibility without directly referring to the political extent of individual choices. The author only implies that individual action in the form of consumption became politicized.

Affeldt adds yet another dimension to the already complex entanglement of sugar production and consumption with racism and nationalism in Australia. To assure that consumers would choose sugar produced by more expensive ‘white’ laborers and to legitimize the establishment of an institutionalized preference of particular social groups, racist images (e.g. in the form of exoticization or infantilization) were reproduced in literature, newspapers and advertisements. At the same time, a public discourse spurred an undefined fear of being invaded by dangerous ‘others’ willfully threatening ‘white’ people. These ideological underpinnings contributed to the political project of creating a ‘white’ Australia which was deliberately and overtly promoted. *Consuming Whiteness* clearly demonstrates that racist discrimination became a complete

and flawless structure, its various levels mutually stimulated each other and manifested the prevalence of the idea of 'white' supremacy. Although she describes a structural implementation of racism, Affeldt does not directly address it as such. Rather, she outlines the process as a shift from biological racism to commodity racism. Capitalism is identified as its driving force whereas the cultural dimension of racism is said to have merely served as supporter of the project. Affeldt's thorough illustration of the overwhelming amount of written and visual outputs shows that this made racism real and right in the eyes of those profiting from it.

One of the book's strengths is Affeldt's obvious awareness of the messiness of the concept of whiteness. There are no clear-cut, static 'racial' categories. On the contrary, Affeldt emphasizes that even though 'race' appeared to be the central category in the process of creating an Australian national identity, the boundaries of the imagined 'races' were still to a certain extent negotiable. By analyzing the sugar industry, the author shows that these constructions always served a purpose and were strategically employed.

In spite of the messy definitions of so called human 'races', the mechanisms of justification were always similar. Affeldt suggests that their invention began with a distinction of phenotypes based on skin colors and physical appearance, but "racism is also a form of cultural discrimination" (16). Now, whether racism is based on biology or culture, its basic idea is the creation of a binarism. A self-defined 'we' group excludes other people by assigning them to another group or other groups which are said to be essentially different. Therefore, those who claim to be the norm feel that they can legitimately restrict the 'other's' access to resources or equal, social participation which Affeldt illustrates based on Australia's sugar production and consumption.

In the settler-colonial context of Australia, the access to the powerful status of whiteness became widened: former British convicts, southern Europeans, European working class people, etc.

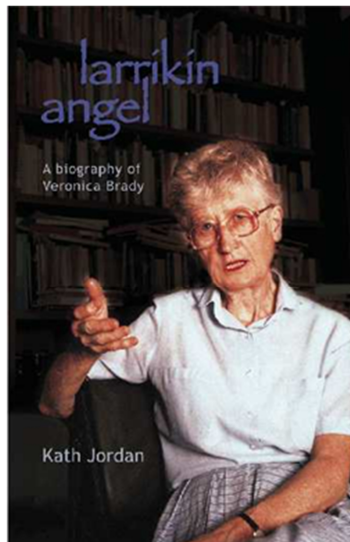
who would have been regarded as suspicious in Europe, were allowed to claim whiteness in Australia by emphasizing their difference to Indigenous Australians, Pacific Islanders and Chinese. According to Affeldt, the sugar industry played an essential role in staging these presumptuous claims which developed into a strategy for securing advantages in a competitive society. One had to stay 'white' to be allowed to belong and one way to reinforce that, was to support 'othering' on all levels. The vast amount of examples, which Affeldt gathered to prove Australian racism, clearly suggests that this artificial creation of an exclusive unity called 'Australianness' based on the invented category of 'race' is a complete absurdity. It is important to, again and again, emphasize the power which this construction still obtains and in how many different areas it operates.

Consuming Whiteness provides a meticulous and highly complex picture of the various expressions of racism in Australia until the early 20th century. It sharply conveys the overwhelming extent of such an ill-advised and dividing ideology. The author's intention is obviously to create awareness among the readers for the offensive explicitness of Australian racism and to impart – especially to its 'white' readers – a detailed deconstruction of the pseudo-natural category of whiteness. Although Affeldt constantly hints at the fact that the holistically applied project to establish the normalizing powers of whiteness has a lasting effect on people's thinking patterns, she does not invite 'white' people to critically deal with their own privileges. When grappling with the issues of whiteness and racism, one relevant question is always: what does it have to do with me? For just as the individual's choice of sugar used to matter for Australian nationalism – which Affeldt identified – the individual's action still has political relevance today.

Furthermore, Affeldt seems to only talk about the past. While she mentions that discriminatory patterns tend to repeat themselves, she does not draw attention to the drastic effects that the formation of an all-white 'Australianness' still has for contemporary politics, especially immigration politics, and people's interactions with each

other. Describing the enormity of the white Australia policy, she does not mention the social, economic, political and psychological consequences which people who belong to groups that have been 'othered' and continue to be 'othered' experience until today.

Nevertheless, *Consuming Whiteness* is an interesting read, with much detail, to gain a greater understanding of the development and deliberate application of racism within politics, the economy and cultural products for the purposes of domination. It sheds a different light on historical processes. The readers themselves may be able to make the connections to current political trends which could be interpreted as a continuation of a project that started with the early settlers and their consumption of sugar.

NACHRUF / OBITUARY**Veronica Brady (1929-2015)**

Veronica Brady was born Patricia Mary Brady on 5 January 1929; “Veronica” was the name she adopted when she entered the Loreto order at the age of 21. It is a teaching order, not a cloistered one, and this suited Veronica Brady admirably; she gained a reputation as a stirring and inspiring teacher, particularly after joining The University of Western Australia in early 1972. With the late Bruce Bennett she championed the introduction of studies in Australian literature, at the time in

the face of sometimes stern opposition. There was nothing like stern conservative opposition to get Veronica moving: her ancestors were Irish Catholics and on her mother’s side included convicts, so in one sense she always remained true to her roots.

Veronica Brady gained a national and international reputation as a public intellectual, literary critic and tireless moral crusader. She was fearless, a Mother Courage whose causes were her ‘children’. That courage often put her at odds with governments or the Church, and drew controversy but also admiration from many people across a wide range of Australian society and overseas. She was a literary commentator whose work was noticed well outside the literary community; she was a Catholic nun who detested the edicts of the conservative popes and who was suspicious of believers whose faith wasn’t “tempered with a certain amount of doubt”; she was a feminist by instinct who inspired many women, both old and young. She spoke on philosophical, literary, social and ethical issues not only across Australia but in China, India, Indonesia, Italy, Singapore, Spain, the United Kingdom and other countries for fifty years. She was a white person whom the Aboriginal community trusted, a symbolic figure for many women engaged in Australian literary,

religious and social studies, and the only literary critic whom Patrick White trusted and admired.

Veronica was the author of distinguished research works, including *The Future People: Christianity, Modern Culture and the Future*, *A Crucible of Prophets: Australians and the Question of God*, *Playing Catholic: Essays on Four Catholic Plays*, the essay collection, *Caught in the Draught*, and *South of My Days: A Biography of Judith Wright*, as well as many other essays on Australian literature, religion and the place of Aborigines, women and the church in Australian society. She was diminutive in stature but not in any other respect and, unselfconsciously, a memorable character. As a teacher she was generous, selfless, enthusiastic and thoroughly reliable but those of us who worked with her will always remember her notes: her handwriting had a Daliesque quality and looked like ink dropped through a wine decanter. Once, when we were at lunch, a waiter asked her if she wanted orange juice rather than wine and I will never forget the withering look she gave him; Julie Bishop could only wish for such a death stare! On another occasion she was driving one of the convents' cars when she suddenly lost control, ran off the road and headed towards a pole. Veronica had enough time, she said, to think "Now I'll find out if it's all true". Then, being Veronica, she missed the pole.

Although she worked across many areas, she could be fearless because she was all of a piece: her religious beliefs emphasised the importance of imagination and she found literature the most profound form of imaginative expression. The need for spirituality lay behind her interest in culture generally and she believed in the importance of community, so that her literary essays have a social and political edge and her socio-political essays have culture and spirituality at their centre. It is no accident that she wrote her doctoral thesis on Patrick White and her final book on Judith Wright, two Australian writers of whom the same things could be said. Veronica lived her beliefs; she was no ivory tower academic. Although passionate she was not dogmatic; I once, as a lecturer much junior to her, told her that I had published an essay

disagreeing with one of hers about White's novel *A Fringe of Leaves*. She immediately reacted with interest and encouragement; in fact our disagreements increased our friendship. In the "Introduction" to *Caught in the Draught* she wrote: "For lack of a vision, a people perish" and she worked hard to help Australia to develop a vision of itself.

Apart from her university roles, Veronica provided a good deal of public service, including on the Boards of the Library and Information Service of WA, Fremantle Press and the ABC, and she was Chair of the Perth Branch of International PEN, a writers organisation dedicated to freedom of expression. She made herself an interesting life and lived it fully. On her retirement from UWA in 1994, a festschrift was published in her honour titled *Tilting at Matilda*; it is dedicated to her "in admiration of her exemplary imagination, knowledge and courage". She was there described as a "larrikin angel", and this phrase became the title of her biography, written by Kath Jordan and published in 2009. On its back cover Fred Chaney is quoted as saying "In an often smug and complacent society, we need Veronica Brady and her ilk to remind us to look beyond ourselves. I think Jesus would be OK with her". She's probably testing him out right now. But we'll miss her.

Dennis Haskell

Westerly Centre, University of WA

DIE BEITRAGENDEN/THE CONTRIBUTORS



Dr **Shelley Bielefeld** is a Braithwaite Research Fellow at the Regulatory Institutions Network at the Australian National University. She has a keen interest in social justice issues affecting Indigenous Australians, and has published several articles on this theme, including articles on the impact of income management, land rights, criminal justice issues and constitutional issues affecting Australia's First Peoples. She has been working on problems arising from the Northern Territory Intervention since its inception in 2007

and those connected with the Stronger Futures framework since 2012. Her work on Indigenous law and policy issues has been influenced by listening to concerns expressed by those who are subject to the Intervention and Stronger Futures.



Alexander Bräuer is a PhD student at the graduate school "Cultural Encounters and the Discourses of Scholarship" at the University of Rostock. He is working on a project about the cooperation between Aboriginal people and white settlers in the pastoral industry of Western Australia between 1835 and 1855.



Fiona Duthie is a librarian at the State Library of Queensland. She holds a doctorate in Australian literature from the University of Queensland. Her articles have been published in *Westerly*, *Antipodes*, *Australian Library Journal* and the *Australian Women's*

Book Review.



Dennis Haskell is Professor emeritus of English, Communication and Cultural Studies at the University of Western Australia and a distinguished academic and poet whose work has been published nationally and internationally. He has also been Chair of the Literature Board of the Australia Council for the Arts.

Martina Horáková teaches Australian studies, Indigenous literature in Australia and North America, and ethnic minority literatures in the Department of English and American Studies at Masaryk University, Czech Republic. Her current research interests include narratives of settler belonging in Australia and Canada, women's life writing, and Indigenous critical discourse. She has recently contributed chapters to *A Companion to Australian Aboriginal Literature* (on Kim Scott and Jackie and Rita Huggins) and *A Handbook of Autobiography/Autofiction* (on Sally Morgan).



Anna von Rath is a lecturer and PhD candidate at the University of Potsdam. She holds a M.A. in Anglophone Modernities in Literature and Culture from the University of Potsdam; she also studied at the English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad (India) and Westminster University, London (UK). Her research focuses on colonial heritage, postcolonial tourism and

travel writing, and (postcolonial) ecocriticism.



Chrischona Schmidt (MA Universität Freiburg, PhD Australian National University) is the manager of the Indigenous art centre *Ikuntji Artists* in Haasts Bluff, Central Australia. Prior to that she completed her interdisciplinary doctoral research and dissertation in 2012 about the 40-year history of the Utopia art movement in Central Australia. Her research areas in both disciplines, art history and social anthropology, include non-Western art of the 20th and 21st

centuries, in particular art from Central Australia, the art market and art production, and questions around methodology in researching non-Western art.